

Co-Production for policy analysis: What is it (good) for?

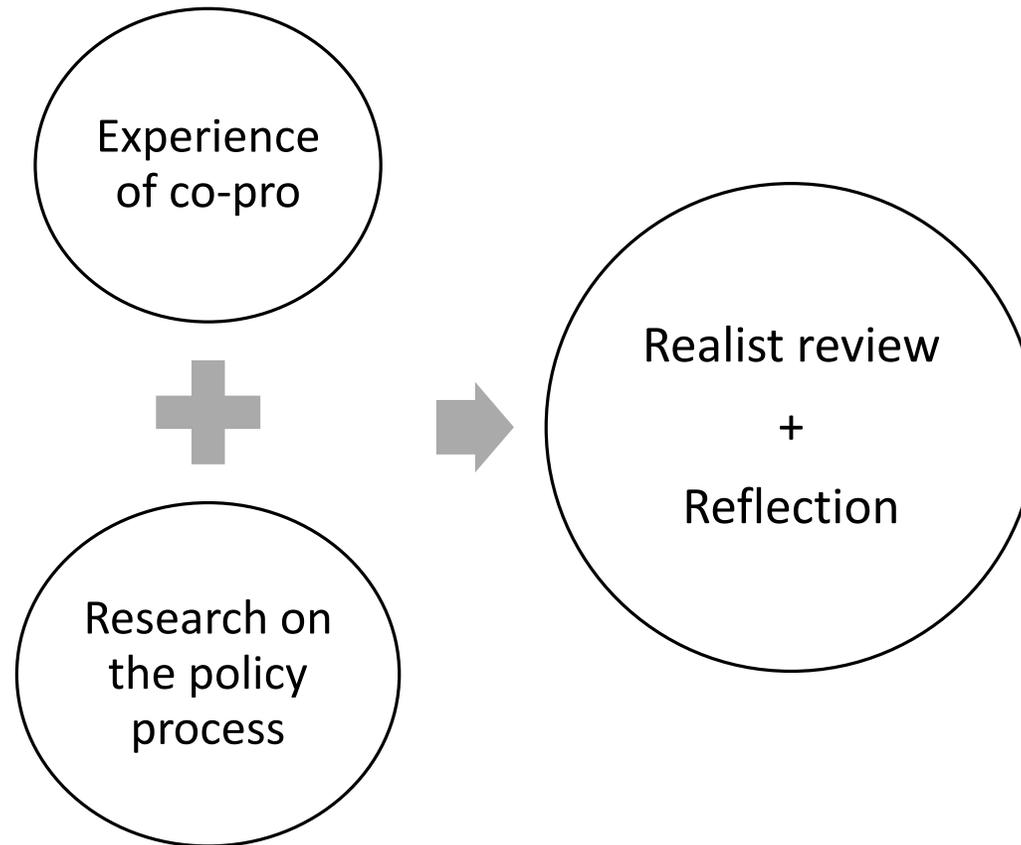
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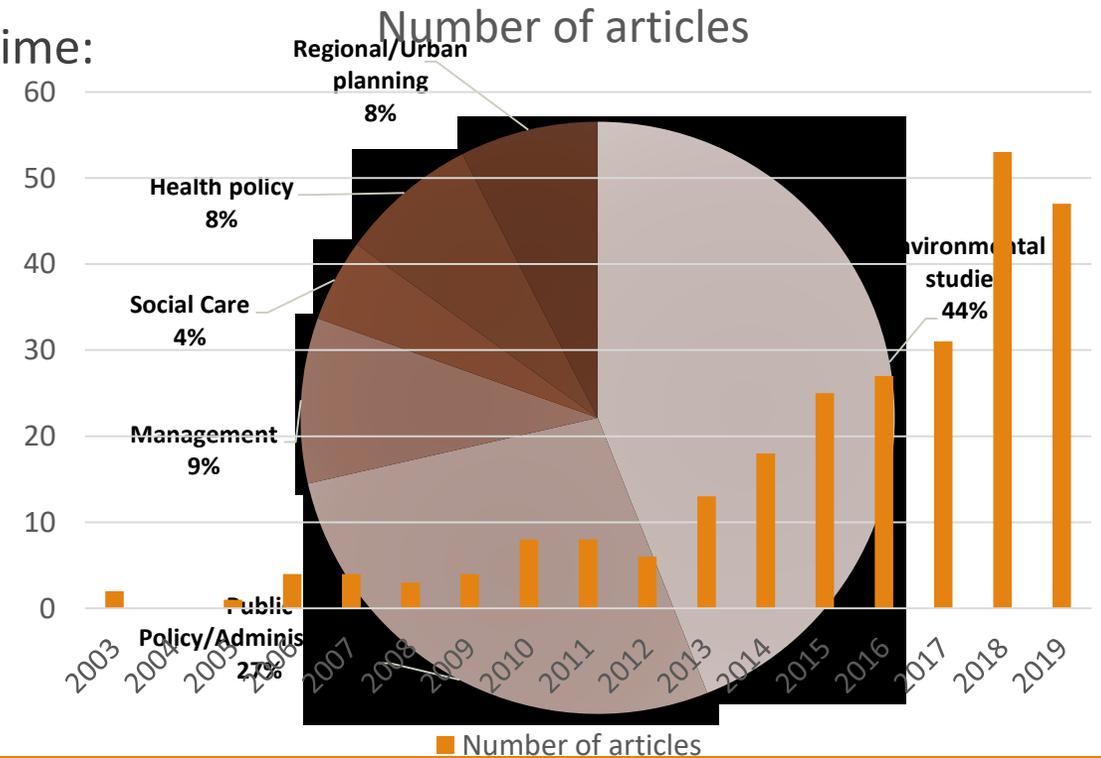
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Where I'm coming from:

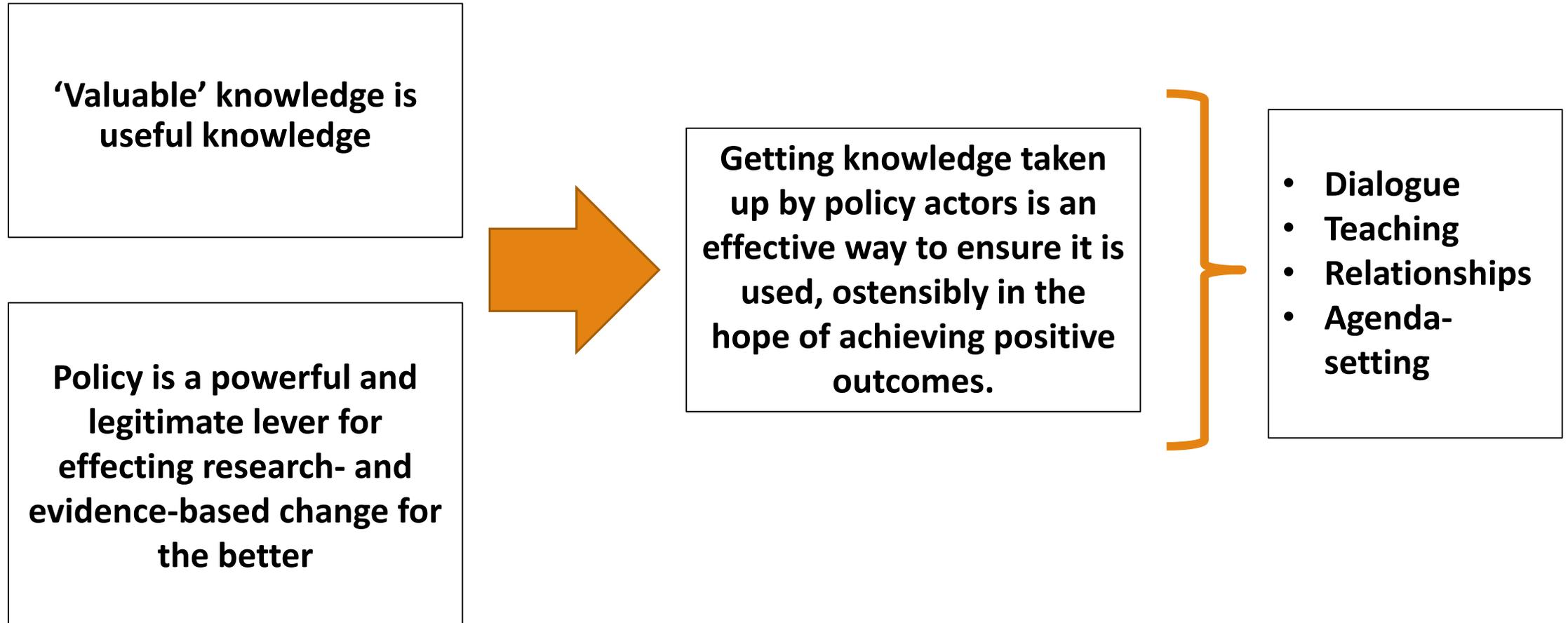


Co-production: An idea whose time has come?

- Search “co-production” in REF2014 impact case studies and you get 85 results
- Search “co-production AND policy” in the Social Science Citation Index and you get 530 results
- But clear trends in use across disciplines and over time:



The appeal of co-production:



The appeal of co-production (cont.)

- Policy change is made possible by **policy learning**.
- Theories of the policy process (and our own intuition) tell us that outside-in ‘teaching’ of policy actors through policy-relevant communication is usually **insufficient**.
- Therefore: creating policy-relevant knowledge *with* users increases its **relevance, appropriateness, and intelligibility**.
- Co-production has potential as a form of **policy pedagogy**.

Co-production of policy-relevance knowledge solves the **evidence problem** *and* the policy **agenda problem**.

Policy learning: 3 general limits

We know that co-production is challenging, hard work, and entails trade-offs. Understanding policy learning complicates things further.

1. Policymakers are subject to bounded rationality
2. Policymakers are subject to policymaking complexity
3. Political imperatives and unequal power relationships have a strong influence on policy

Research question:

What role can co-production play in policy learning to reduce inequalities?

Co-production vs/& EBPM?

Co-Production	Evidence Based Policy Making
Diverse valuable information	Hierarchy of evidence
Participative	Elite epistemic
Transactional	Inferential
Process and outcome	Outcome

Realist review of co-production

- Method of systematically reviewing policy-relevant scholarship
- Appropriate because it seeks *explanation* and can take account of *complexity*
- Interested in identifying and explaining the interplay between
 - Context
 - Mechanisms
 - Outcomes
