Communicating Complex Ideas

Translating research into practical social and policy changes
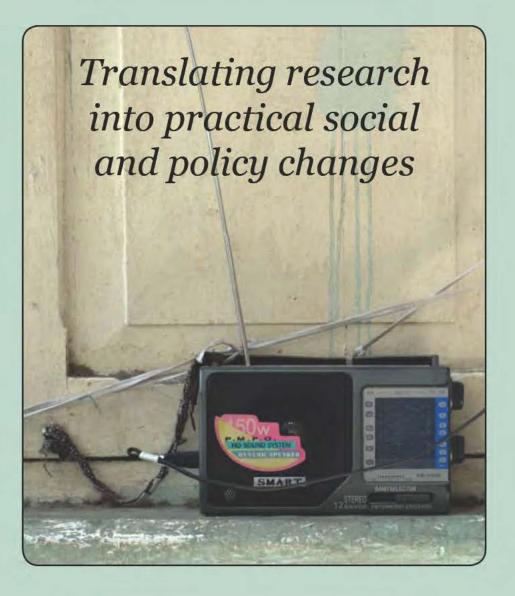
EDITED BY ENRIQUE MENDIZABAL

On Think Tanks

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Contents

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Enrique Mendizabal

Background

Researchers (and the organisations they work for) are, by their very nature, more likely to be influenced by findings emerging from research itself than by the recommendations and advice of consultants – who do not often work alongside researchers or have limited experience of academic life. Moreover, researchers are also more likely to be influenced by studies undertaken by themselves or their peers than by those carried out by researchers in contexts and with tools different to those that they are used to. These ideas guide the studies in this book.

With this in mind, I have worked to encourage (first while at the Overseas Development Institute and now independently via On Think Tanks and with the help of other initiatives such as the Global Development Network's GDNet programme) researchers in developing countries, many working within think tanks, to take on the challenge of studying the complex relationship between ideas and politics in their own disciplines and policy contexts. In books like Thinking Politics (2009) edited with Kristen Sample, and Links between Knowledge and Politics (2011) edited with Norma Correa, we have provided a space for a growing community of researchers and practitioners to explore and better understand their contexts and the manner in which this affects their work.

Frances Cleaver's and Tom Frank's 2009 paper 'Distilling or Diluting? Negotiating the Water Research-Policy Interface' provides the inspiration for this particular effort. In their paper, Cleaver and Franks outline the struggle they and other researchers faced when attempting to communicate complex ideas to policymakers. The authors offer a candid description and reflection of the dialogue between researchers and policymakers and the possible consequences of different communication approaches. Their conclusions are insightful, and are grounded on a solid understanding of the capacity challenges and limitations of working in a complex context – something that they, as researchers, need.

This volume builds on these and other efforts to encourage researchers and communicators in developing countries to embark on a similar journey. Each

chapter offers a critical analysis of the opportunities and challenges that researchers face in attempting to communicate complex ideas to different policy audiences.

The approach: research and dialogue

There are two components to the approach used in this study: research and dialogue.

The research process proposed to the authors offered ample opportunities to develop a new capacity for critical thinking in an area that is indispensable for think tanks or policy research institutes about to make choices about how they will communicate their research. Choosing the right publics to engage with, the most appropriate approaches to plan this engagement, the channels and tools that will be more effective, and the competencies and skills that may be necessary, requires more than a few guidelines, workshops and toolkits; these are skills forged in practice.

Some of the choices made by these organisations (e.g. working with the media or hiring communications experts) can have dramatic effects on their institutional make up and their relations with their stakeholders and key publics. None of these choices should be taken lightly – or swiftly. And to ensure sound and grounded choices, research centres' best option is to make use of one capacity they already master: research and analysis.

Unfortunately, the study of think tanks and of the complex relations between research and policy or of the nature of research and communication is not as popular as might be desirable if we consider what is at stake. Few research organisations in developing countries dedicate any time to reflect on their own strategies or on the nature of the research and policy communities they belong to.

But even when they do so, they face another challenge more familiar to those with spare capacity to reflect on such things: the effective communication of complex ideas is not an exact science. No amount of research will provide a set of rules that must be followed in all circumstances. The art of effective communication needs to be practiced and incorporated into an on-going dialogue , in order to learn and improve.

Therefore, the approach we took in these studies sought to encourage a dialogue between researchers and communication practitioners (ideally within the same organisation or country). It is through this dialogue (and through the dialogue with other authors, as well as with a wider audience, for instance, through blog posts) that the nuances of the opportunities and challenges that exist in communicating complex arguments to policymakers, the media, and the general public can emerge and be better understood.

In addition, by pairing up researchers and communicators, both were able to learn more about each other's work and perspectives. Therefore, the research and writing processes themselves, offered an opportunity for the authors to develop their own knowledge and capacity to work with their peers and across disciplines.

Why is this important?

Funding directed at organisations and researchers to encourage and help them to communicate their research rose between 2000 and the time of writing, 2013. A whole mini-industry of consultants has emerged in the international development sector to provide researchers and research centres in developing countries with communication and research uptake services. This impetus has been driven in part by the pressure that aid budgets across the world have been under: research funding, as well as other types of interventions, must be seen to have direct and measurable effects.

It is possible to identify the outlines of a consensus among funders, a number of consultants, international development think tanks and NGOs supporting funders in this effort . This unlikely consensus suggests that researchers and research centres need to become much better at communicating their work. This means, among other things, that they must employ savvy communication strategies, including developing more appropriate messages and employing new communication channels and tools.

These messages, the consensus suggests, need to be 'sticky', 'SMART', 'targeted', among other things. These demands are influenced by marketing literature and practice that champions clear, convincing and prioritised messages:

It is clear from the frequency with which bullet points and lists are used in water policy making and practice that they provide a popular and accessible mechanism for communicating ideas. However, the simplicity which makes them accessible is also a weakness, since they do not require the users to make the linkages and relationships between the different concepts. (Cleaver and Franks, date: 17)

This 'bullet point' approach leads to some resistance among researchers who consider that their work deals with matters that are too complicated, and often too complex, to be distilled in a few key statements, facts or tables. They claim that those who demand this are dumbing down their work – or simply do not understand it or the research process itself.

Others, like Cleaver and Franks, and the authors of the chapters in this volume, while recognising that this may only be a way of attracting the attention of their audiences, including their funders, worry that it could nonetheless make things worse in the long term. By creating the impression that these are problems that can be simplified or explained with a few statements and facts, even if only for the purpose of

communicating to new audiences or attracting the attention of key decision makers, they may be inadvertently encouraging those audiences to dumb down their thinking – or, at the very least, developing in them a false sense of understanding and power.

In the account of their experience, Cleaver and Franks suggest that it is not possible to reduce water governance to a few key messages because good decisions demand that decision makers understand that this is a complex issue. In other words, policymakers (and anyone participating in a political process) need to accept that some issues are complex and that hence it may not be possible to ever know all there is to know about the problems and the solutions under consideration. Still, they must be able to act and be ready to face new challenges and present new information as they emerge.

The cases

When choosing the cases we looked for opportunities for dialogue between the research teams and between the authors and their context. They deal with different aspects of public policy as well as different levels of public engagement. The cases in this volume include:

From Argentina: Julia Pomares from a local think tank, Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), and Laura Zommer, its former Director of Communications, critically document the experience and the challenges they faced attempting to reform electoral policy and practice in Argentina. Their case is inherently political because it deals with the manner in which democratic power is gained. They present the piloting of their ideas as a way of communicating them in practical and tangible terms.

From Indonesia: Muhammad Maulana, a Research Coordinator at Seknas FITRA and Bagus BT Saragih, a journalist at The Jakarta Post addressed an equally political challenge: budget transparency. Their case, however, presents opportunities for the use of research and communication tools not available for the Argentinean team. They pay particular attention to the role of the media as an effective medium for communicating their arguments to the general public. The media presents an opportunity to link technical arguments about the need for more budget transparency with the values of the public.

From the Middle East and the Gulf States: Ted Purinton and Amir ElSawy at the American University in Cairo focused on education reform in the Middle East and how researchers deal with different and changing local narratives about education. Their case interestingly combines national level imperatives for educational reform as well as family level values and considerations. More so than in the Indonesian case, in the Gulf, policy reform appears to be less about what policymaking bodies can do and more about what the public wants and expects.

From South Africa: Shannon Kenny and Patrick Kenny, independent

communications consultants, and Professor Anna Coutsoudis, at the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of KwaZulu-Natal, focused on a deeply personal and yet publicly contested issue: breastfeeding. Their case study is a reflective account of a campaign in which all three authors have been involved: The People, The Planet, The Can, which involved the social marketing and re-branding of breastmilk in South Africa. This case introduces the challenges involved in dealing with an issue that incorporates deeply seated personal views and opinions. It confirms the lessons emerging from Purinton's and ElSaway's analysis that policy can be as much about the beliefs and behaviours of citizens as it is about the decisions of policymakers.

From Ecuador: Stephen Sherwood, Lecturer and Research Fellow at Wageningen University, Andrea Ordóñez, former Research Director at Grupo FARO, and Myriam Paredes, Assistant Professor, at FLACSO, developed a case that somewhat mirrors the South African experience, this time centred on a rural environment. Their case focuses on the challenges scientists have faced in combating the harmful consequences of using pesticides in Ecuador. As in the South African case they deal with deeply rooted social and personal views and behaviours. It prompts the authors to explore how different discourses, global and local, experiential and scientific, theoretical and practical, have developed and play themselves out in the decisions of Ecuadorian farmers.

The cases were produced over a period of about a year – some taking longer than others. During that period, some saw several iterations influenced by a dialogue between the authors and myself, as well as, and most significantly, by changes and updates in the processes that they were writing about. When possible, these where incorporated to the final cases in this volume.

The chapters were originally presented to the broader public via posts on the blog 'On Think Tanks'. These posts outlined the main research questions that the authors would attempt to address in each chapter and shared some of their initial expectations and progress.

As the research process progressed, the authors shared draft versions and discussed their chapters with me over Skype as well as face to face with one of the Ecuadorian case authors at an international event in South Africa and during visits to Argentina and Indonesia over the course of 2012. These interactions and conversations presented opportunities to probe certain assumptions and focus the cases on issues and lessons that were emerging across the studies.

What do the cases tell us?

The cases address very different contexts and circumstances; it is difficult to compare like with like. However, they offer important common lessons that could be further presented to inform others elsewhere. Underpinning this effort were the following set of questions:

1. *Is it possible to communicate complex ideas in a manner that does not compromise their own complex nature?*
2. *What kinds of strategies are most effective?*
3. *What competencies and skills are needed?*
4. *How important is the context?*
5. *How can researchers and communicators best work together?*

The cases present a number of interesting answers to these questions. Some will not surprise, while others offer interesting new insights into this field.

1. *Is it possible to communicate a complex idea in a manner that does not compromise its own complex nature?*

Across the board, the answer is a resounding yes. However, at the core of any successful strategy and any ensuing effort, there has to be an unavoidable focus on understanding and reaching a consensus on the problem. Communicating a complicated solution is much easier when all parties understand the problem that is being tackled. This certainly works when all parties understand that a problem is complex and therefore it is impossible to know all there is about it. For example, if a policymaker does not quite understand the complex problems that fertilisers have caused (and the complex causes of those problems) then the necessary long list of interrelated actions to solve them will be difficult to grasp and politically impossible to support.

But without a good grasp on the problem, a shorter list will not do, either. Not only will it be unable to address all the challenges that need to be solved to be successful but it will also convey the false impression that the problem may not be as complex as research has found it to be. The more politically charged challenges faced by the cases, such as the Argentinean electoral reform, highlight the dangers that a poor understanding of the problem, by all parties involved, could present for them and their organisations.

Once the problem has been addressed it is easier to move on to the solution (or solutions). All the cases suggest that it is possible to communicate these effectively but the researchers and their organisations may have to consider the following:

• adopting new strategies and practices that they are not normally used to;
• ensuring that communicators are better engaged and involved in the process to ensure that they properly understand the ideas, as well as the assumptions and methods employed to develop them; and
• acknowledging that the nature of the challenge demands far more realistic timeframes and patience about their possible influence.

2. What kinds of strategies are more effective?

Since the early 2000s I have worked to develop processes, frameworks, and tools to help researchers to maximise the impact of their influencing efforts. These frameworks are intended to guide researchers through a number of steps for planning, monitoring and evaluating policy influencing. Over the same time period , new jargon has emerged, for instance, 'theories of change', 'value for money', 'impact assessments'. They all, in their own ways, assume that it is possible to plan, before the event, how, what and when change should happen.

Interestingly, none of the strategies described in the cases were implemented as planned. In fact, there were hardly any strategies to talk about at the time when the initiatives began. The cases from Argentina and South Africa, for example, show that there was an objective, an intention, and improvised or opportunistic action before there was any sense of a strategy – or even the attempt to develop one. The organisations and the people involved adapted their actions to changes in their environment and to new information that became available as they engaged in the process.

At each step of this process they incorporated new team members or adopted new tactics. They even changed the roles they were playing and corrected their objectives. At each step, too, new partnerships were formed, and with them, again, came new objectives, resources, plans and ideas. Each step also presented new challenges that demanded new knowledge, and therefore new disciplines and experiences to be incorporated into the research effort, the teams, and their partnerships. The case of electoral reform in Argentina is illustrative of this point. As new doors opened for the think tank to affect change, new and more significant risks emerged as well. In other words, with greater influence came greater risk.

Could they have predicted what would happen and plan accordingly? It would have been impossible for the researchers and communicators to predict what would happen at the beginning of their work. Nor how long it would take to achieve the desired change. Even now, the cases present a number of unknowns and do not offer sure or certain recommendations for future action.

Overall then, the most appropriate strategies appear to be ones that are flexible and opportunistic, dynamic and open-ended. Rather than a list of good practices, the cases support a focus on the right people and the right skills to deal with uncertainty.

3. What competencies and skills are needed for these types of strategies?

The cases suggest that to be successful, or to be at least capable of success, researchers must rely on others. Across the experiences, it is teams rather than

individuals who take the central role. These teams, however, demand a number of skills and expertise that are not always found in individual research centres. Based on the findings from the cases, teams need to be:

- Multi-skilled. Good researchers have to work with good communicators and managers. As the process unfolds, teams should also be able to accommodate new members with the necessary skills to deal with the new opportunities and challenges that emerge.

- Multi-disciplinary. Complex problems are better explained using different disciplines at once – and their different methods and tools. Education reform in the Middle East, for example, demands an understanding of economic, social (including religious and kinship), and political factors. Most complex problems, too, have a long history that could be better explored by historians. The case of Ecuador on the use of fertilisers also illustrates the importance of employing several disciplinary lenses to understand and describe the challenge at hand.

  The solutions for these problems are equally dependent on a multi-disciplinary approach. The technical aspects of the solution, as well as the manner in which the solution is communicated both demand methods and tools from different disciplines.

- Multi-partner. Teams made up of individuals with different backgrounds and teams from different organisations may be, at the very least, equally suited for dealing with complex problems as a team from the same organisation. In none of the cases studied was a single actor solely responsible for the desired change. Seeking reform across a range of unrelated players is something that a single organisation would be unlikely to deliver, as it would have to be equally influential across a range of policy spaces and actors, which is unrealistic.

  Working with others is a more appropriate approach. This, however, demands organisational competencies and individual skills that not many people and centres posses. Finding the right partners and managing the relationships is also a challenge by itself.

- Common skills. The cases also suggest that all the parties involved must have some common skills that facilitate communication between them. To collaborate across backgrounds, disciplines and organisations there have to be elements in common shared by all. These may be shared objectives, a common interest or understanding of the policy issue or idea, or, at least, a working understanding of each other's professions.   But the most promising teams are those that engage with each others' skills and experience and take full advantage of their coming together.

- Common knowledge. Certainly, all members must understand the ideas being communicated. They must also understand the context in which they are communicating or, more importantly, they need to be able to improve their understanding as they communicate their ideas.

4. How important is the context? Is it external?

Unsurprisingly, the context emerges as a key factor in these studies of the effort to communicate complex ideas. Not only does it shape the authors' practice, but can also go a long way in helping to understand their position. In Ecuador, South Africa, and the Middle East, contextual factors such as local culture and values, are central to the authors' analytical frameworks. In fact, this is the principal focus of the chapter on education reform in the Middle East and the Gulf States.

A key implication emerges from the cases: context, often presented as external or exogenous to the organisations and to their communicating or influencing efforts, can be just as easily seen as an internal or endogenous factor.

The 'context', best exemplified by the rules, culture, and values of the population in Ecuador, the Middle East, and in South Africa, was precisely what the initiatives were attempting to affect. At the same time, those leading the initiatives belong and, in varying degrees, participate in that same context – its rules, culture, and values.

As a consequence, we should rethink how we treat contextual factors, reassessing how they affect both the interventions, and change itself. If the context is not external and separate to the organisations and individuals involved then it should not be taken as a constant to be studied separately or in isolation to the initiative. Neither can those involved in an initiative be considered independent of their context. Their motivations, the choices they make in relation to the definition of the problem and the objectives, the strategies, and tactics pursued, their choice of partners and collaborators, and their broader interactions with others, need to be incorporated into the study of the context.

The literature from developed countries about the links between research and policy in developing countries has emphasised, by the manner in which it has sought to study the relationship, a separation between politics and research and between politics and policy. Taken as a whole, it argues that policy is better informed by research when the communities of researchers, policymakers and politicians are brought together by a metaphorical bridge and connected by specialised professionals and mechanisms – sometimes called knowledge managers or brokers. Proponents of this view argue that these communities inhabit different spaces, are governed by entirely different institutions, and that they have fundamental differences that make it difficult for both to collaborate with each other without external help or the adoption of new ways of working.

The practice and interventions that this literature informs become, therefore , equally compartmentalised. Some of the following terms and concepts are common in this sector and illustrate this view of separate communities and spaces: supply, demand and intermediaries; bridging research and policy; research to action; research to practice; evidence based policy in development; research uptake; research into use.

A consequence of this compartmentalisation is that policy minded researchers, think tanks, and other civil society organisations are often singled out as the force for change; the protagonists in their own stories of change.

They become, at least for the purpose of these accounts of policy change, somehow more enlightened than their peers working in policymaking bodies, the media or the private sector. They, and not the others, are the agents of change. In fact, we know that they share the same economic, social and economic space as these other actors: there are strong familiar, social and professional relationships between researchers, policymakers, journalists, activists, and business people. And we also know that these are not passive agents. They, too, have agendas and missions of change.
The cases show conclusively that researchers and communicators are active members and participants of the very same context they are attempting to affect. They also suggest that to be successful they must make further efforts to engage with it and with its other participants. The differences between them, for instance, between those supporting and those opposing a different approach to breast milk in South Africa – or to fertilisers in Ecuador – should not be taken to mean that they belong to different communities. Instead, they are common differences within the same groups.

The South African case, for example, provides a good illustration of this. The authors describe how several friends and family members of the team often disagreed with their views regarding breast milk. Similarly, a large part of the South African story refers to the transformation that the researchers and the communicators went through themselves. Without this change, the effort that ensued would not have been possible.

The context, then, is central to the stories and ever present within the organisations and teams involved. It is, at the same time, the objective of the interventions: the very same thing they attempt to change.

5. *How best can researchers and communicators work together?*

Another aspect of the compartmentalisation of the communities for ideas and politics is the separation of research and communication practice. This separation has a clear implication for the manner in which research projects and research organisations are set up. Researchers and communicators rarely work together as a matter of course. Instead, the latter are brought in to communicate final research outputs or to support with specific tasks related to publication design or formatting, or the organisation of events.

This assumes that the tasks involved in both sets of activities are entirely separate and can be carried out in isolation with or, at the very least, with limited interaction with each other. The cases show that this is not necessarily so. Research and communication are deeply connected in a number of ways that demand a re-think of the way that organisations and teams are set up:

- Personal skills. At the individual level, all researchers have to communicate. While they may not be in charge of packaging their studies or shooting a video they must still communicate their ideas to fellow researchers, organise teams, interpret and share their findings, write reports and papers, etc. The entire research process is a communicative one. And something similar can be said of communicators. To develop the right communication strategy they need to study their context and audiences, the issue they are addressing, the research they are using, etc. A good communications strategy, like a policy recommendation, has a strong 'research' base.

- Feedback. The research process is full of opportunities for feedback – and learning. All research projects involve a number of phases or steps that present several opportunities for others to get involved, for researchers to incorporate their views, and for communicators (and others) to affect the research process.

  These feedback moments bring researchers face to face with communications challenges and with communicators.

- Outputs. When researchers talk of the 'outputs' of their research they are in fact referring to the channels and tools that communicators use. The academic paper is a communication tool – it is a type of publication. A press release is no less a research output than a paper, albeit one that is more likely to be put together by a communicator than by a researcher. And there lies the crux of the matter: some types of research outputs are more commonly employed by researchers and others by communicators, but they are no less communication tools.

Again, it is not always possible to separate communication outputs from the research process. When a researcher decides to undertake a literature review it is also defining a communication output, namely, the written summary of their review of different literature. Case studies, briefing papers, and background notes have their own structures and writing styles that respond to both communication and research requirements. An econometric study can be presented in a number of ways, all of which are communication tools: tables, diagrams, academic papers, to name a few. Even the design of survey questionnaires and the wording of specific questions demand careful attention to communication concerns.

These deep connections point towards a necessary integration of both practices across an organisation – and in the design and execution of research projects.

Conclusions

The cases present a new take on the 'stories of change' approach often used to show or illustrate how research has been used to influence policy. Instead, they offer an opportunity to reflect on the manner in which different elements of an effort to inform policy change come together and how two key participants, researchers and communicators, can support each other.

The book as a whole presents an approach to encourage further reflection within and across research organisations, which could support their own learning efforts. This kind of critical analysis of an experience or a policy challenge has the potential to unravel the complex nature of the relationship between researchers and communicators as well as to offer useful insights to improve it.

The research and writing process itself presents an opportunity for researchers and communicators to explore each other's roles and learn how to work together in the future. Therefore, the approach used here – dialogue, critical thinking and adaptive responses – will also be useful for any other organisations wanting to increase their capacity for research communications.

Advocating for Electoral Reform in Argentina

María Page, Julia Pomares, Laura Zommer and Dolores Arrieta

Introduction

The Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) is a non-partisan think tank founded in 2000 that seeks to improve the quality of public policies. Its evidence-informed, policy-oriented research projects are implemented in the fields of social development (health, social protection and education), economic development (fiscal policy, international integration and trade) and democracy and institutional strengthening (public management, transparency, political institutions, justice and human rights).

Since 2008, CIPPEC has been working on the promotion of a reform in voting procedures aimed at replacing the French ballot system – in use since the enactment of the universal suffrage in early twentieth century – with the Australian ballot: a single ballot containing all candidates and parties. By promoting this change, CIPPEC strives to achieve a more equal electoral competition. The initiative has gone through different phases since 2008, driven as much by the goal of electoral reform as by opportunities, achievements and failures. This chapter seeks to share, analyse and discuss CIPPEC´s experience in advocating for electoral reform in Argentina. Specifically, the chapter sheds light on the various challenges, risks and choices the project team faced as a consequence of being involved in different stages of the policymaking process, as well as the different literature encountered, and strategies and communication tools employed along the way. It also considers how, if any, different communication and research approaches could have improved CIPPEC's advocacy and impact.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical perspective from which we approach the case study. Section 3 provides a brief account of CIPPEC´s project, how it started and changed over time, who the participants were, and the context in which it was implemented. It also discusses the implications of engaging in evidence-based advocacy to promote electoral reform: a realm that is inherently political, because it involves the rules of political competition. By building on CIPPEC´s experience promoting electoral reform, Section 4 discusses the different

roles think tanks can play in the policy process when advocating for governance reforms, as well as the dilemmas, risks and choices. Section 5 presents and discusses the different communication strategies and tools the project team adopted during the project, as CIPPEC's role and engagement in the policy process changed over time. Finally, the last section presents some lessons learned on communicating complex ideas when the rules of the political game are at stake.

Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical approach to this study of research uptake and communication in Argentina. Three main issues are presented here. First, we delve into our working definition of research uptake – and the relationship between research and policy. Second, we get into the specific features of research uptake with regard to governance reforms. As it will be argued, the challenging nature of this policy field (the change in political rules) shapes the research–policy dialogue and might explain the lack of research uptake in governance policy, when compared with other policy sectors (e.g. health, education, etc). Third, we present current thinking on the role of research in different stages of the policy process. This is important since one of the main issues of this study is about the tensions inherent in getting involved in policy dialogue during several different stages of the policy process.

Defining research uptake: beyond evidence

First, in line with recent developments in the field (see Sanderson 2004), we assume that the role of research in the policy process is not well understood through the lens of the evidence-based policy (hereafter EBP) movement. The EBP literature has a normative inclination. This involves the implicit assumption that the diffusion and application of knowledge is devoid of biases, interests or normative choices: an assumption that obscures an understanding of the object of study and narrows the potential impact of this research in practice. That is why this study will refer to knowledge instead of evidence: because there is a risky tendency to think of evidence as value-free world (as having objective value).Instead, the more complex category of knowledge has suggestions of the value-laden world of politics (and of subjective values) (Simons 2004).

Conceiving of knowledge (and its production) as a non-linear process makes us also question the definition of power implied by the first wave of EBP analyses. Their strong emphasis on the instrumental role of research, and hence on the impact of research on actual decisions obscures the 'invisible' ways in which power is exerted. There is an increasing consensus about the different ways to use research; not only as instrumental to, but also in shaping, policy narratives (Weiss 1979; Keeley and Scoones 2000; Landry, Lamari, et al. 2003; Nutley, Walker et al. 2003). In our approach, scientific knowledge is only one of several rival forces shaping the policy process –the term evidence-inspired policymaking has been proposed to account better for this fact (Duncan 2005) – and it is a force that proactively seeks to make research a key building block of policy formulation.

(Lack of) research uptake in governance policies

Based on this idea of research uptake, we turn to the specific role of research in governance policies. Compared to other policy domains, there are only embryonic studies of the ways governance policy is grounded in scientific research. More general knowledge about better governance also rarely affects policy making in this area (Faundez 2005), which might be a closely related fact. The 'governance' agenda (as promoted by several large international financial institutions) has a strong normative flavour: for example, the basic axiom that better governance fosters poverty reduction and economic growth is taken as an assumption in most development and policy circles, but is increasingly contested in the emerging empirical literature. The scientific weaknesses of a normative approach might undermine the strength of conclusions and, therefore, possibilities for research uptake. Significantly, governance reforms are of an inherently political nature – insofar as the rules of the political game are the main target of the reforms. As such, political interests play a key role in their design and implementation (Peters 1997), which proportionally downplays the role of research. In such a context, the need for producing systematic knowledge on the reform of governance policy is essential: indeed, it has been acknowledged in both academic and policy publications. This case study is one attempt to address this gap.

The largest body of work on research communication affecting governance policies is related to assessing the impact of the work of human rights organisations (Franklin 2008; Ron, Ramos, et al.2005). These studies, however, assume that communication strategies are irrelevant to the research uptake: they focus on the number of reports published (and whether there is an increase in the number of reports taken up by the media) but not on contents of the media strategy: for example, which media are targeted? What is the timing of the strategy? Finally, the work of Garcé and others (2006; Garcé 2007; Mendizabal and Sample 2009) on Latin American think tanks looks at the links between political parties and think tanks: a link that is key to understand the role of research in various governance policies. Garcé's paper shows that Uruguayan think tanks are few, unstable and not very influential. One of the explanations advanced is that their existence is part of the survival strategy of some political leaders and, as such, they depend on their political careers. Bearing in mind that, in the Uruguayan case, weakly institutionalised think tanks coexist with a highly institutionalised party system (albeit with ideologically heterogeneous factions), an interesting question to analyse is whether think tanks in developing countries proliferate in the absence (or presence) of a robust party system. From our case study, we hypothesise that the less entrenched party system in Argentina has given way to the more prominent role of think tanks. This helps to explain the significant presence of CIPPEC during the electoral policy debate at stake here.

Research uptake across stages of the policy process[1]

Research uptake is different at each moment of the policy process. First, knowledge actors (such as researchers and funders of research) appear to be successful in raising

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1   This section builds on Jones, Pomares and Pellini with Datta (2009).

a problem for policy discussion through innovative thinking and systematic evidence (the agenda-setting stage). The role of knowledge brokers (or 'boundary workers' in Robert Hoppe´s definition) is particularly important at this stage because early interaction between knowledge producers and users facilitates trust (MacIennan and More 1999) and paves the way for better dissemination of research findings once research production is completed (Balthasar and Rieder 2000).

The second conceptual stage of the policy process, policy formulation is the definitional political moment in which elected politicians define the intended policy. This does not mean that knowledge at this point is not important but it competes with a range of factors with the potential to shape policy decisions (organised economic and political interests, among others). Moreover, at this stage 'public opinion' (the voices of ordinary citizens captured by surveys) may play a key role in shaping policy preferences. In governance issues that involve highly political interests (such as public administration reforms or decentralisation) this is the main phase of discussion, and often takes place behind closed doors. Knowledge actors outside of this loop might therefore find it difficult to attract attention from political actors.

In a further stage of the policy process, implementation, knowledge can be successful in shaping how policy is applied. At this stage, research is used to solve problems. In other words, when a problem has been identified and the outcomes of a policy have been formulated, scientific knowledge can shed light on the best strategy to deal with it.

Finally, although there is a growing role for research institutions in policy evaluation initiatives, knowledge is less influential at the evaluation stage than at other stages of the policy process. This aspect is less explored in the literature, although some clues about why this is the case can be drawn from the body of work we examined. Some authors point to the mismatched timeframes of researchers and policymakers as one of the key factors behind policymakers not endorsing policy evaluation (Spangaro 2007): research evaluation often takes more time than that available by policymakers.

Electoral reform in Argentina

In Argentina, electoral administration is decentralised into 24 constituent units (23 provinces and the City of Buenos Aires). Each district can decide its own electoral rules (including voting procedures). Since the beginning of universal suffrage in 1912, the French voting system has been employed at both national and provincial elections. The French system or the 'ballot and envelope' model has individual ballots for each party or candidate, with each voter submitting one vote into each ballot box (usually in an envelope). Each political party prints, distributes and supplies its own ballots on Election Day. This system used to work fairly effectively while there were two main parties of relatively equal size, territorial outreach and resources.[2] But after the 2001 socioeconomic and political crisis, extreme party fragmentation rendered this voting system archaic, ineffective and inequitable. There are now so many

2   These two parties were the Peronist Party and the Radical Party.

different ballots that it endangers the prospects for casting an informed vote. Ballot theft has proliferated and small parties find it difficult to guarantee their ballot is on the table. Therefore, bigger parties and incumbents enjoy an important advantage due to broader capabilities for printing, distributing and watching over their ballots.

The issue has been in and out of the public agenda since 2003 (specifically, it is 'in' shortly after elections and 'out' the rest of the time). Opposition parties and some NGOs like Poder Ciudadano have led the demand for keeping the issue on the table. Some have advocated for moving to electronic voting (tested in some provinces in 2003 for the first time), and others for the adoption of an 'Australian' (as it was named after its introduction in the United States in the 1860s) or single ballot. In the Australian ballot system, voters mark their choice (either with a cross or by writing the name of the candidate) on a single ballot listing all the options. In this system, the election authority is responsible for printing and disseminating ballots.

In the 2007 Argentinian national election, there were numerous accusations of ballot theft and a serious shortage of ballot monitoring by opposition parties. The election process that resulted in Cristina Fernandez being elected as President suffered several logistical problems, especially a lack of ballot papers for opposition parties in the main districts. According to allegations by opposition parties, the theft of their ballot papers affected their share of the vote. It is in this context that support for the adoption of the single ballot resurged, and CIPPEC joined in. Although we had never produced any evidence on the issue before, we published a policy brief and several opinion articles detailing the theoretical arguments for adopting the Australian system (Straface and Onisczczuk 2009).

Logistical problems at the national level were coupled with severe problems at the provincial level. These provinces did not adhere to a law that required simultaneity of ballots, and instead held elections prior to the October national race. This was the case in the large province of Córdoba, where the incumbent vice-governor won the governorship by a margin of 1%of the vote. After the preliminary tally of results was announced, the candidate in second place (Luis Juez) denounced the process as fraudulent and made several public appearances calling for the recount of every vote cast. In the end, the final tally confirmed the preliminary result, but it took more than a month for the final result to be accepted, and Córdoba's Supreme Court had to intervene to solve the case. This process eroded the legitimacy of the electoral process.[3]

At that time, too, there was a single, unifying argument put forward in support of switching the ballot system: the French ballot voting system leads to an unequal electoral competition because larger parties and incumbents find it easier than smaller parties to print, distribute and watch over their ballots. In spite of this argument, the national government continued to be reluctant to consider the change,

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[3]   Only three months after Election Day, the elected governor set up an Experts' Committee aimed at 'formulating a proposal of political-electoral reform leading to its modernisation and strengthening.' One of the key recommendations of its final report was that voting procedures should change towards the implementation of the Australian ballot (Comisión Consultiva de Expertos 'Así no vamás').

and, over time, the issue disappeared from the public agenda.

By 2009, the future of CIPPEC´s Democratic Institutions programme, which had taken on the issue, was seriously compromised due to a comprehensive lack of funding. In prior years, obtaining funds from international cooperation donors to carry out applied research and advocacy on electoral policy issues had become increasingly difficult to secure for NGOs and think tanks in Argentina. Being a middle-income country that held free elections regularly since 1983, Argentina had become an unattractive candidate for cooperation funds, which usually support the strengthening of democracy initiatives. While there are issues that need to be addressed in order to grant equity and transparency in electoral competition and thus promote electoral competitiveness and turnover, we also celebrate that the country has succeeded to guarantee the legitimacy of electoral processes. In 2013, our evaluation still stands: political competitiveness has waned, party turnover is becoming rarer and there is still a lot of room for improvement. However, the basic definition of democracy is not under risk in Argentina. Our main argument here was (and still is): after thirty years of uninterrupted democracy, we should not settle for the achievement of free and fair elections. We should aim for equal electoral competition.

Meanwhile, most local organisations were also suffering from a general shortage of resources. Many civil society organisations had decreased in size, in part as a result of lack of funding. As a consequence, there were very few independent authoritative voices to address electoral reform issues. This was a void waiting to be filled.

At this opportune moment, CIPPEC staff found out about an initiative from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was meant to support democratic strengthening projects, which had never yet been granted in Argentina. We saw this as a chance to rebuild CIPPEC's electoral agenda. The apparent need for change in the voting system provided us with a good topic but, unfortunately, our Democratic Institutions programme[4] had just been closed down. CIPPEC's executive committee asked the Politics and Public Management programme (P&PM) to lead the design of the new project and develop a proposal. This project paved the way for the specialisation of the P&PM programme towards electoral issues.

The P&PM programme was led by Fernando Straface (at the time of writing, Executive Director of CIPPEC). The project, coordinated by María Page, was seen as an opportunity to open a new agenda on democratic good governance and to start working with international cooperation funding. Technical assistance projects to governments, in which governments hire CIPPEC for training planning units or helping them to develop monitoring and evaluation systems, usually keep the programme well-funded, so CIPPEC'S executive committee had little incentive to prioritise this programme when it came to international cooperation funding opportunities. The P&PM programme was created in 2008, so fairly new at

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4   The Programme on Democratic Institutions had been led by María Inés Tula, a renowned expert in electoral institutions and put in place some successful initiatives (such as the change in electoral system in Santa Fe mentioned below) and had left the institution at that moment.

CIPPEC, and its work experience was more related to public management issues than to electoral affairs. So we started by recognising that, although we had a solid research team, we needed the input of an expert to frame the issue (and the project) effectively. We decided to look for a partner that could provide expertise in the electoral policy field and we approached the Di Tella University through Professor Ana María Mustapic, a highly recognised scholar who was a member of CIPPEC's Advisory Board. Thus we put together a team that combined expertise, seniority, public recognition and the research muscle to provide timely answers. The funding application was successful and a one-year project on Promoting the Single Ballot was launched in early 2009. This marks the beginning of CIPPEC's formal engagement with this issue: an engagement that continues today.

Sitting on every side of the desk: can think tanks be involved in different stages of the policy process about the same issue?