- Realist reviews ask: ‘What works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respect, and how?’ (Pawson et al., 2004: 3)
- Seeking to identify what stories these articles tell about how policy is made and how co-production (esp. of policy-relevant knowledge) fits into it.

Our review

- Data set: Social Science Citation Index ('co-production AND policy')
- Total results: 530
- Exclusion criteria:
 - purely theoretical papers (must refer to empirical research);
 - alternative meanings of 'co-production' (eg. engineering)
 - co-production that does not involve non-service using research actors
- Papers for inclusion: currently working backwards from c. 265 *EEK*
- 2 cycle coding in NVivo
- Inclusion and coding test for inter-coder reliability, with adjudication where necessary

Co-production for policy learning: The issues

- Can the co-production and EBPM 'stories' of policy co-exist?
- What happens when policy actors are reconceptualised as stakeholders? (ie. power)
- What implicit assumptions do we have about the democratic policy-process in the 'co-production of policy analysis' story? (ie. Questioning pervasive liberal assumptions)
- Can we co-produce knowledge with policy actors in a critical manner? (ie. reformist vs revolutionary insights)
- Where is the line between advice and advocacy? What roles do/should they play in this process?
- Are there epistemological issues at play that we should surface?
- Is there a risk of elite epistemic 'capture' of co-production?
- What happens when we value outputs over process?
- How can we co-produce policy-relevant knowledge to ensure system-wide coherence?

Conclusion:

Returning to the 3 limits

1. Policymakers are subject to bounded rationality
2. Policymakers are subject to policymaking complexity
3. Political imperatives and unequal power relationships have a strong influence on policy



We need to ground our co-production methodologies in a meaningful understanding of the policy process.