Of course, there were problems we had to override, decisions we had to make and dilemmas we had to face when trying to seize different opportunities, even at the cost of risking to fall, or effectively falling, into serious conflicts of interest. There were pros and cons, tensions, gains and losses, ones we evaluated beforehand as well as those we did not foresee. We can divide our involvement in the electoral reform into four stages:

1. *During 2009, we focused on raising awareness of the importance of changing the voting system (**agenda-setting stage**). Our success here derived from the way we framed the issue.*

2. *In late 2009, the National Congress decided to pass electoral legislation and our role turned towards lobbying legislators and opinion leaders about the benefits of adopting the single ballot (**policy-formulation stage**). We did not succeed in convincing incumbent legislators about changing national legislation.*

3. *A window of opportunity opened when the provincial Congress in Santa Fe (the third largest district in the country) adopted the single ballot and called CIPPEC for technical assistance (**implementation stage**).*

4. *In a second phase of the project, at the request of the Government of Santa Fe, CIPPEC conducted an evaluation of the single ballot system, which was used at the 2011 elections (**evaluation stage**).*

In all, CIPPEC were involved in several stages of the policy process, covering the whole life cycle of this reform. As such, our experience provides quite a unique perspective for the analysis of electoral reforms, and also for a broader understanding of the role of think tanks in general, and CIPPEC in particular.

Re-setting the agenda: same old issue; brand new perspective

The first challenge was raising awareness about the importance of a feature of electoral systems usually downplayed by public opinion leaders and the media (and also by academics!): namely, the consequences of the way we cast a ballot. Ana María Mustapic, Professor of Political Science at Di Tella University, and member of the Advisory Board of CIPPEC, played a key role in our success at this stage. She helped us to reshape our approach to the issue. We decided to adopt a political rights perspective, and to reframe our message in terms of citizens' rights. We are also convinced that this change of perspective was critical for obtaining the German Embassy Fund, since that initiative has a strong emphasis on political rights.

Once we settled on the message, we invested resources in producing new knowledge about the issue, even while we knew it wasn't on the public agenda at that moment. We conducted mock elections in several train stations and public spaces in Buenos Aires, where we asked people to test the single ballot, and to answer a question about usability and their confidence in the single ballot. In order to do so, we also turned to academia. A well-known professor and pollster at Di Tella University, Carlos Gervasoni, was in charge of training the people working on the mock polling stations and conducting the survey. Surprisingly, this research showed no concerns about the change in voting procedures, and that the single ballot was perceived as a more user-friendly voting method.

Later in 2009, when the government decided to discuss electoral reform, we had quantitative data to support our position. Thus, when the time came, our investment paid off in terms of legitimacy and we succeeded in being recognised as single ballot experts and champions by key stakeholders, as well as by specialised journalists.

Policy formulation: is there any chance of being heard when the rules of the game are at stake?

In late 2009, the national government launched a 'Political Dialogue' to discuss changes to electoral legislation. The main argument put forward by the government was that the party system was suffering from extreme fragmentation and there was a strong need for a change. Several meetings with a broad set of actors – ranging from election administration officers and legislators to think tanks, NGOs and academics – were held in order to debate the ambitious electoral reform now promoted by the national government. CIPPEC produced a policy brief that presented our main findings and aimed to advocate for the single ballot, within the context of the consultation process (Mustapic and Straface 2009).

By the end of 2009, a wide electoral reform bill was passed (Law 26,571) including substantial changes regarding the candidate selection mechanism, political financing and the voters' register, but completely omitted the voting procedures. Needless to say, we were very disappointed. Why, in spite of being recognised as credible champions on the subject by key actors, were our arguments taken into consideration

only by those who had a particular political gain in promoting the single ballot, and dismissed by others? How could we take advantage of the expedient political context and build a wider consensus on electoral equity and consistency of electoral rules?

During the legislative debates of the Law 26,571, several opposition parties raised the issue about the need to include the change in voting procedures in the reform package. They mentioned CIPPEC to legitimise their claims. Our arguments were taken up only by opposition parties, presumably because they were convinced that the single ballot would put them on more favourable ground for the electoral competition, and would increase their vote share. The incumbent party, on the other hand, insisted there was nothing wrong with the current voting procedures. When approached by the press, government officials argued that ballot theft was only anecdotal, and that the implementation of the single ballot was unfeasible as the number of parties was too large to fit it into a single ballot. In response, we produced a new policy brief that focused on ballot design and implementation issues, building on international experience and an analysis of key local actors' perceptions (including their fears and reservations about a change in the voting system) (Mustapic, Scherlis and Page 2010).

Opportunely, our research strategy coincided with the political strategy of the main (Peronist) provincial opposition party in Santa Fe. While, at the national level, the Peronist Party resisted electoral change, the incumbent Peronist senators of the province of Santa Fe decided to approve a change in the voting procedures by passing a bill (originally issued by the governing coalition, and led by Governor Binner from the Socialist Party) in the last legislative session of 2010.

Why did they do this? To understand this, it is necessary to explore the different types of ballot design in single ballot systems. One is a ballot in which all the different, simultaneous electoral competitions – the two relevant here are for the governorship and for the senate – are included on the same piece of paper. This design can also include an option to select the same party for all races. The other design incorporates a separate ballot for each race, with the option to select any of the running parties. The proposal presented by the coalition government was of the second type. It has been demonstrated by several authors (e.g. Rusk 1970) that using different ballots for different races increases split-ticket voting (voting for different parties in each different race).

The Peronist senators of Santa Fe presumably anticipated that adopting the single balloting system with each different competition included in a separate ballot–would enhance their electoral performance in the next provincial election. This could be because they did not have a strong candidate for governor of Santa Fe, and so they could not rely on riding the coattails of a popular candidate; split-ticket voting would be to their advantage.

Our analysis conducted after the election – comparing election results in Santa Fe and Córdoba – confirms that including all competitions on the same piece of paper

discourages split-ticket voting, and weakens 'coattail' effects: when one popular candidate in an election attracts votes for other members of the same political party (Leiras and Calvo 2011). This is because it focuses voters on the individual circumstances of different races, and encourages selections on the basis of general assumptions about parties. The previous French ballot and envelope system also included all competitions on the same piece of paper. Thus, the Peronist senators preferred to use a system that split the competitions over separate ballots – even if it was a single ballot – because it would better enable them to secure support for the seats for the Senate only rather than being undermined by their party's weak candidate for governor. Thus, unexpectedly, Santa Fe's Socialist government faced a puzzling dilemma: to implement the single ballot in record time (only three months were left before the beginning of the provincial electoral process) or to postpone the implementation by imposing a partial veto on a bill legitimately issued by the governing coalition. They decided to take the risk of implementing a new system.

From advocacy to implementation: challenges and pitfalls of crossing the line

It was Christmas Eve 2010 when the Executive Director of CIPPEC[5] received a call from the Governor of Santa Fe asking for CIPPEC's support in the implementation of the single ballot at the 2011 elections.[6] It was not an easy decision for CIPPEC, since the issue was politically sensitive and also because CIPPEC had never before worked in the implementation of an electoral reform in a large district. Also, it would be the first time that CIPPEC would provide technical assistance to a government on electoral issues. It was definitely a big risk that had the potential to go badly and damage the overall reputation of the organisation. However, the benefits were also tempting and potentially large: promoting one of CIPPEC's key reform proposals on the ground, as well as the opportunity to support the work of the only Socialist provincial government in Argentina. The latter would certainly contribute to our overall strategy of positioning CIPPEC as a player that works with the whole political spectrum, and not just with centre-right parties, as was a common public perception of the organisation since its founding in 2000. At the same time, how could CIPPEC decline the invitation from a governor to support a good cause (at least, through CIPPEC's lens)?

We decided to get involved and take on these substantial risks because of two main reasons. First, we knew that the experience would give us access to new and very

useful information regarding the implementation of a key political change. Second, we wanted to support the one and only government that was keen to implement the reform we had promoted for so long (even though the reform had taken the Government of Santa Fe completely by surprise).

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5   In early 2010, Fernando Straface became Executive Director of CIPPEC. In October 2010, Julia Pomares joined CIPPEC as the Director of the Politics and Public Management programme.

6   According to the Electoral Law 12,367, Mandatory Open Primary Elections were held on 14 August, 2011.

We knew it was risky and we felt very exposed, but we also felt that getting involved in the implementation when we had actively worked to identify the issue, proposed a reform to address it, and promoted change was very different from being hired to implement any other random policy. In a way, we felt legitimised by our previous work.

The decision to get involved in the implementation of the reform brought about a new challenge. In addition to communicating complex ideas related to the reform itself, we would now have to communicate our role in the process. Would our independence and equanimity come under question? What could we do to prevent that risk? Did we foresee all the implications of working with a government?

The decision to provide technical assistance to the implementation of the first experience of using single ballot in Argentina was internally discussed, and there were no strong detractors amongst the directors who are part of CIPPEC's Executive Committee. The fact that the initiative was to be undertaken by the Socialist Government of Santa Fe (recognised as a trustworthy administrator) probably gave confidence to many. Progress was made in the full knowledge that there were unprecedented risks, and hard work ahead, and little time to do it in.

During the implementation process, CIPPEC did not create formal spaces to analyse or discuss what the organisation was doing, or risking in terms of reputation. However, several informal talks between the Executive Director, the Director of the P&PM programme and the Director of Communications were held. With the wisdom of hindsight, we acknowledge that this might not have been an open enough discussion, because a number of conflicts could have arisen and we were not fully prepared to deal with a crisis caused by political actors opposing the single ballot or the local or national media.

However, in the circumstances, the key to the project's success was that CIPPEC's legitimacy in Santa Fe was not questioned by any of the relevant political actors or the media. In the social imagination, CIPPEC had no affinity with socialism, and this turned out to be an assurance both for the government and for our organisation. In addition, the research on the provincial electoral system CIPPEC had undertaken in the 2004 electoral campaign, along with the candidates from the main political parties, as well as journalists and academics from Santa Fe who built public consensus around the abandonment of the provincial electoral system gave confidence to all the actors involved. In short, CIPPEC had been working in Santa Fe for almost a decade and had proved its ability to converse with various stakeholders; the previous years of research and advocacy for the single ballot assured others of CIPPEC's technical reliability.

At this stage, CIPPEC sought to further strengthen the government's position by producing several outreach materials, which were reviewed and approved by the provincial Electoral Tribunal: a handbook for voters, a handbook for poll workers and a short educational video on how to cast a ballot using the new voting procedure. We also conducted face-to-face training for 2,043 poll workers in the capital of the

province (Santa Fe city) and the largest city (Rosario), as well as in several small cities throughout the province.

The education effort was successful, and the election went ahead under the new system. Soon after the election, a small dispute over the election result arose. A small party claimed a seat, using as supporting evidence a couple of quotes from the CIPPEC voters handbook and pointing at a contradiction between this and electoral laws. The response from the provincial government came quickly. It surprised us, and threw the risks and potential pitfalls of working with government into sharp relief. The provincial government issued a press release saying that seats are allocated based exclusively on electoral legislation and that the contents of the handbook were the sole responsibility of CIPPEC and not the government.

We were unprepared for this moment of political tension, and worried it would have negative implications for the single ballot but, fortunately for CIPPEC, good news came soon afterwards. The accusing political party's lawyers were referring to the provincial electoral law quoted in the handbook, and the alleged contradiction related to a contradiction between two different provincial laws, and not to a mistake in CIPPEC's interpretation. Since there were no solid foundations for the claim, the dispute ended soon afterwards.

Providing internal evaluation: coping with actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest

In late 2011, after successfully disseminating the outreach materials, the government of Santa Fe asked us for a second phase of technical assistance in which we would design and administer a survey on the day of the election to assess the perceptions of voters about the new voting procedure. This idea was brought to the table by CIPPEC and was backed up by a survey already conducted by the organisation in the province of Salta, where electronic voting had been implemented for the first time in April 2011. We were keen to produce systematic data about voters' perspectives on the single ballot. We were also eager to compare the results of both surveys. But was it appropriate for CIPPEC to participate in both the implementation and the evaluation of the initiative?

The decision to take part in the evaluation, despite having also participated in the implementation, while not ideal, was influenced by our agenda, and our need to generate information to recommend improvements for this or other districts. Also, being part of the evaluation guaranteed us the access to the data. The conflict of interest was obvious, and it was always made clear and explicit. We think this issue was more problematic for the researchers involved than for any other actors, because no one questioned nor doubted CIPPECs' credibility during the earlier intervention. It was assumed that, during the evaluation, researchers and technical advisors would be able to expose and criticise their own recommendations if they had made mistakes.

Communicating complex ideas across the policy process: different roles, strategies and tools

So, how did our communications strategy and tools work in practice?

CIPPEC's initial policy brief, mainly addressed to journalists and politicians, did not achieve its goal to install the issue as a political priority, as per our agenda-setting objectives. However, it did give researchers the opportunity to meet key players, and to begin building links and trust both with journalists and legislators.

In order to avoid becoming implicated in the political game, CIPPEC had to rethink its strategy. At the suggestion of Ana María Mustapic (member of the CIPPEC Advisory Board, and a specialist in electoral systems) CIPPEC changed its communication strategy on the single ballot. Our central argument no longer focused on the problems for parties, and focused instead on problems for the voters, who had no guarantee they would find their preferred electoral choice on election day. This change of approach in the argument was essential in positioning CIPPEC as an organisation working to defend political rights, and helped us to distance us from the other players of the political game.

On the basis of this new strategy, we worked on new policy briefs and several press articles and 'op-eds were published in national newspapers. Furthermore, CIPPEC began to organise workshops for political journalists to explain the benefits of the single ballot. During these meetings, the researchers explained the key aspects of the issue and answered questions. This experience turned out very well. The researchers met the same journalists once or twice a year for several years and managed to gather a group of journalists from various media outlets that were continuously aware of the project's progress and CIPPEC's strategies. Also, we should bear in mind that, over the same period (2009–2012), political polarisation increased, and journalists saw these workshops as one of the new and few spaces for a diverse exchange of views.

During the implementation stage, the strategy aimed to reach voters directly. We devised two main objectives of our campaign. First, we sought to inform those who would be using the system (voters in Santa Fe and in Córdoba, which decided to implement the single ballot immediately after Santa Fe). Second, we also sought to inform the rest of the electorate across the country, in order to generate wider interest and incentives to promote the reform. In order to reach a wider audience, CIPPEC produced a short video that explained how the single ballot worked and its benefits. The video was uploaded to the websites of the most read newspaper and most viewed news channel in Argentina (Clarín and TN, respectively).

The strategy proved to be effective in shedding light on the issue within the political agenda and in the media. However, CIPPEC failed to influence the ruling party to implement the initiative at the national level. When, in 2011, two months before the national election, opposition parties promoted the implementation of the single ballot at the national level, CIPPEC warned that electoral reforms of this type

required consensus among all political actors and shouldn't be the result of short-term electoral tactics. Our main argument was that election years were not the most appropriate time to discuss changes in the electoral system.

CIPPEC's communication strategy varied during the different stages of the project. In the first instance the strategy tried to position the organisation as an independent and technically capable institution, working to install the single ballot issue on the public agenda as an instrument to improve the voting system. After working with the Government of Santa Fe, CIPPEC sought to maximise the visibility of our work to make them more transparent, even at the risk of compromising our reputation in the event of any major crises during the project.

CIPPEC has two further objectives that will produce communications challenges. First, we want to convince the national ruling party that the adoption of the single ballot will benefit all voters and the political system itself. Second, we want to convince the public that the single ballot design is essential for the correct expression of electoral preferences. Given the fortuitous circumstances of the provincial reform, in order to do this, CIPPEC will need to seek new tools that communicate the unifying argument in an accessible way to legislators, journalists and voters.

Conclusions

There are different types of lessons that our experience can contribute to the broader understanding of the role of think tanks in electoral reforms. First, there is the complexity of being involved in several stages of the policy process. Second, there are lessons about the challenges implementing communication strategy. Third, there are the specifics of electoral reforms, and the role of think tanks in these processes of change.

Being involved in several moments of the policy process

What we learned from being involved in the implementation of an electoral reform are probably the most important lessons. First, some consideration of CIPPEC's different strategies to influence policymaking over the years is in order. Collaborating with governments in implementing public policies was one of CIPPEC´s original goals. The organisation's name includes the word 'implementation' because the founders' aim was to create a 'think and do tank'. Argentina has had many promising policies or laws that failed because of shortfalls in their implementation. Thus, although initially we strived to position the organisation, through its research and academic production, amongst journalists and politicians, in 2007, following the Board's direction, CIPPEC committed itself to increase its collaboration with governments.

Accepting government funding for projects was the subject of a long and heated internal debate. While we all agreed that receiving funds from a government limits, at best, the perceived independence of the organisation (and, in certain cases, it

might directly affect the independence of researchers), our experience over the years proved that governments were more likely to get more involved in reform processes and consider CIPPEC's recommendations more seriously when they decided to 'hire' the organisation, rather than when CIPPEC, with third party funding, offered their advice.

Having said this, our role in the implementation of the reform brought about several challenges. The provincial opposition (the Peronist Party) claimed, several times over the electoral campaign, that the electorate would not be sufficiently informed about how to cast a vote using a new ballot so we knew that the costs of doing this wrong could be quite high. Based on this case study, we can ascertain that the role of knowledge during the implementation stage proved to be far from the idyllic portrait in the evidence-based policy literature. During implementation, instead of just providing solutions to problems, knowledge was also manipulated in the political battle between the government and opposition.

We also learned some lessons from our involvement in the evaluation stage. In the future, CIPPEC needs to define its parameters in evaluating reforms in which the organisation has also been involved in implementing. Since the organisation has a 'think and do tank' focus, it is likely that similar opportunities will be taken again in the future. One lesson to draw from this project is that CIPPEC needs to have an internal debate to define a protocol to determine in which cases the organisation should participate in both the implementation and the evaluation of a policy, and what processes are needed to ensure the reliability of these assessments.

In the future, an aspect to consider might be the need to introduce another recognised external organisation or researcher into the evaluation process in order to evaluate CIPPEC's work and ensure a non-biased evaluation.

About the communication strategy

Prior to the enactment of the single ballot law in Santa Fe, CIPPEC had not developed a model law on the specific design of the ballot that would contribute to a successful implementation of the single ballot system. For example, CIPPEC's position on whether there should be a single ballot for all competitions or one per competition had not been prepared. The evaluation revealed, in fact, that the design of the single ballot is a crucial factor to ensure the correct expression of electoral preferences, an aspect on which CIPPEC only started to work after the Santa Fe election, and which led the organisation to refine our views about the specific features of the single ballot. We worked on this model law afterwards, based on what we learnt from several evaluations conducted by CIPPEC: at time of writing, this has not yet been widely disseminated.

Second, we learnt that it is necessary to choose the communication tool that best allows us to shed light upon a complex subject in accessible way so it is possible to convince key decision makers about the medium- and long-term problems of not changing the system.

Finally, there is a need to develop an evaluation of the impact of the different

communication tools on the perception of decision makers, journalists and voters. This data is essential to confirm the effectiveness of the strategy and identify what changes are needed.

Think tanks in 'dirty politics'

Although CIPPEC has been involved in several implementation projects, our experience shows that electoral reforms are of a different type. The dangers of our evidence being utilised as 'bullets' (as coined by Peter Weingart) in the political battle were much higher than in other projects. We learnt that the adaptation of the communications strategy was key to the success of the project and had to be thought through at the same time as the knowledge-building process (and not afterwards, as is often the case). We now foresee why international organisations devoted to electoral technical assistance preclude nationals of the country from being involved in the projects. But, how sustainable and appropriate would it have been to have foreigners advocate for changes to Argentina's political system? The risk of being caught in the firing line is high, and we probably would have gotten injured if CIPPEC's national legitimacy had not been consolidated by the time we committed to the project.

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Moving from Communication as Profession to Communication as Being in Northern Ecuador

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Research communication in transition

In this chapter we take a reflective look at the practices of communication in science and development. We deal with public policy in favour of highly harmful pesticide technology (World Health Organization Class 1 products) in northern Ecuador, a region once described as a 'model for agricultural modernization' (Barsky 1988) among smallholder farmers. Drawing on multidisciplinary research dating back to the late 1980s,[1] we examine the evolving roles that competing actors – operating in both formal and informal institutions – have played in different phases of development in pesticide policy. The case evolves from the arrival, growth, and normalisation of mass pesticide poisoning as a consequence of publically supported agricultural modernisation, to the enabling of alternatives as a result of the growth in influence of agroecology and other counter-movements. While, in practice, poisoning by highly toxic chemicals continues to be a major concern in northern Ecuador and elsewhere, in 2008, public policy shifted at the constitutional level to focus on 'food sovereignty', leading to legislation for the elimination of Class 1 pesticides from the market in 2010. Here, our objective is to summarise the institutional dynamics involved in the different phases of communication around these pesticides and their alternatives and call attention to what we see as a promising, emergent pathway of communication in research and development practice: 'Development 3.0'.

The pesticide experience in Ecuador exemplifies a broader reality: the effect of harmful, unwanted products of past public policy on environment and society. Notable examples abound – from soil and water degradation, loss of genetic

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1   The multidisciplinary research in Carchi is summarised in Crissman et al. (1998), Yanggen et al. (2003) and Sherwood (2009).

resources, rising rates of obesity to global warming and climate change. These unwanted outcomes, however ubiquitous, are not the deliberate result of policymakers (though it could be argued that the perpetuation of harmful policy, for example, concerning highly toxic chemicals, can become deliberate (Sherwood and Paredes 2014)); they are largely the product of self-organisation. While people are aware of such concerns (or at least these concerns can become knowable, such as in the lingering questioning in certain sectors over the existence of global warming and climate change), at the same time, communities have proven impotent at enabling timely change, even when guided by the insights and resources of science and government. In fact, a growing body of literature points at science and development for both establishing and perpetuating much of the harmful organisation responsible for socio-environmental decline (see for example Ulrich Beck's (1992) work on 'risk societies'). This context invites a critical look at the role that researchers can come to play as communicators and social actors in processes designed to tackle such institutionally complex and problematic issues.

To analyse this case we bring into play our diverse experiences with research communication for social change: both in using research to shift practices at personal and community levels and in using research to influence and change organisational priorities and government legislation. We believe this case sheds light on the limitations of both approaches, while providing a number of lessons for necessary redirection and institutional transition.

Here, we view communication as more than words, language, symbols and exchange. For us, it is a largely self-organised, co-constituting process underlying development. Through communication people derive meanings, significance and sense of self and community. Thus, communication is understood as not merely a process of *inter*action. It also involves *trans*action, in the sense that, through communication, those involved undergo fundamental cognitive, behavioural, cultural and social *transformations* (Simpson 2009). As such, communication is ultimately about organisation: social ordering and networking to shape worldviews, agendas, priorities, and purposes.

Thus, communication can be seen a vehicle for opening up a particular course of action – in other words, policy. As experienced in Ecuador, the process of communication changes the organisation of individuals in communities and government, including, we found, those involved in science and development. This means that, through endless interactions with others, a development actor comes to make sense of her or his role in the systems of which s/he is a part, thereby shaping and reshaping her or his identity, beliefs, and activity.

This perspective places into question the common assumption underlying development research and policy: that social change is primarily the function of externally based intellectual ideas (i.e., exogenous designs) and of informing the public of the same. In fact, change is most commonly the product of far less deliberate, localised activity: peoples' everyday practice (Schatzki et al. 2001). As

argued in the research in public health (Marsh et al. 2004) and agriculture (Van der Ploeg 2009), enabling promising ongoing activity (i.e., 'endogenous potential') can be seen as a promising, largely underutilised resource for development policy.

Nevertheless, shifting attention from exogenous design to endogenous potential raises serious challenges for present-day research and development practice, in particular with regard to how professionals view themselves, define problems, allocate resources and engage the development process (Gibbons et al. 2000). Ultimately, a shift to Development 3.0 demands that researchers and development practitioners publically accept a role as a non-specialised, non-paid member of a family, community or social network – i.e., as a social actor. In the process, the abstract professional, once protected by title, salary and status, becomes accountable to the sort of standards commonly asked of her or his project-based 'beneficiary' and, in the process, becomes subject to public performances and displays of 'being', as expressed in one's own practice.

Research communication in sociotechnical change

From Latin *communicare*, meaning to impart, share or make common, communication is most about sense-making and meaning-making as well as organisation. Through communication, people act and are acted upon; they establish and break relationships; they mobilise and paralyse; they place into motion all kinds of intentional and unintentional events. Knowingly, deliberately or not, through communication people open up and close courses of action and, in the process, they make, break and set in motion policy.

In our research on development communication, as social scientists we are inclined to ask, what is being socially accomplished through communication? Researchers communicate for many purposes: to define problems, set priorities and influence the distribution of resources. Whenever researchers interact with policymakers, industry representatives or farmers, their communication is not only carried out using words, but also by the practices involved in the research process itself, which includes continual interactions with other stakeholders.

Through their use of symbols and language in everyday life, not unlike other actors, researchers forge identities and belief systems; they create and sustain communities, systems of prestige and authority; and they generate storylines and explanations. The communicative processes involved in setting agendas in and around emergent issues both brings together and divides people, who act as individuals and in groups in civil society, private enterprise and government. Thus, the outcomes of research communication have important implications for particular sets of actors and their communities. In summary, through their agency, practices and attitudes, researchers convey research results at the same time as promoting certain values and beliefs, and in the process, they become embroiled in the social politics of continuity and change.

In the creation of policy around technology, groups of researchers creatively organise around common interests and open up new pathways, moving networks along particular 'trajectories' of interaction with members, third parties and artefacts. Therefore the changes that their activities promote (and demote) are not understood as merely the product of rational, evidence-based decision-making. Instead, researchers strategically utilise communication as a means of both self-expression and social organisation. Viewed this way, research communication becomes one of the messy, often 'irrational' processes of enactment, which is central to social networking and change.

In their examination of knowledge production in universities and research centres, Gibbons et al. (2000) describe how researchers belong to particular communities organised around competing beliefs on the social meanings, purposes and utilisations of public resources for social change. In Table 1, we summarise two extreme modes of knowledge production: Mode 1 (expert-led) and Mode 2 (people-led). Mode 1 is founded on the positivist notion of largely context independent knowledge production that prioritises adherence to universal rules and standards of rigour. Meanwhile, Mode 2 is based on the tenets of socially constructed knowledge, thus emphasising the importance of situation and context. We utilise this taxonomy of knowledge production to describe the ways in which competing groups of researchers, development workers and countermovement activists form and reform communicative interventions in their efforts to promote particular presents and futures at the cost of other possibilities.

Table 1. Mode 1 (expert-led) and Mode 2 (lay or people-led) knowledge production

Criterion	Mode 1: Knowledge produced in the context of abstraction	Mode 2: Knowledge produced in the context of application
Nature of knowledge production	Theoretical: produced from within a disciplinary community	Practical: produced from within a problem context
Bias: rules that govern conduct	Disciplinary and multidisciplinary: single or multiple system of rules governing conduct	Transdisciplinary: dynamic, multiple systems of rules collide and collude
Problem solving: experience and skills employed	Homogeneous: focused, well-defined experience and skill set	Heterogeneous: diverse experiences and skills involved
Organisation structures	Centralised and hierarchical: well established; graded and top down	Diverse and heterarchical: loose, flexible and fluid structures; mixed and dissimilar constituents

Criterion	Mode 1: Knowledge produced in the context of abstraction	Mode 2: Knowledge produced in the context of application
Negotiation and consensus: resolution of differences	Closed and static: conditioned by pre-established norms and rules	Open and transient: conditioned by context of application and evolves with it
Nature of knowledge	Generalisable and cumulative	Context specific and dependent on locality
Social accountability and reflexivity	Low: offer oriented, exclusive and low sensitivity to impact of outcomes; preoccupied with internal criteria and priorities	High: demand oriented, inclusive and high sensitivity to impact of outcomes; preoccupied with relevance
Quality control: enforcement of 'good science'	Self-referential: peer review judgements; peer selection based on compliance with norms; emphasis on individual creativity from within disciplinary bounds	Broadly based: composite and multidimensional; dependent on social composition of review; emphasises group thinking; socially extensive and accommodating
Theory of knowledge spread	Spontaneous diffusion based on merit	Repeated processes of generation

Source: based on Gibbons et al. (2000).

Evolving communication in development practice

In this section we call on nearly two decades of collaborative action research led by scientists from the International Potato Centre (CIP) and Ecuador's National Institute for Agricultural Research (INIAP) in the highland Carchi Province. As a model for agricultural modernisation (Barsky 1988), Carchi experienced substantial changes as the result of a government-endorsed potato–dairy system. Despite the immediate success of the agricultural modernisation initiated in the late 1960s, studies summarised in Crissman et al. (1998) found that, over time, this progress came at great costs. By the early 1990s, a very fragile monoculture of a few potato varieties came to dominate the highland landscape. Cole et al. (2000) identified that two thirds of the rural population – men, women and children – suffered measurable neurological damage due to exposure to highly toxic pesticides, and economic studies identified a relationship between pesticide exposure and low productivity (Antle et al. 1998). Sherwood (2009) concluded that market oriented production and reliance on externally based knowledge and technology had generated second order problems with worrisome environmental, productivity, and human health consequences. Twenty-five years after the onset of agricultural modernisation, it had become increasingly difficult to grow a crop and to survive financially as a farmer, and the model of modernisation was on the verge of collapsing.

We summarise the history of research communication in Carchi in three general phases tied into the evolution of Ecuador's dominant sociotechnical regime:[2]

- technology transfer (or Development 1.0);
- participatory development (Development 2.0);
- an emerging approach emphasising self-organised 'coherent practice' (Development 3.0).

Based on different problem orientations, norms and standards of practice, we believe that this evolution has important implications for researchers and communication professionals.

To illustrate each phase, we draw on three corresponding development interventions that responded to growing public awareness and concern over the harmful consequences of pesticide technology and evolving notions of 'best practice' in agricultural research and development. The initial approach was based on technology transfer, as exemplified by the agrichemical industry's global 'Safe Use of Pesticides' (SUP) programmes, focused on promotion and management of pesticide technology. This was followed by participatory development, with a prominent example being the Farmer Field Schools, which emphasised pesticide-use reduction. Most recently, Ecuador's lively agroecology movement has inspired a period of reimagining the food system through reflective family-level practice (as exemplified through its national awareness raising campaign '*Que Rico Es!*' or 'How Sweet It Is!').

Development 1.0: technology transfer for the safe use of pesticides

The success of agricultural modernisation in Carchi was built on a uniquely successful process of land reform tied to ambitious public policy to promote industrial era technologies (i.e., mechanised tillage, improved crop varieties, synthetic fertilisers and pesticides) and to efforts linking farmers with urban-based commercial markets. Following the introduction of currency in rural areas and strapped with the need to pay off government-sponsored loans, beginning in the 1960s rural families quickly abandoned their traditional crops and cropping systems for higher valued potatoes. Agricultural modernisation brought substantial increases in food production and productivity for nearly 20 years, enabling many smallholders to settle debts and to recoup other investments, and for some to achieve ownership of larger areas of land, cattle, a house and a vehicle – constituting previously unimaginable accumulation.

Over the last 50 years, rural development initiatives in Ecuador have centred on intensifying production through externally sourced inputs. Regarding pesticides, in the 1990s a consortium of international agrichemical companies (in particular,

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2   A regime refers to relatively stable sociotechnical network organised around a single or limited pathways of acting. Since agriculture is based on the coordination of social and technical elements (e.g. people, nature and artefacts), in this context a regime refers to a relatively stable network in favour of a certain pattern of farming (Van der Ploeg, 2003).

Bayer CropScience, Novartis/Sygenta, BASF and FMC) and their national partners (Agripac, Ecuaquímica, Farmagro and India), supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, designed and implemented Safe Use of Pesticides training programmes, emphasising product selection as well as information on dosage calculation, application and storage. The SUP training programme in Carchi was a local expression of broader agrichemical industry-sponsored initiatives across the globe to promote food production based on pesticide technology (Atkin and Leisinger 2000).

An important assumption of the SUP training in Ecuador was that exposure occurred because of 'a lack of awareness concerning the safe use and handling of [pesticide] products' (letter from the Ecuadorian Association for the Protection of Crops and Animal Health). Based on the tenets of technology transfer, the programme focused on transferring knowledge from technical experts to lay farmers as a means of changing practices. An innovative industry-sponsored programme promoted Safe Use of Pesticides in schools as a means of reaching parents through their children (Box 1).

Box 1. Scarecrow: the Safe Use of Pesticides Programme

In 2001 the agrichemical industry consortium initiated the 'Scarecrow comes out in defence of nature' programme in the rice-growing region of Guayas province, as part of a project called 'Plan America'. That year, a team of communication professionals presented the programme to 1,148 schoolchildren between the ages of 10 and 15 from 28 rural schools, declaring, 'Rural grade school education is central to the future of agriculture'. The stated goal of the campaign was:

> to change the mentality of adults through their children and to form tomorrow's farmers with information on the Correct Use of Products for Crop Protection and Integrated Pest Management, in such a way that children were trained to recognise the most important local pests and insects, diseases and weeds in the area, as well as the risks associated with the poor uses and abuse of products.

The training programme was based on a pre-developed slide show and a graphic manual. It included drawing contests and written tests where awards were given to the best performers. As a result of the perceived success of the project, CropLife Ecuador launched a second Scarecrow campaign, which reached an additional 2,000 children.

EcoSalud, an action research project led by CIP and INIAP, worked to strengthen SUP by strengthening communication, such as through community-run theatre. Efforts were made to inform people of the latest research findings and for the farmers to experience, in a safe environment, the toxicity and propagation of the pesticides and to consider the health issues caused by careless management of dangerous chemicals. Researchers introduced fluorescent tracers into backpack sprayers and then returned to homes at night with ultraviolet lights as a means of helping families to see the contamination pathways into the home (Box 2). When farmers complained about the unavailability and high costs of protective gear, for example, the programme obtained equipment and subsidised its costs. In addition, EcoSalud introduced emotionally impactful activities, such as public presentations of child education campaigns, including wall paintings and photographs of parents abusing pesticides. One activity involved feeding a dosage of carbofuran, the most popular local insecticide, which is also a highly toxic neurotoxin, to baby chicks and having an audience observe them until they became intoxicated and ultimately collapsed and passed away (later, this activity was videotaped to avoid further maltreatment to animals). Nevertheless, despite much creativity, provocation and diligence, such interventions ultimately had little lasting impact on farmers' practices.

> ## Box 2. Exposure pathways
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> To illustrate pesticide exposure pathways, we used a non-toxic fluorescent powder that glowed under ultraviolet light as a tracer. Working with volunteers in each community, we added the tracer powder to the liquid in backpack sprayers and asked farmers to apply normally. At night we returned with ultraviolet lights and video cameras to identify the exposure pathways. During video presentations, community members were astonished to see the tracer not only on the hands and face of applicators, but also on young children who played in fields after pesticide applications. We also found traces on clothing and throughout the house, such as around wash areas, on beds and even on the kitchen table. The tracer study helped people discover how pesticides entered the home and how those who did not apply pesticides, women and children in particular, became exposed.

While the improved SUP programme captured the attention of participants, research showed that it did not address underlying social roots behind a growing public health crisis of pesticide-induced intoxications (Mera 2001). The exercises made it clear that there was something wrong with the use of pesticides, but farmers did not explicitly experience the harm or witness the most abstract, chronic effects of pesticides that can take years to surface. Additionally, without culturally

acceptable substitutes to maintain the high productivity and family income, farmers continued to use the pesticides, even when explicitly aware of their negative effects. **The researchers concluded that information, even conveyed in very convincing and practical ways, was not sufficient to overcome individual and collective social barriers to change.** Further attention was needed to the underlying limitations of agricultural modernisation, in particular with regard to the situated nuances of culture and knowledge systems.

Development 2.0: participatory research and Farmer Field Schools

Studies concluded that Safe Use of Pesticides programmes overemphasised scientific understanding, technology transfer, and market linkages as the means to better futures (Atkin and Leisinger 2000). Consequently, activity focused on crops, bugs, and pesticides, rather than the people who designed, chose and managed practices. Of course, technologies can play an important role in change, but when the technologies themselves lie at the root of the problem, greater attention needs to be paid to addressing problems caused by humans. Frustrated by the limited success of their attempts to address pesticide concerns through SUP, in 1998 a group of researchers at CIP and INIAP began to test the Farmer Field School (FFS) action-learning approach.

Originally developed by the FAO in Southeast Asia, the Farmer Field School approach was developed as a means of building knowledge and improving decisionmaking by farmers. Each FFS group is composed of about 25 farmers who come together to test ideas on a small learning plot. Groups meet weekly to manage the plot according the results of their ongoing agro-ecological analyses and to run a series of selected field experiments. The general goal of a FFS is to identify practical ways to increase crop production and decrease costs.

Beginning in 1998, CIP and INIAP ran 25 Farmer Field Schools in Carchi. Studies found that through combining their own experience with the biological and ecological insights of science, FFS graduates effectively found new cost effective ways for improving pest management, such as traps for the previously unknown adult Andean weevil (Box 3) (Barrera et al. 2001). Furthermore, farmers identified precocious potato varieties resistant to late blight. As a result, Farmer Field School participants were able to grow potatoes with half as many fungicide applications as previously, thereby saving money, time and avoiding needless harm to their families and the environment. Following harvest and graduation from the season-long Farmer Field Schools, some groups progressed to form local research committees that concentrated their efforts on seed production or tackling particular, difficult, field-level problems.

Box 3. Weevil traps: eliminating highly toxic pesticides through ecological literacy

The problem with highly toxic pesticides has never been a lack of alternatives. Where we work in northern Ecuador, farmers have cultivated potato for millennia without highly toxic pesticides. Nevertheless, when pesticides arrived in the 1960s and 70s, farmers found them miraculous.

Despite very positive experiences at first, decades later soil fertility declined and certain Andean weevil populations survived the chemicals and reproduced, leading to more resistant populations. Farmers had to spray more and more pesticides to achieve the same control as before.

Studies in many cultures show that rural people are commonly unaware of insect life cycles, leading the anthropologist Jeffrey Bentley to conclude in 1989, 'What farmers do not know cannot help them.' Similarly, the Andean weevil grub lives underground, where it is very hard for farmers to see. Through rearing Andean weevils, FFS participants learned about the existence of the adult weevils that live above the ground, and they became interested in learning how to capture them, before the females laid their eggs. Researchers worked with them to develop traps: potato leaves set under carton boxes for shade, with dozens placed around the margins of a freshly ploughed field. Knowledge of the Andean weevil lifecycle is just one example of how ecological literacy can enable farmers to decrease the use of highly toxic pesticides without adversely affecting production.

In the Farmer Field Schools, life cycle studies are communicative exercises that enable farmers to 'read' what's going on in their fields. Helping farmers to fill knowledge gaps can help them manage the agroecology in their favour. Such knowledge-based approaches can help rural people to assess more deeply the dynamics of their field, thereby enabling more informed decisions and freeing themselves from a dependence on solutions offered by external proponents of agricultural extension and salespeople.

This communication strategy went beyond the approach of filling knowledge gaps with externally validated evidence and pre-packaged solutions. In the FFS, communication became a joint meaning-making venture between researchers and farmers to find context-specific solutions. Researchers facilitated the process by bringing new information, raising discussion questions and systematising experiences.

Unfortunately, despite the initial success of the Farmer Field School programme in changing the way pesticides were used and a good reception by policymakers, its context specific nature posed serious institutional challenges, making FFS hard to scale up (Sherwood et al. 2012). The Ministry of Agriculture created an ambitious national extension programme that was not capable of accommodating the nuanced demands of FFS and, in the process of creating standardised curriculum, it effectively converted FFS from an example of a relatively open-ended, participatory action-learning approach (Dev 2.0) to a uni-linear technology transfer approach (Dev.1.0). FFS graduates and researchers lobbied for continued investments in participatory processes in addition to substantial efforts to increase the controls over the most harmful, highly toxic pesticides. Such efforts, however, were not successful in a context where the rural sector carried little political clout compared with an agrichemical industry that had effectively established the assumption that pesticides were not dangerous if properly applied.

Development 3.0: the rise of the consumer citizen and 'Eat well!'

The research in Carchi came to find that a matrix of cultural practices, power, business interests and ideology led major stakeholders, including farmers, researchers, government and industry, to become locked dangerously into a lethal system of food production. The effects of pesticide poisoning had become so far reaching and generalised that it was no longer possible to place the blame on a single actor, be it a farmer or pesticide salesperson. Chronic poisoning had become naturalised as part of the sociotechnical agrifood backdrop. Meanwhile, it became increasingly evident that urban consumers, used to relatively cheap basic foods, but also anonymity, were important actors in both sustaining the current state of affairs and enabling future redirections. The challenge for ameliorating the situation is in linking growers and consumers into a powerful force of change. But who should be targeted, how, and with what resources?

This scenario, of generalised chronic poisoning, is giving way to increasingly influential counter-movements, in particular the 'consumer-citizen' (Sherwood et al. 2013). In Ecuador, public contempt has turned towards those technologies once legitimised by the logic of economic rationality, but now undergoing severe questioning. At the same time, a growing number and diversity of farmers, distributers and citizens are turning to alternative food production, circulation and consumption. We understand this to have happened mainly due to their personal experiences with what have become conventional agrifood processes, connected to the information available on the adverse effects of pesticide technology.

The limitations of research communication as technology transfer or through knowledge-based approaches have led some researchers to join food counter-movements, leading to new political possibilities. While criticism of agrichemicals has continued to be the rallying point for agroecological movements, over time, food movements in Ecuador have evolved to address more holistic issues of farm

management: in particular, soil conservation, as well as integrated plant and animal management. Most recently, these have come to include even broader producer–consumer relationships pivoting around 'healthier food systems', which address such priorities as agro-biodiversity and exchange equity, as well as making investments in direct exchange markets, barter economies and the emergence of local currencies.

One particularly influential movement in Ecuador, the *Canastas Comunitarias* (literally 'Community Food Baskets'), has become inspiration for greater consumer activism. These groups promote direct grower–consumer exchange as a new form of community 'responsibility'. Over the last 20 years, the *Canastas Comunitarias* have emerged in over 50 neighbourhoods, involving more than 1,500 families and spanning six cities (Kirwan 2008). Initially, individual groups were motivated by the financial advantages of purchasing commodities in large quantities, which usually results in savings to the order of 30 to 50%. Over time, however, groups such as the Ecuadorian NGO Utopia and the community of Tzimbuto, Chimborazo diversified their agendas to include matters such as food quality, environmental sustainability and social equity (Borja et al. 2013). The municipalities of Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil, Ibarra and Riobamba have promoted Community Food Baskets to advance their political agendas (Dillon-Yepez 2006) and, recently, Congress selected a Canasta representative for its eight-member Food Security and Sovereignty Board, which is charged with setting national priorities.

The *Canastas* are composed primarily of families in poor neighbourhoods. Since its founding 18 years ago in the city of Riobamba, the *Canastas* movement has grown largely without external financing, which demonstrates its intrinsic value for the participants. *Canastas* are not simply based on the principle of solidarity; they are founded on the idea of reciprocity (i.e., complementary relationships and mutual gain among all participants). This later principle encourages members to organise collectively around positive-sum opportunities, enabling them to avoid paternalistic gift giving and dependency, which often plague externally led community development projects.

Enabling groups, such as the *Canastas*, to confront contradictions between the beliefs of individual members and collective practices represents an opportunity for addressing a number of public health concerns – from pesticide poisoning and unfair pricing to overweight and obesity (Sherwood et al. 2012). These spaces, as a focus of attention on emerging networks of actors, have generated expectations and political possibilities, leading to new claims on food production, provision and consumption. In the process, food movements have grown into a national force, known as the National Agroecology Collective (*Colectivo*). Most recently, the members of the *Colectivo* have united around a holistic national campaign, '*Que Rico Es!*' that aims to provide equal attention to 'sustainable, regenerative and equitable' food (Box 4).

Box 4. 'Que Rico Es!'

The members of the National Agroecology Collective created a week-long, twice-yearly campaign to 'wake up' 'those who eat' (i.e., consumers) to the power that they inherently wield in food systems. In Ecuador, studies estimate that consumers spend about US$ 8 billion per annum in food and drink – in effect, financing the production, consumption and circulation of food and food products (Prado 2004).

The central objective of the campaign is to sensitise consumers to the food crisis, and to inspire them to get involved in existing examples of healthy alternatives, such as alternative food fairs and the Canastas Comunitarias. Ultimately, it aims to enable ordinary people to exercise a sense of citizenship through their individual and collective daily food practices, as per an explicit policy shift from 'agriculture as production' to 'agriculture as food' in the 2008 National Constitution and 2010 Food Sovereignty Law.

Entering its second year, the Colectivo has set up a Responsible Consumption Committee, charged with leading the campaign. One of its most important activities is to consolidate research results on 'healthy' food production, consumption and circulation and to disseminate information to members, government and the media. For example, the committee engages with proposals to introduce genetically engineered seeds and crops in Ecuador (which are presently prohibited at the constitutional level).

The members of different movements and organisations involved in the campaign use diverse research, including the pesticide studies summarised in Yanggen et al. (2004), to engage urban consumers in food issues, yet the campaign still appeals to the everyday experiences of families and their networks. Researchers in these movements primarily participate as activists; the research agenda depends upon the needs of the movement rather than on predefined intervention objectives.

New dynamics of communication in development

Looking back on our experience of research communication in the context of Ecuador's public health issues, our thinking has evolved from treating research as a primarily abstract, externally led activity to something entirely more active and intrinsic to communities. Similarly, our idea of communication has evolved from informing the public to questioning the role researchers themselves should play in the course of social change. One conclusion is familiar: that is, an understanding of context is very important for policy change – but this does not just apply to farmers,

producers and consumers. This experience shows the necessity of understanding the context of researchers themselves, particularly with regard to their cultures and organisations, and to how their mindsets, attitudes and performances – during negotiations and other deliberative processes – shape desired outcomes.

Reinterpreting the communication process

Faced with public concerns over pesticide technology, research communication in Ecuador has evolved from being primarily expert driven towards being more community led and open to participation. The contradictions within the Safe Use of Pesticides approach and the institutional confrontations between the Farmer Field Schools and the dominant socio-technical regime of the time led alternative food movements to open up new opportunities for social change within the food system itself. Given the centrality of food in people's lives, we have learnt that there is no point sitting at the back, observing. The emerging approach demands that all stakeholders, including researchers, accept that their (in)actions have social impacts and that they find ways of embedding their activities within the social campaign or movement they support.

In the 'modernisation' development paradigm, as characterised by both Development 1.0 (technology transfer) and 2.0 (participatory development), research communication is very much viewed as a means of addressing what are understood as information deficits, through the dissemination of scientific knowledge. Researchers are viewed as playing an external role in compensating for such deficits, often aided by intermediaries or brokers. Over time, however, the pressures of social movements demanded that researchers' pro pesticide intensification agenda shift to an agroecological approach. In certain organisations researchers were able to open up space for new forms of capacity-building and technology generation, such as the discovery-based approaches of Farmer Field Schools as well as farmer-led research. Nevertheless, studies show that, in many cases, the required shift in modality violated institutional standards of 'good practice', and went against established administrative procedures, such as the ability to predetermine outcomes, and the utility of project-based designs (Sherwood et al. 2012). Despite awareness and interest in the shift in communication and capacity-building approaches, many sympathetic researchers faced serious challenges in their organisations and, ultimately, their participatory designs. For example, when they tried to scale up, the Farmer Field Schools, became less about community empowerment and leadership and more about sustaining externally led development.

Our experience has led us to view communication of research as not merely an element of rational decisionmaking but a central part of social organisation itself: what we describe as a process of self-organisation. Just as paradigms of development practice have changed over time, so too have the processes and expectations of communication. Slowly, researchers are coming to recognise that information alone is not sufficient to address the diversely rooted causes of a growing pesticide health epidemic. In fact, a preoccupation with conveying information that already existed made them blind to

the complicity of science and business in perpetuating a certain harmful sociotechnical trajectory. New direction was called for, what we call 'Development 3.0'.
The shift to Development 3.0 evolved from elements of earlier paradigms (i.e., technology transfer and participatory development), but also opened up a fundamentally new pathway, where communication is not an ex-post activity, but rather a central means of internalising the externalities of agricultural modernisation. In this context, communication needs to be seen not so much as the set of activities carried out by a communications team, but what researchers themselves do from the onset of their investigation as means of assuring their accountability to stakeholders and the relevance of their contributions.

The process of communicating research among the different stakeholders therefore changes the social organisation among the different stakeholders, including the researchers themselves. This third method of engagement poses challenges to the traditional way of conducting research and communication.

Implications for practitioners and researchers

The arrival and perpetuation of harmful pesticide technology demonstrate a number of lessons for researchers. The research that was carried out was aimed at stopping the health epidemic caused by the use of pesticides. At different points in time researchers targeted farmers, industry representatives and policymakers to inform them of the alarming findings, such as the fact that a majority of the rural population, including women and children, suffered chronic exposure and serious health problems. The hope was to eliminate the most highly toxic products and work together in promoting alternatives. Nevertheless, eventually it became apparent that a large number of scientists, business people and government officials put their personal interests ahead of those of the broader public – a blatant demonstration that the activity of science, technology and government was not always about advancing the public good. This raises serious questions of ethics and morality in how researchers use communication for competing purposes.

Researchers and development workers are trained to assume that sustainable development is a function of good quality information. Nevertheless, this case exemplifies that information is not enough. While it is easy to point the finger at the agrochemical industry, the fact is that the vast majority of products sold in Carchi were compliant with labels that met international standards, complete with the industry's colour labelling system to reveal toxicity and warning about safe use. Unlike many areas of the developing world, farmers in Carchi were literate and capable of reading and understanding labels. Presenting information in such a way that only delineates the issue at hand does not guarantee that the stakeholders will opt for a given solution. This actually opens a contested space where stakeholders interpret and act on information and experiences differently, leading to outcomes that are impossible to predict and control. In the case of Carchi, during the Development 1.0 period, pesticides became a social marker of gender: public exposure to neurotoxins was a public presentation of masculinity (Mera 2001). In this

sense, pesticide poisoning for social reasons is not unlike how some people in urban settings drink large quantities of alcohol during public encounters, smoke cigarettes or drive motorised vehicles recklessly beyond speed limits when it is knowable that such activity can have serious consequences on their health and wellbeing.

Similarly, diverging policies may arise that challenge each other no longer on the technical but instead on social and political grounds. Challenging assumptions and taking responsibility for unintended consequences or irresponsible behaviour requires researchers to understand the sociopolitical context, where the technology they create and promote may take on a life of its own. In other instances, researchers must be held socially accountable for their activity by farmers as well as by the broader public, which ultimately must pay the costs of both the 'goods' and 'bads' of their technology.

Underlying these matters is also the assumption that change is linear and predictable and that development can be controlled, fixed or engineered. To be effective, researchers perform within the norms of their discipline and profession, but they also need to become more intimately involved in the socioenvironmental contexts where their activity unfolds. When serious contradictions arise, even if unwanted, they must be held accountable and come to share responsibilities, working with stakeholders to mobilise resources for ameliorative measures. For example, a number of researchers in INIAP organised themselves to promote a new agenda for decreasing pesticide use and promoting ecologically based alternatives, leading to proposals for shifting 'best practice' from SUP to the Farmer Field Schools.

Communication, from a practice perspective, challenges the defined split between the observer and the observed. The point of departure for a practice perspective is that the world is not just full of observations and facts, but also agency: the strategic activity of people as social actors, taking positions and strategically pursuing their interests. Even when not intending to do so, researchers communicate their own belief systems and values along with their research results: for instance, when participating in expert-led training programmes or taking a backstage position within social counter-movements. In an environment of institutional change (especially involving contested policies, such as agricultural modernisation policy), it is not simply a matter of knowledge being communicated; rather, it is about the attitudes and competences of researchers as social actors, willing and capable to act reflexively and step outside the bounds of their professional norms to enable corrective change in their organisations. In such cases, performance standards are not just limited to a self-referential group of colleagues organised around relatively narrow institutional interests, but researchers also must be held accountable to broader public scrutiny.

Ultimately this means that, when researchers communicate they must take into account the roles they play in communities organised around certain standards of practice. Researchers can no longer just provide specialised advice based on abstract knowledge and assume that their institutional role as a knowledge broker is accepted and provides them the legitimacy to intervene. The Ecuadorian experience with

pesticide technology highlights the need to recognise that researchers are not external players. By communicating, they participate and perform in social networks and are active actors of change. Hence they are sustaining certain belief systems and regimes of practice over those of others. To be effective, researchers must view themselves as both communicators and the target of communication efforts. Otherwise, they risk becoming entrenched in their own perspectives and blind to the very realities they aim to affect.

Researchers eat: the 'practice-turn' in communication and the social sciences

'Practice' is a familiar term that is commonly misunderstood and under-appreciated. Typically, practice in development is limited to the mundane routines of daily life. Nevertheless, the body of works of social thinkers over the last century – Heidegger, Vygotsky, Wittgenstein, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Schatzki – invites reflection on its underlying philosophical meanings and implications. People's daily practices, for example, around the use of pesticides in food production, can be seen as a public display of what is possible and what is desirable: simultaneously an expression of who we are as individuals and as a community. Dependent on continually changing local contexts, perceptions, creativity and flair, practice represents an infinitely complex and dynamic space of communication and social organisation.

Our study on how the practice of pesticide poisoning inserts itself into families and communities sharply contrasts with notions of peoples' activity as being related to a single rationality or calculus or informed by research. Communicative practice, such as in farming, brings into view activities that are situated, corporeal and shaped by habit and inspiration with little to no immediate reflection. For example, farmers communicate their beliefs on pesticides verbally as well as through use in their daily lives. In the same sense, researchers may promote pesticide safety in a rural community, and then go home to the city and purchase potatoes for dinner: an action that ultimately finances the very practices they criticise. Therefore, a full understanding of self-poisoning by pesticide requires moving from the comfortable tendency to place blame on the victim, to providing attention to peoples' agency in spaces that are today simultaneously individual and collective, private and public, and social and technical.

This case, however, has taken us to consider practice not only as something we study from a distance, but also as a co-construction of which researchers, as members of a society, are intimately part. In the transition of the phases of this case, it became clear that the way in which researchers carried out their activity and how they interacted with others changed their behaviours as researchers and as communicators, from an external position to an embedded one. Initially, researchers behaved as external actors that brought pre-packaged knowledge to

the rural sector. In the second phase, certain groups of researchers responded to

public criticisms and opened up space for change, coming up with process-based innovations capable of shifting regimes of practice towards knowledge-based approaches: commonly involving no pesticides. Since that time, a growing number of researchers have become involved in creating alternatives to input-intensive agriculture, ones which are increasingly responsible to the situated realities of localities, rather that the predefined, universal notions of conventional agricultural science and development practice. In the process, researchers have become part of a new movement – which was emergent and thus not fully understood or researchable – essentially a new operational modality that involved researchers as actors from within.

In this new context, in order to communicate, the researchers must now gain legitimacy among the other actors. Legitimacy cannot be based solely on the researcher's work, findings and evidence. It becomes more relevant who the researcher is as an individual, and how he or she communicates through his or her practices and, in this particular case, eating habits.

It is clearly exemplified in this case that researchers are stakeholders because they certainly are 'people who eat', as described by the members of the Colectivo, meaning that they are not just abstract actors but also an intrinsic part of the system to be affected. This is something we see happening more frequently, as researchers and policymakers start to recognise that they are part of the context that they investigate. We are seeing more researchers being an explicit part of the process of change, which in turn is changing professional identities, the nature of work and the researchers' sense of agency.

This raises interesting questions regarding researchers' legitimacy as communicators in the policymaking process. For example, in the case of researchers who study public health services but use private services for their own health needs, or promote changes in public education but send their children to private schools. Do they have legitimacy beyond that provided by their social status and privileges to participate in policymaking advice? But if, on the other hand, they were embedded in the system, how could they maintain their claim of objectivity?

Researcher–citizens: from communication in abstraction to communication in practice

Through their growing activity in social movements, we see that a growing number of researchers in Ecuador have become active in communicating their concerns at a personal level and taking on responsibilities as parents, neighbours and citizens. In this chapter we examined experiences with pesticide technology in search of new insights into the challenges involved in communicating complex ideas. We found an evolution, from technology transfer to participatory development rooted in the tradition of agricultural modernisation to an emerging third pathway focused on a qualitative shift towards greater embedding of research and the researcher in the social space. Our findings beget three concerns for policy researchers and research

centres more generally:

1. *conflict between the expectation of objectivity and neutrality and the increasingly apparent agency of the researcher;*
2. *need for greater accountability and responsibility of researchers in processes of social, economic and political change; and*
3. *institutional challenges in shifting from development in abstraction to development in practice.*

Not unlike the effects of other modern technology, the risks associated with pesticides were largely abstract and essentially invisible, and thus they were subject to interpretation. As a result, there was not a linear process from research communication to action, but it was the successful entrepreneurship of different arrays of actors – e.g. people operating in farming communities, research agencies and universities, NGOs, agrichemical industry, and government – that informed public perception and determined endogenous pathways of action. In this   dynamic a more engaging role of researchers as communicators was important in triggering results.

Initially, research communication was about messaging and diffusion, for example, through largely unidirectional courses and reading material on pesticide safety. Studies showed that such approaches were influential, but often in ways that favoured product sales and the image of industry, rather than addressing public concerns over pesticides (Atkin and Lesinger 2000). Later, communication became more about self-directed learning through filling 'knowledge gaps' and deepening insights, in this case via discovering learning practices for greater 'ecological literacy' and 'Integrated Pest Management' (Cole et al. 2007). In this case, researchers played the role of educators and capacity-builders, for example, in creating the Farmer Field Schools. In practice, however, this kind of research communication continued to reproduce the underlying problems of agricultural modernisation, namely conformity to markets and dependence on expert knowledge and technology, which – in turn – undermined the social and environmental embeddedness of rural development (Sherwood et al. 2012).

Nevertheless, we find researchers who have opened up a third pathway that appears to be addressing this matter. Most recently, efforts to address pesticide poisoning and other concerns associated with agricultural modernisation have been aimed at new consumer–producer relationships and forms of interaction. Actors involved in earlier efforts to tackle pesticide problems have shifted their attention to communication strategies that emphasise more 'responsible' forms of organisation through such new relationships.

In many ways, counter-movements have pioneered these activities, operating outside the boundaries of formal science and development institutions. In some instances, these pioneers included researchers and development practitioners

who chose to step outside the usual institutional boundaries at universities, NGOs and the government. This shift in responsibility demanded that researchers, practitioners and bureaucrats in part leave the abstract professional position and pay attention to her or his individual and collective roles as 'one who eats': i.e., a potentially influential agent of food practices in the family, community and social networks. In other words, they must recognise their unshakable roles as citizen.

The transition required demands 'coherent practice': understood broadly as thinking, feeling and doing in the same direction. This is most immediately and practically expressed in one's daily consumption of food and other products, as a means of seeking social equity and environmental sustainability – not in abstract terms but through daily practices of living and being. As such, 'work' extends beyond one's professional activity to other domains of life.

While an interesting concept, this shift poses serious institutional challenges, such as those highlighted in the 2009 International Assessment of Agricultural Science, Knowledge and Technology for Development (IAASTD). In Table 2 we summarise our understanding of that transition and its meaning for research and development practitioners. We do not pretend that institutional support presently exists for this new pathway. Nevertheless, there is a growing urgency for 'organised responsibility' in research and development practice, creating a demand for the emergence of a new professional and supportive institutional frameworks and environments. According to the IAASTD, such institutional change merits further reflection and strategic attention from the think tanks, universities and agencies of development policy.

For those of us involved in research in developing countries, today, our professional and personal lives are becoming far more interconnected. In practice, we as researchers are experimenting with the tensions between our ideas and our daily activity. As actors belonging to social networks, our sense of allegiance may shift to the point where institutional rules must be broken in order to get things done. In our example, despite claims of the political neutrality of the science, progress eventually depended on the willingness of researchers to take a position on the need to outlaw highly toxic pesticides or to keep genetically modified seeds and crops off the market. The boundaries between the personal and professional space break down in our version of communication. We are endlessly forced to deal with our own inconsistencies and incoherencies. In this case in particular, we can no longer purchase food in just any store, but must make efforts to eat organically and buy directly from farmers in local markets. We see hope in such tendencies: in reorganising our responsibilities and in reconnecting our ideas with our actions, our living and doing, our families and our communities.

Table 2. Institutional movement in development practice: from information provision to process facilitation to 'being'.

	Dev. 1.0 Professional: producer of knowledge, technologies and services	Dev. 2.0 Professional: facilitator of process management	Dev. 3.0 Professional: practitioner and social actor
Dilemma	Uninformed practice and organisation – a need to inform and educate.	Exclusive, undemocratic organisation – a need to deliberately involve hidden voices and manage externalities.	Organised irresponsibility – a need to internalise social and environmental externalities.
Assumptions on reality	Single, tangible reality.	Multiple realities that are socially constructed.	Multiple realities that are individually and socially constructed.
Interaction with bodies of knowledge	Discipline-based, limited interaction with other perspectives.	Multidisciplinary, ongoing interaction and transformation of perspectives.	Transdisciplinary, need to overcome arbitrary dichotomies of modernisation (abstraction and practice; expert and practitioner; internality and externality; local and global; personal and professional)
Scientific method	Reductionist and positivist. Complexity can be best described through independent variables and cause – effect relationships. The perception of the researcher is central.	Holistic and post-positivist. Local and global categories and perceptions are mutually acknowledged. Differences between subject and object; methodology and data are little defined.	Reflexive. Objectivity is denied; a need to be explicit about influences and manage them.

	Dev. 1.0 Professional: producer of knowledge, technologies and services	**Dev. 2.0 Professional: facilitator of process management**	**Dev. 3.0 Professional: practitioner and social actor**
Strategy and context of research	Professional knows what he or she wants. Designs are pre-established. Information is the product of universal knowledge. Context is controlled and independent.	Professional does not know where processes will go. Themes emerge as a result of learning – action. Focus and understanding emerge from interaction.	Professional seeks coherent daily practices in family, neighbourhood, communities and office. Performance and public accountability in context is fundamental.
Who sets priorities?	Researchers and practitioners give priority to problems and activities.	Communities, practitioners and researchers prioritise together.	People, through their daily living and being.
Relationship with intended beneficiaries	Researchers and practitioners control and motivate clients from a distance. Tendency to distrust local people, who are principally research objects.	Researchers and practitioners maintain close dialogue with constituents. Construct trust through joint analysis negotiations.	Direct and immediate, as a member of communities, the researcher lives the consequences of his and her activity.
Intervention modality	Unidirectional and project driven: time and theme bound.	Interactive and deliberative: unbound, working in teams based on long-term commitment.	Socially embedded and contextualised: working within defined social change contexts.
Political position	Inappropriate: threatens objectivity.	Appropriate and necessary: managing social role of science and development.	Central: professional understood as a person first, intricately involved in intentional and unintentional communicative products.

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School Reform in the Middle East: Educational Researchers Adapting to the Arab Spring

Ted Purinton and Amir ElSawy

Introduction

Research organisations, including think tanks, technical assistance providers and universities, exist in the Arab world within complicated political environments. They are caught between international and national funding streams; autocratic, precarious and changing governments; conservative populations (and in the case of Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC, countries, large expatriate populations) and populations of low socioeconomic status. In these contexts, these organisations struggle to know (a) what to convey so as not to jeopardise funding or support; (b) who to convey it to, considering the changing administrative landscapes; and (c) how to convey it, given rapidly changing beliefs, assumptions, and aims within Arab societies.

Education policy serves as a unique opportunity to study these tensions, as it was not a direct and immediate issue of country governance and political participation in the Arab Spring. Instead, it is a basic function within governments that reflects wider societal values but does not instantly stand out at the top of legislative or presidential agendas, except perhaps in GCC countries. Nonetheless, education policy has very real political consequences, as it involves all families within a society; demonstrates underlying political, economic, and social philosophies; and shapes citizens' thought processes and behaviours.

Research organisations have contributed to reform agendas in the past, many of which have been implicated with foreign funds that set certain countries on very unique courses of change and reform. Others have provided political parties – some of which are very new in the political arena – with ideas about education. Many promote ideas that are synonymous with educational reform in Western Europe and

the US, but researchers and advocates are not always sure how to communicate those ideas to specific constituencies most effectively. Furthermore, as the Arab countries haltingly embrace democracy, think tanks and other research organisations are likely to become more prominent and important in politics, policy and educational practice. Additionally, such organisations have strategic influence in the expansion of foreign-based institutions, firms, and NGOs providing various educational services to Arab countries.

In this chapter, we consider the current efforts of existing organisations in the Arab countries that produce research, offer advice, advocate, organise conferences, and publish a range of materials on education policy reform or development. Additionally, we consider multinational and foreign organisations that have produced research within the Middle East, as these organisations (though they are not necessarily think tanks: e.g., USAID) have influenced educational policy in the region. Through our analysis of various reports, policy recommendations, networks of scholars, linkages to international and local universities, we also reflect on our own experience of establishing a new university-based research centre in Egypt.

Our main interest is in understanding the cultural views on education and how those views get translated into policy and practice. In particular, we want to understand how such organisations can better understand their public status and the consequences of that status on the work they do. To illustrate, following the Arab Spring, think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment and some universities, such as the American University in Cairo, have promoted 'citizenship' education. The resistance they have encountered has not necessarily been about the ideas themselves, but often about the positions these organisations hold in society. In sum, though the ideas may be acceptable to policymakers, that American organisations, for instance, have instigated projects in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere is seen by some as external political meddling and not objective educational advice.

The purpose of this exploration is to understand the challenges of think tanks' research and advocacy for educational reform. Our intent is to decipher how the shaping of messages can take into account the on-going and complicated regional changes and still promote positive and productive educational reform. If we desire to influence educational reform, we have to ensure that our messages, and the vehicles we use to convey our messages, are appropriate, sensitive, and targeted.

In such a complex topic area, some serious questions must be asked. First, what responsibility or justification do researchers have to influence the stability of strong traditional cultures that have lasted for centuries, while working to modernise inequitable education systems? Second, how can international think tanks encourage educators to use education as a means for empowerment and peace, as well as for identity and cohesion? These questions guide our thinking as we explore the changing dynamics of the region in conjunction with specific targets of educational reform.

A brief remark about the boundaries of this analysis is necessary. Though the Arab countries are quite different, and perhaps becoming even more so, we examine a cross section of these countries via their education research and policy advice, because the region shares language, religion and traditions, as well as multilateral organisations (for example, the League of Arab States has considered education reform to be a priority). In no way do we intend to portray the countries as monolithic, but we do believe knowledge flow about education is greater among Arab countries due to the common language and multilateral organisations. Additionally, the educational heritage of the region shares a common bond, as early forms of education in many countries consisted of study and memorisation of the Koran. This in part influenced a focus on memorisation in contemporary formal education systems. Finally, Arab countries are often targeted simultaneously by think tank research and advocacy messages. So, to conclude, the countries we focus on in this chapter include those that are member states within the Arab League and our aim is to understand how education in this part of the world is guided by the work of think tanks.

The primary research team is comprised of Ted Purinton, a faculty member with the Graduate School of Education at the American University in Cairo, and Amir El Sawy, a graduate of the college. The American University in Cairo is an independent, not-for-profit university in Egypt that uses an American liberal arts curriculum and an American academic governance model. Though the university has a long history in Egypt, it has always been a comparably elite institution with nearly half of its faculty coming from the US or Europe. It has simultaneously been identified as an Egyptian institution and an American one; in the region, people regard it with a combination of respect and disdain. In short, it is an integral intellectual contributor to the region, as well as a perceived threat.

Our interest in exploring communication challenges for research organisations in the region is quite personal. We recognise that the elite and foreign status of the American University in Cairo is at times a benefit (in that society seems to be looking for solutions that a modern research institution is prepared to produce) and at times a drawback (it is often considered to be out of touch with regular Egyptian society). With that recognition, while producing a specific research project since 2012 – on STEAM education (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, with the addition of the 'arts') – we have had multiple conversations with researchers and communication staff at think tanks, funding agencies, technical assistance providers, and universities. Seeking feedback on the work, we have gained valuable insight into how to communicate solutions to governments, schools, reformers, and citizens.

A review of the literature

By and large, researchers, think tanks, and advocacy organisations have promoted the modernisation of educational systems in the Arab countries, and have conveyed this desire for modernisation by examining inputs, outcomes, and contextual social issues.

- Inputs are the resources of an educational system, such as teachers, textbooks, physical spaces, policies, and so forth.
- Outcomes are the results of the system, whether related to learning, social control, or social capital.
- Contextual social issues are the elements that may influence either the inputs or outcomes but are not directly controlled by the system. Common examples in educational achievement outcomes are socioeconomic status, the education level of the mother, or the nutritional levels of the children.

Starting with the contextual social issues, many reports have been released recently on youth dilemmas and post-university joblessness. The Brookings Institution, for instance, published a book in 2009 on general youth issues entitled *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East* (Dhillon and Yousef 2009). The book examines several countries in the region through the lens of various concentration areas, including employment, poverty, and education. The Middle East Youth Initiative, a part of the Brookings Institution, has had significant impact in the understanding of regional youth issues through its reports on the competing pressures of an interconnected, globalised world and the strong, conservative local social norms. A good example is Diane Singerman's work on the conflicts of marriage expectations, educational opportunities, and employment; her term, *waithood*, has summarised the awkward experiences that young adult Arabic people face as they delay marriage until later in life in the face of economic troubles (Singerman 2007).

Gender is a very common topic related to education. Reports such as the World Bank (2004) assessment, *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa*, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (2009) report on *Arab Adolescents: Values and human rights*, and the Population Reference Bureau's *Empowering Women, Developing Society* paper (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam 2003), or the well-known (and wide-ranging) Education for All Global Monitoring Report, *Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality* (UNESCO 2003), have kept track of gender disparities in educational opportunity and outcome and have proposed various policies and practices to decrease gaps.

Among related social issues, these two – gender and youth – are the most well reported, but there is definitely a distinction in the literature between educational reform and social reform. However, to achieve equality effective reform, school systems themselves must be catalysts for the improvement of gender disparities. Indeed, many of the reports also concern themselves with reform in economic, political, labour and other domains, as gender inequality presents issues that are so widespread within societies and so deeply ingrained in cultures that they permeate multiple areas of life.

Outcome focused research usually uses economic measures to determine impacts of educational policies and practices. In the case of think tank research, economic analysis is used to promote different policies and practices. Often the outputs of such research – reports – are broader in scope than just education, though they contain policy recommendations for education, as it is seen as a contributing factor to the social outcomes. Research on how existing educational systems impact economic development has been particularly prominent. Studies such as *The Jordanian Economy in a Changing Environment*, published by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Amman (Saif 2004); *Enhancing Egypt's Competitiveness*, published by the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (Reda 2012), or *Le Système Éducatif et les Classes Moyennes au Maroc*, published by Institut Amadeus (2010) see education as quintessentially linked with economic progress. Recommendations are usually quite vague in such reports, calling for broad improvements for the sake of the economy.

Finally, input focused research, which usually has the most prominent role in specific educational reform actions, focuses mainly on the technical and operational elements of education, including educational labour, teacher preparation, assessment, curriculum, instructional methods and institutional governance. For instance, the RAND Corporation has conducted multiple evaluation studies of reform efforts in Qatar, providing recommendations on student assessment (Gonzalez, Le, Broer et al. 2009). The Carnegie Middle East Centre has produced reports on citizenship education from a curricular perspective (Faour 2012; Faour and Muasher 2011). The United Nations Development Programme published a report on human opportunity, focusing on educational elements such as early childhood education, enrolment trends – the *Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations* (2002). As a final example, the Brookings Institution published a report entitled *Higher Education Reform in the Arab World* (Wilkens 2011). These reports provide specific guidance on the actual steps of reform, or they point to specific faults in the technical systems of educational programming.

A brief note is necessary on the distinction between contextual social issues (*outcomes*) and *inputs*. Though such issues as literacy are indeed educational issues, in the remainder of this chapter we will focus on *inputs*: specific actions that policymakers and practitioners can take with direct regard to educational systems. If the research merely examines an issue, such as literacy, without a technical perspective (i.e. involving *actions*), then we have considered it to be a contextual social issue, albeit one that deeply influences inputs and outcomes. The literature clearly shows that education both impacts on and is affected by so many other areas of society. It is worth bearing in mind that no report can accomplish everything at once, and no think tank can build expertise in all areas of need within a region or country.

Five main issues emerged from the STEAM education reform work regarding the challenges of research communication for education reform in the Arabic countries:

* international influence;
* the cultural role of Islam;
* cultural views about girls;
* the demographic transition; and
* political participation.

All five areas provide distinct communication barriers. Until researchers understand these, the kind of reforms they advocate simply will not take place. Our hypothesis is that researchers attempting to reform education must speak the language of the people affected, not the language of policymakers: mainly because the policymakers make political decisions based on their own personal experiences and understandings of education. Indeed, we posit that a policymaker's views will likely end up being shaped more by his or her role as a parent than as a politician.

International influence

To begin with, we look at the influence of internationalisation in the educational sector. The Arab region consists of some countries that have high oil wealth and low indigenous participation in the private sector: some that have crumbled under the negligence of dictators; some that have resisted gender equality; others that have embraced the modern world; and everything in between. One very significant challenge regarding education exists, however, in most of the countries: the remnants of European colonisation. Education is often considered to be a modern measure of economic development. However, with a lasting legacy of education programmes and teachers from abroad, or the emulation of other school systems, together with an increasing realisation of the impact of this on Arab cultural identity, citizens are engaged in sometimes awkward practices and decision making about education for their children. Whether attempting to build national identity through programmes containing outdated curricula or, conversely, choosing American, British, French, or German school 'brands' with the intent to increase social status, many Arab families consider educational decisions quite differently than their governments. Of course, this is not to say that governments are not themselves impressed with international models but, often, international models prevail for the sake of conditional funds (Ginsburg & Megahed 2010).

In countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, governments have appropriately targeted a growth in 'human capital' (i.e. the capacity of the workforce) through education to ensure both sustainable economies – given that their wealth is primarily a function of oil – and wider indigenous participation in the private sector. On the last point, a mismatch of the educational system to the skills required by the private sector has resulted in fairly high unemployment. In countries such as Egypt, Yemen and Morocco, education has not been reformed radically, but when reform has occurred it has often been in an attempt to boost the entire economy through

skills and knowledge or to comply with aid requirements (especially when dealing with such issues as gender equity) and international standards. In Gulf countries, many 'branch' campuses from universities in the United States and the United Kingdom have been set up in an attempt to increase indigenous 'human capital', even though impact has yet to be shown.

In contrast, in poorer countries, where fewer branch campuses have been set up, as the cost of doing so would likely be too high for their potential return, many locally owned private schools work hard to attract tuition fee paying parents by offering locally interpreted versions of American or British curricula. Increasingly in these countries, nationally focused programmes are also becoming more popular, as some parents wish to inspire local values instead. The issue of identity is supremely central to educational endeavours in the Arab world, whether it be related to upper class alignment to international institutions, in the adoption of international practices, or in the general unease with internationalisation.

As researchers encourage reform in the education sector, a serious challenge they face is how to walk the fine line between encouraging better education performance relative to other countries, and helping each country to identify their own unique approaches to their educational challenges. It is possible that the subtle issue of international influence is a political pendulum, where liberal international values are prised on one side, and conservative patriotic ones are prised on the other – without realisation that the middle ground, particularly incorporating international standards with local values, is perhaps the wiser route.

The cultural role of Islam

Education in Islamic societies has historically been posed as a means of understanding the word of God. In the early periods, prior to 1200 AD, a great diversity of instructional methods and curricula were used. By 1300 the role of education in Islamic societies took a decidedly narrower approach (Cochran 2011), with an increasing rejection of humanistic sciences.

Memorising the Koran became an important vehicle for attainment of religious inspiration. Additionally, didactic instruction was viewed as a way to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the learner in a way that would create a bond from one generation to the next. Most education scholars trace this approach through history to more modern methods.

While religion is still often part of the curriculum, even in public schools it is sidelined by the major modern school subjects: mathematics, history, literature, languages and humanities (except in certain religious schools, such as the Al-Azhar education system in Egypt). The prominence of memorisation and didactic transmission of knowledge characterises today's schools as can be seen in the prevalence of strictly lecture-based methods of teaching.

Cultural views regarding girls

While girls' schools have, for well over a century, been a central component of the educational offerings of most Arab countries, literacy and formal education for girls has, as in many other regions throughout the world, lagged behind literacy and formal education for boys. While much Islamic practice has historically encouraged girls' education, particularly in rural areas, the time and effort families invest toward the formal education of daughters is often quite a bit less than that of sons (Zaalouk 2004). We find that this is not due to 'Islamic views' of education for girls, but rather a result of family structures, developed through an intersection of cultural and religious values, dictating that women stay at home while men go out for work. If, for instance, the distance needed to travel to school in a rural location is long, a family may choose to keep its girls at home, as opposed to its boys, due to the cost of transport alone – taking into account the perceived higher return on that investment.

While many countries have increased access for girls, social norms continue to influence the equity of education in actuality, particularly in rural areas (Zaalouk 2004). Furthermore, social norms carry over into classroom practice. Traditional, religious attitudes to teaching do certainly play a role in the conservatism of Arab education, and, in 2013, there is still low access to education for girls in rural areas. In urban areas there is increased access, but still low equity. Though a country may make great strides in access, researchers must strive to be acutely aware of the content of education in classrooms increasingly populated by girls, and the ways in which teachers behave toward girls in their classrooms.

Demographic transitions

Across societies, as literacy increases, so does contraception (Courbage and Todd 2012). As contraception increases, older, more traditional ways of life begin to fade away. Families shrink, and women seek education and formal employment. In sum, '…cultural progress destabilises civilizations' (Courbage and Todd 2012).

Due to a current youth bulge in the Arab states and North Africa, in the coming years and decades great transformations will inevitably take place in the region. In addition, the development of new demographic transitions and relationships is being aided by the rise of communication technology.

Political participation

Finally, we focus on political participation, by considering two essential aspects: citizenship education for future participatory capacity and educational governance for existing educational policy. Curricula for citizenship education assume that children, young people, and young adults can learn habits, frameworks and skills for lifelong participation in political endeavours: from voting, to community service to active engagement in the public sphere. Political participation through the lens of

educational governance, on the other hand, focuses on those who make the decisions for educational institutions.

Although educational systems generally tend to mirror their societies, it should come as no surprise that, given the centralisation of educational systems, citizens have had little direct influence on educational policy. Of course education has been a mechanism of social control, but it has also served as a tool for larger political agendas. For instance, the Mubarak administration in Egypt (1981-2011) maintained strict centralised control of the Ministry of Education out of nervousness that local decisionmaking might provide inroads for regional political domination of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ginsburg and Megahed 2010). Although many think tanks focus on education policy for economic and human development reasons, the politics of what children learn in school – and the politics of who makes decisions about what children learn in school – are supremely important.

Developing a STEAM Education Centre: objectives and challenges

To illustrate how the issues relating to education reform can become critical hurdles for research communication, we will describe a portion of our own work on developing a STEAM[1] (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics focused) education research centre in Egypt at the American University in Cairo. Working with many professionals – researchers, public relations specialists, communication experts, philanthropists, development specialists, and political analysts – we explored for this case study the various communication challenges that prevent reform from gaining traction.

STEM education is now a very popular concept in education reform circles, and many reports and conferences have put forward arguments and strategies for increasing and enhancing STEM education. Within the region, most find ground to criticise both the scientific output in the Arab region, and the educational opportunities meant to increase it (Adams, King, Pendlebury et al. 2011; Sawahel 2011). However, some necessary steps for reform have also been taken, and there have been some notable Arab scientific successes in the region (Brewer, Augustine, Zellman et al. 2007). UNESCO has also sponsored numerous conferences on science education for the region.

One main objective detailed in many STEM education reports and conferences is promoting the reform of methods of teaching. Such work intends to change the culture of teaching and learning in some of the more technical subjects by making it more hands-on, integrated and relevant. Most of this reform seeks to make science and mathematics instruction in schools more focused on problem solving than on rote memorisation. Yet other work on STEM reform aims to encourage economic

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1   Note that the centre we refer to is called STEAM, as we have undertaken the inclusion of arts and humanities as a focal point in regular STEM education; but most global research, much of which we discuss here, refers to STEM.

growth through 'human capital'. Some of the work advocates for decreasing the gender gap in the sciences and in engineering.

STEM education curricula, as introduced in many countries, have been a seemingly simple solution for responding to reports about 'human capital' challenges, low scientific output and rote instructional methodologies. Despite such research trends, and the varying reasons for countries pursuing such reforms, the STEAM Education Centre was developed with the ultimate goal of encouraging interdisciplinary, hands-on, problem-based learning in schools and universities. The activities of the Centre are aimed at enhancing science and mathematics curricula and pedagogical methods to engage students, develop problem-solving skills, and maintain educational relevancy. It is the Centre's view that rote learning of science and mathematics curricula, and decontextualised pedagogy, have contributed to alienation of many students from those subjects, as well as limited skills for applying those subjects to real world problems.

As with all STEM reform agendas, two central problems exist.

- First, **it is easier for policymakers to insist on changing what gets taught when what they really wish they could do is change the entire educational system**. The implementation of revised curricula is fraught with socio-organisational challenges. A new curriculum is an easy target for policy analysts, as well as regular citizens, to turn to when critiquing educational systems, as it is both the content of education and an apparent (and sometimes) available product. As a result of its prominent role in education, and its place in the debates on the relevancy of social interventions, it is often seen as low-hanging fruit for analysts and critics.

- Second, **the curriculum is symbolic of the values that any society intends to transmit to its youth**. Thus proposals for change are often seen as threats. Indeed, science and mathematics do not carry much value-based baggage (compared to, for instance, citizenship education), but in a society that places great emphasis on transitional markers in education – the various tests to get into university, the awarding of a university degree, and so forth – curricular change can have very high emotional impact.

These two problems, from our experience, have posed essential challenges to gaining traction in practice. Because of the issues above, policy is the simple part: policymakers can encourage the modification of the curriculum, and that modification can reflect high-level policy goals that have policy-level salience. Such goals, including STEM, are both internationally savvy and economically-minded. Thus, through our case study, we argue that think tanks and research organisations may actually be targeting an incomplete audience with their work in educational reform. We show that policy-level reforms may be drastically insufficient for making any noticeable change.

Setting up the STEAM Education Centre in Cairo

In 2011, upon the prompting of many international research and donor organisations, the Egyptian Ministry of Education endeavoured to make STEM education a central goal in its reform strategies. Foundations responded by bringing in international speakers. USAID, the US Agency for International Development, responded by providing funding for five STEM schools to be created based on models in the US. Various other efforts were also initiated in order to strengthen the general education of mathematics and sciences in public schools.

In response to these policy initiatives, in 2012 the Graduate School of Education at the American University in Cairo opened a STEAM Education Centre as an effort to influence policy and practice for STEM/STEAM education in Egypt and the region. The following text summarises the objectives of the Centre:

> AUC's STEAM Education Centre has as its ultimate goal the teaching and learning of science, mathematics, and engineering at all levels and all sectors of Egyptian education. We believe that classroom instruction, whether in early primary grades or graduate school, should be dynamic, hands-on, intellectually stimulating, age appropriate, and fun; it should be delivered in a well-planned curriculum and assessed by authentic, performance-based measurements. Science, mathematics, and engineering, in particular, should be taught with interdisciplinary means in ways that encourage creativity, ingenuity, exploration, and life-long learning. We believe this is possible at all levels and that such dynamic teaching can reinvigorate the learning and assessment process for all subject areas in Egyptian schools.

> STEAM conducts its work synergistically on three levels: (1) conducting rigorous research to inform and influence teachers, leaders, and policymakers; (2) providing school-based professional development, coaching, and instructional leadership; and (3) developing models of school-based reform, including instructional leadership models, data-driven decision-making protocols, teacher evaluation strategies, job-embedded professional development plans, and research-based resource allocation strategies. The centre examines STEAM education holistically by analysing all aspects of educational improvement.

The inclusion of the arts into the regular STEM reform concept is an added twist to this reform agenda. Whereas many STEM practices and policies aim to increase knowledge and skill in the mathematics and sciences, and to increase the attractiveness of engineering as a potential profession, adding a component for the arts is a way to ensure that skills in creativity and communication are enhanced simultaneously. As an illustration, classroom projects that simulate engineering activities (and attempt to address instructional learning objectives in mathematics and sciences) can include design components; rather than just 'solving' problems, such approaches also encourage students to think aesthetically. Another example is addressed directly by ABET accreditation standards (standards for accreditation for

university engineering programs): a significant emphasis has been placed on ensuring that engineers can, in addition to being competent in their disciplines, communicate clearly to non-engineers and lead team-based projects, among other things.

Many aspects of the development of the centre demonstrate both challenges and possibilities for how think tanks and university-based researchers might influence practice and policy. To summarise these challenges and possibilities, we outline two critical issues that we have encountered: practice and implementation.

Implementing STEAM reforms

Integration of subjects and instruction through problem-based learning requires a significant amount of knowledge about certain kinds of teaching that many teachers do not possess and an acceptance of educational philosophies that many teachers and parents do not have. As an illustration, in 2012 we invited teachers and leaders from local schools and universities to various public lectures with distinguished researchers in education from around the world. Attempting to include them in the creation of STEAM education policy in Egypt, we believed it would be both technically necessary for them to understand STEM/STEAM in the international context and organisationally decent to include them in the high-level conversations. The effect of this has been undesired, however, as we have prompted great confusion. In our attempt to get the highest quality and most current research to the teachers and leaders, we did not address some of the more fundamental concerns they have about the educational environment, such as classroom management, authentic assessment and student-centred methods of teaching.

In this case, our communication was not tailored to the audience: we made the mistake of assuming that these teachers and school leaders had the same concerns as policymakers and researchers. Teachers were confused about the more complex topical presentations that were understood easily when presented in other countries. Leaders were frustrated that the most common issues of pedagogy continued to be ignored: they wanted teachers to refine skills in instructional differentiation (handling learning disabilities in general classrooms) and behaviour management. We clearly dealt with different issues to those the audience needed and wanted. Other examples of this have also been seen in trainings, publications, reports, and consultations. Though we wanted to move forward with some very cutting edge ideas, quite often we first needed to deal with the basics.

Equipping teachers and school leaders with evidence-based instructional strategies is important, as practitioners must carry out the work themselves. However, it is equally important that students and their parents are convinced of the merits of such strategies as well. The incentives within the larger system of Education in Egypt are skewed toward assessments that test very narrow knowledge (i.e., the tests ask for discrete bits of knowledge without consideration of their application or issues of interpretation, as many modern tests are capable of doing). Students in Egyptian schools take the Thanaweya Amma ('general test') high school assessment that has

tremendous influence on university admissions and career trajectories, and so an industry of private tutoring has proliferated around it. For that reason, at schools that charge tuition in particular, even the most innovative ideas are often squelched due to the pressures of the tests (Herrera and Torres 2006). Indeed, simply changing curricular content is much easier than changing what gets taught, and how. In other words, official curricula often do not match the actual content taught within individual classrooms (Coburn 2004; Spillane 2006). Added to this, many textbooks in Egypt are considered to contain factually incorrect information (Dakkak, 2011). With all of these issues in mind, despite the possibilities for inserting STEM/STEAM concepts into curricula, instructional practice, policy guidelines and funding streams, some significant challenges are still there, and the centralised textbooks that contain information on the tests are still seen as of critical importance to families and students.

One interesting example of this came from a recent funded project on new STEM high schools (carried out by another agency, but with some support from the STEAM Education Centre). With the establishment of the first school in 2011, the Egyptian STEM school project has focused on the curriculum, mainly as a way to find a way around the Thanaweya Amma. To accomplish this, existing national textbooks were barred at the school, in favour of pre-approved websites, hands-on projects, and other textual materials that had not been produced by the Ministry of Education. Yet students still obtained copies of the old textbooks and read them, even without requirement, primarily out of concern that they may, ultimately, be held responsible for some of that knowledge, even though the school insisted that would not occur. Imagine: over a hundred teenage boys sneaking science textbooks into their dorm room beds at night! This alone is evidence of the force of institutional practice on culture.

Our experience demonstrates that the route from policy to practice is indeed long. We aimed initially to focus mostly on policy, and yet, we recognised that policymakers could not, in fact, assist us in our endeavours. When it comes to education, the people who carry out the work and are consumers of it are perhaps the more important actors. One particularly interesting example of how we incorporated this recognition that citizens could be at the front-line of educational change came from some work we did with another new STEM school established outside of Cairo by the Egyptian government under the USAID project. We deliberated over how evidence-based practice could best be integrated into the school, amid the heavy constraints of the test-based culture. In the end, we decided strongly against having researchers provide the evidence-based information directly. We believed that our communication skills were better honed for policymakers, and that we lacked the experience to make the communication successful. So, instead, we recruited young graduate students to shape the research messages in a way that takes advantage of their closer generational similarities. For instance, many of our graduate students were directly involved in the revolution on 25 January, 2011; even though they are just a few years apart, many of the high school students watched from the side lines. Of all our communication techniques this personal connection, in encouraging conversations

about the benefit of innovative education – and the simultaneous real-life examples from people who have made it through university and are now in graduate school – has been hugely successful. Students, themselves, have changed how they talk with their parents about the school: they have become more positive about the benefits of a STEM education. This showed us, albeit in a minor way, that think tanks and research organisations indeed should look to address the 'street level bureaucrats' and people providing good community examples at least as much as policymakers (Lipsky 1980).

Conclusion: recommendations for researchers and think tanks

All in all, we have come to understand that research attempting to influence policy and practice must reach all parties in an educational context at the levels of complexity that fit them best, with regard to their applied function in the context. Each party has a responsibility to communicate with the audience in mind. In previous decades, education reform ideas were communicated directly from think tanks and funding agencies to governments that implemented them quickly and often poorly. Following the recent revolutionary wave, we believe that researchers must communicate with citizens. In Egypt, with a population that barely trusts government at all (in early 2014) – and education being a political issue that is so personal to many families – we have learned that citizens must be given the opportunity to engage with the ideas that we, as researchers, would like to see implemented. Citizens themselves have to ask for reforms with specific, tangible, local solutions, from their governments. If we continue to promote ideas only to governments, we know these ideas will not hold in society.

To conclude, we come back to the larger picture of educational reform in the Arab countries and consider the five frameworks discussed earlier – international influence, the cultural role of Islam, cultural views about girls, the Arab demographic transition, and political participation – describing ways in which researchers could be both more strategic and more accesible in how they communicate to their target audiences. We also close each sub-section with lessons that we, as researchers, will implement in our future work with the new STEAM Education Centre.

International influence

There is a tendency in educational policy communities to compare surface-level features, and adopt merely those features without understanding the underlying contextual features. For instance, education ministers throughout the world have noted the educational successes in Finland and Singapore, and have attempted to copy the most apparent strategies: lengthier teacher training, greater selectivity in teacher preparation programs and targeted, low-stakes assessments (as opposed to constant, high-stakes, year-to-year testing). There are two essential problems to consider with this kind of comparison. First, there are differing underlying cultural views of teaching. In Singapore and Finland, teaching is regarded as a more venerable profession compared with many other countries and this, in turn, permits higher

salaries in exchange for more extensive training, more selective recruiting, and more focused classroom practice. In most countries throughout the world, teaching tends to be viewed partially as low-skilled labour, partially as caretaking. As a result, professionalisation attempts, though successful in Finland and Singapore, have not been as successful in other countries for a combination of political, economic, and social reasons, usually unique to each country.

The second problem with importing ideas from successful countries – commonly termed 'borrowing' – is demographic. Singapore and Finland are wealthy countries. While Finland has less diversity, Singapore has a more tightly controlled government; in both cases, dissent is not as prevalent in educational policy as in larger, more diverse, and more economically volatile countries. One might reasonably ask why United Arab Emirates (UAE) has not had as much success with educational reform: after all, it is a small country, geographically, and very wealthy. Why has it not been able to adopt similar policies and achieve similar successes? While some of the answers will become more apparent as we move through the five analytic frameworks, one way to think about this is that the UAE, though wealthy, is not economically stable. With a massive foreign population doing significant amounts of its professional labour and a less educated indigenous population doing much of its government work, the UAE government itself has shown concern for its economic stability, given volatile oil markets. In an attempt to increase indigenous 'human capital', the government has imported a variety of universities through branch campus arrangements, and it has continued to import many foreign educators. While these are significant steps toward improving educational outcomes, unless education is regarded as an esteemed profession – and unless Emiratis build capacity within their own population, rather than importing it – the educational system will continue to be externally driven.

Though the Arab countries will continue to experience economic volatility for some time, educational policy can only move forward with an appropriate understanding of social, political, and economic contexts. Without these, researchers and think tanks will continue to send Arab countries on rat races, by advocating policies on the merit of them being adopted elsewhere. Indeed, the Arab countries should test specific strategies used elsewhere, but their adoption must be exercised within the broader contexts of local constraints. And researchers can convey that message better if they seek to understand those underlying issues first.

With regard to the new STEAM Centre, we have noted a major problem in implementing various strategies. Schools, teachers, parents, students, and policymakers wish to see the programmes and strategies that are implemented in Europe and US to be replicated in Egypt. While such desires are important, effectiveness of such efforts is hindered by the limited exposure the participants have had with the model schools and teachers. Additionally, much of the literature we have used to justify and promote the STEM idea comes from Western Europe and the US. Too much of the research that guides education reform in developing countries comes from the 'best practices' of developed countries. In some regard, this is because the

market for such research at the university and practice level is much more developed in these countries. But it simply does not work, both for technical implementation and for cultural reasons. Developing a literature at the site of implementation is essential for citizen and policymaker acceptance, and will become a far better practical tool.

Cultural role of Islam in education

The view of learning as memorisation, rooted in early conceptions of personal religious development, persists within Arab cultures. As in many conservative traditions throughout the world, there is a tendency to view phenomena in terms of right versus wrong, as opposed to a more liberal spectrum of diverse social systems and interests. Reforming the memorisation-centred learning culture is not as much an issue of 'modernising' the curricula as it is of broadening the number of methods at people's disposal. 'Modernised' curricula will make little difference in practice if the teaching and learning processes do not also adopt diverse systems, and learn from them. As researchers, we must demonstrate school-to-school, teacher-to-teacher, student-to student, that this is possible, and must choose advocates who are a good fit as communicators in each context. In choosing those advocates, we are reminded of Rogers' (1962) diffusion model: new adopters are mainly convinced by seeing that others have had success with an innovation.

As we have shown, researchers may have a stronger impact if they modify who they see as targets for educational reform. As has been documented, although a high-level curriculum is an easy target for education researchers, and is readily accessible for critique, more appropriate targets might be assessment systems, and parents', students' and teachers' cultural perceptions of knowledge transfer. In terms of the STEAM Centre, we have already had some success in changing educators' and policymakers' views regarding interdisciplinary, hands-on, relevant instructional methods. But we recognise that we will need to engage in a broader campaign to demonstrate its benefits before we convince many Egyptian citizens of the value of these innovative educational practices.

Cultural views regarding girls

Researchers have found over the years that it is easier to increase girls' access to schools than to increase attendance or to change teachers' and parents' views about the potential of girls: both during the learning process, and in the subsequent labour market. Think tanks can continue to push for access – which is still needed in many Arab countries – but that access will do very little if there is little perceived value in girls taking full advantage of that access.

Therefore, researchers and think tanks can have a much more effective role in this if the target of reform is broadened from just the political system to the communities and families involved (Zaalouk 2004). In a sense, what it means is that think tanks and researchers must strike up a more direct conversation with communities.

While this may be less comfortable for researchers who have become accustomed to working at the interstices of power, usually in cosmopolitan capital cities, it seems this is the only practical and honest way for foreign reformers to move girls' education forward in other countries.

While teachers and parents must be constantly reminded about the equal potential capacity that girls and boys have in the sciences, we also recognise that these girls will soon graduate into a society that does not necessarily agree. Thus, we will increasingly need to show what gender equity looks like in practice. This means that researchers, once again, must address citizens directly, not just governments. Indeed, the Egyptian government has permitted and even supported schools and educational reforms that benefit girls for quite a long time; in order for those schools and policies to matter, people must be the direct recipients of knowledge and ideas.

Demographic transitions

Just as think tanks and researchers must honour their responsibility to communicate strategies and the reasons for curricular modernisation, increased access and the modification of assessment structures, they must also pay close attention to the new and unique realities that will present themselves in the coming decades.

Researchers working in poorer, North African, Arabic speaking countries such as Morocco, Egypt, or Libya, for instance, can learn not only from the successes of educational reform in the developed world, but also from the failures. Similarly, researchers working on educational problems in the wealthy Gulf Cooperation Council countries must heed the decades of failures associated with the transplantation of educational institutions from one country to another. In many ways, researchers must develop the capacity to think beyond their own research and the canon of educational literature as it currently exists.

Thus, it is increasingly important moving forward that the STEAM Education Centre in Cairo is a producer of local knowledge for local consumption. This is a hard aim to achieve, as the ideas seem appealing to parents and policymakers essentially because they are imported from abroad. Yet, consider the distinctions between STEM reforms in the US and Germany, and the purpose of the STEAM Education Centre in Egypt: in the US, for instance, STEM education is often thought of only as a method of increasing interest in and capability for engineering and science professions. In Egypt, engineering is an extremely popular and competitive profession already. Demographically, methodologically, the issues are radically different, and therefore, the methods of addressing them should also be very different.

Political participation

This frame is perhaps the best place to conclude, as it reminds us that real democracy and genuine citizen decisionmaking would prevent policymakers from implementing reform in a vacuum. As we have tried to show in this chapter, messages about

educational reform may be less appropriate in the hands of policymakers and more appropriate in the hands of the parents, students and teachers. Citizens of Arab countries regularly express dissatisfaction with their educational systems. With the right strategies, citizens could be more instrumental in creating reforms that will yield the outcomes they desire.

In terms of upcoming research communication for schools development proposed by the STEAM Education Centre, we will engage in the development of new school-based governance structures, to encourage students and parents, as well as community business owners, to have a say in school management. Indeed, we see this as an essential method of communicating to the Ministry of Education the ways in which education can occur. Demonstrating good governance is best done in practice, we believe, by coaching participants through successful processes.

One central reform agenda in the developed world has been to increase the amount of knowledge that parents have about schools and the educational process, in part to increase competition between schools. While the merits of such a strategy are still being debated, it does send a powerful message that the process of education cannot and should not be kept a secret from those who use and benefit from it.

Educational reform is complicated work made more challenging by its interconnection with nearly all aspects of political, social, and economic life within countries and cultures. Ultimately, in a dramatically changing and increasingly vocal region, we find that the most powerful audience for educational reform is not, in fact, the policymakers, but the people. Thus, we must encourage new approaches for think tanks and universities in communicating research, possible outcomes and innovations directly to citizens in Arab countries. In many ways, for educational systems to improve, think tanks must begin to see their role in the region as actual educators.

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Where's our money going? Challenges of Budget Transparency and Accountability in Indonesia

Muhammad Maulana and Bagus BT Saragih

Why budget advocacy…?

The budget is the most important economic policy instrument for governments. It reflects a government's social and economic policy priorities more than any other document, translating policies, political commitments, and goals into decisions on where funds should be spent and how funds should be collected. A well-functioning budget system is vital to the formulation of sustainable fiscal policy and facilitates economic growth. Economic problems are exacerbated by weak budget systems and faulty budget choices. That is why the budget can be an indicator to accurately measure governance performance.

While a government's budget directly or indirectly affects the life of all its citizens, frequently it is the people with the most modest means who are influenced the most. They tend to be most vulnerable to weak economic growth or high inflation. The current wellbeing of those with low incomes, and their future prospects, can also hinge on expenditure decisions in areas such as health and education. Yet, budget cuts tend to fall on programmes that benefit the poor more frequently, since other issues such as public debt or the public sector wage bill are more likely to have first claim on scarce resources. Moreover, even when funds have been allocated to anti-poverty programmes, weak expenditure and programme management — and the lack of political power among the poor — can mean that the money never reaches the intended beneficiaries.

The budget process and budget system in a country are also crucial in determining the degree to which it has an open, democratic, and participatory system of government. The general absence of information on budget issues — particularly in accessible, non-technical forms — has seriously hindered the efforts of national

and local organisations to participate in the discussion on the distribution of public resources (Shapiro and Falk 2001).

Philosophically, the source of the budget is the people. The government collects various kinds of taxes from them. It is every citizen's task to spare part of their income to be given to government as income tax, for example. Taxation is the main element of state revenue and makes up a significant portion of the state budget. Because the budget primarily comes from taxpayers, the government – as the state authority that holds power to manage the budget – must be responsible to the public by translating the taxpayers' funds into the people's benefit.

In Indonesia, the basic framework of state budgeting is also institutionalised by the Constitution of 1945. Article 23, point 1 of the Constitution stipulates:

> State budget as the implementation of State financial management is endorsed annually under law and the processes are carried out transparently and accountable for the sake of the people's welfare.

The mandate of the Constitution indicates at least two principles of state budgeting. First, the budget must improve people's welfare. Second, budgeting processes must be transparent and accountable. As a nation that upholds democracy and legal values, this constitutional mandate must serve as the fundamental principle in budgeting processes and management of taxpayers' funds.

Those principles are broken down in the 2003 Law on State Finance. Article 3 of the law stipulates: 'state Finance is managed in an orderly, lawful, efficient, economical, effective, transparent, and responsible fashion with consideration of a sense of justice and appropriateness'.

Nevertheless, given its young democracy, which only began in 1998, Indonesia today still suffers from so-called 'power euphoria'. This euphoria has led to weak governance including practices related to budgeting processes. The government has failed to implement state budget management totally under the principles set by the Constitution and the 2003 law.

Among frequent shortcomings are weak budgeting practices resulting in ineffectiveness and inefficiencies. Taxpayers' money is wasted, partly due to the government's failure to adopt the basic values and principles set by the laws. The failure to comply with the laws even sometimes happens as a result of deliberate misappropriations by culprits.

Another problem is the lack of transparency. Officials still tend to treat budget-related documents as state secrets and provide very little public access to them. 'Ordinary' people are considered ineligible to access detailed information about the government's programmes and policies as well as the allocated budget to finance them. An ill-informed public, even among low-level civil servants, was often subject

to this misleading assumption. As a result, some still believe that discussing the state budget, not to mention its deliberation processes, is taboo.

Culprits within the government used this common understanding about privacy of the state budget to continue to misuse taxpayers' funds for their own benefits. They take advantage when people still falsely believe that state officials have full rights to state funds and that their 'exclusive' access to budgeting is compensation for their status as government officials. These culprits have no shame in telling the public that any matters related to budgeting processes are their business only and that the people should not object to this privacy.

This situation has boosted the National Secretariat of the Indonesian Forum for Budget Transparency's (Seknas FITRA) spirit to improve efforts to encourage more transparent and publicly accountable expenditures of state budgets aimed directly, as the Constitution requires, at promotion of public welfare. FITRA's organisational mandate and vision are to ensure the public's sovereignty over the state budget by advocating greater budget transparency and accountability in Indonesia.

Inequity of budgeting: a case

FITRA has found malpractices in budgeting that lead to ineffectiveness and inefficiencies almost every year. One indication was the allocation for official overseas visits that kept ballooning even though FITRA's analysis showed that most of the visits had failed to generate any tangible benefits for Indonesia. Inefficiencies could even be seen in allocations for trivial matters, such as the procurement of snacks for meetings which frequently cost an unreasonable amount of the state budget.

A study by FITRA showed that state funds allocated for official trips had drastically increased between 2006 and 2010; from 8.9 trillion rupiah (US$ 919.71 million) in 2006 to Rp 19.6 trillion in 2010; more than twice as high than it was four years earlier.

Year on year, the allocation for official trips in 2007 was 2.25% higher. It increased significantly by Rp 3 trillion, or about 30%, in 2008.

In 2008, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono began his campaign for budget efficiency in all state bodies, in which he said allocations for official trips, besides seminars and workshops, were the most subject to reductions. In fact, the finance ministry has even issued supporting regulations to help guide state institutions to implement budget efficiencies.

Ironically though, the allocation for official trips increased even more steeply after the President's campaign. In 2009, the government set Rp 15.2 trillion for official trips, or about 40% higher than the Rp 11.1 trillion spent the previous year. A similar trend was seen in the 2009–2010 period.

Legally speaking, there is nothing wrong with the government allocating a massive amount of taxpayers' money for official trips. But the public was irritated by the fact that they did not perceive any benefits to come out of them. Trips, particularly overseas, were seen merely as tours for the pleasure of politicians in the eyes of the people, rather than part of efforts to improve their welfare. It was seen as inappropriate to allocate Rp 19.5 trillion for official trips in 2010 while the funds assigned to the People's Health Insurance Program (Jamkesmas) were only Rp 4.5 trillion or less than one fourth of the amount that the government disbursed to finance its officials going on trips. In fact, some other important programmes in the education and development sectors, such as the School Aid Funds (BOS) and the National Programme for Community Empowerment (PNPM), were financed by foreign loans.

Irregular allocations for official trips were found in almost all ministries and state bodies, even the House of Representatives and the President's office. In 2010, both the House and the President's office topped the list of highest budget allocations for trips with Rp 179 billion and Rp 170 billion respectively.

To make matters worse, the mechanism of utilisation of such funds contained loopholes that were prone to misappropriation. A 2010 Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) study revealed that the misuse of funds allocated for official trips caused the highest losses to the Indonesian State in 2009. In total, the BPK found that Rp 73.6 billion of funds that were supposed to be for official trips had been misappropriated with various kinds of modi operandi, such as marking up expenses, fictitious trips, fake tickets, and double payments.

It is in this context that this chapter attempts to address the challenges that FITRA has faced in communicating with policymakers and the public in Indonesia.

Communicating budget-related ideas via the mass media

FITRA's struggles to influence budgeting policies have been ongoing for years but serious advocacy steps began to be carried out in 2004. Between 2004 and 2010, however, FITRA had yet to find specific and focused advocacy points: targets were still generally identified, such as ensuring that allocations for education and health services must be higher than allocations for administrative and bureaucracy expenditure.

At the regional level, the practice of this kind of advocacy is mostly done by analysing the ratio between direct and indirect expenditures. Direct expenditure is the use of taxpayers' funds for programmes that directly affected the people, while indirect expenditure is the use of the budget to finance activities that do not have direct impacts on the taxpayers. Included in indirect expenditures are civil servants' salaries and other kind of allowances.

Advocacy strategies generally aim to conduct public campaigns, strengthen the capacity of the community, and build the awareness of people's rights regarding the budget. Advocacy through lobbying or meeting directly with policymakers is rarely done because FITRA has continued to maintain its position as an external monitoring organisation.

Therefore, one of the instruments used by FITRA is called the 'budget brief' which is basically a summary of a comprehensive and in-depth study. This method is often effective for informing budget policymakers because, as public officials, they have very little time to read a budget analysis of several pages and policy recommendations and as a consequence tend to ignore the reports. Through budget briefs, FITRA presents only the main results of its analysis, which visibly depict injustice and impropriety in budget allocation so that policymakers will be brought straight to the main points. Also included in the budget briefs are tactical recommendations that need to be taken into consideration by policymakers in the hope that they will allocate taxpayers' money for the greatest prosperity of the people.

Budget briefs are submitted to lawmakers and members of regional representative councils. FITRA always hopes that they will take its budget analysis into account and help channel it to the government and regional administrations by, for example, voicing it during hearings with the executives.

However, the practice of this kind of tactic has rarely seen a significant impact particularly when it comes to issues concerning ineffective, inefficient, and inappropriate budget allocation. A simple example is that despite FITRA's sustained criticism the government continues to allocate a great portion of the budget for state officials' travel expenses while the budget for education and health, which would have a direct impact on the poor, has remained low.

Quite clearly then, direct influence by FITRA is not working. A more indirect approach, one that includes the very public that ought to be outraged by this kind of behavior, is necessary.

Therefore, besides the use of budget briefs, FITRA's advocacy work is also done by carrying out public campaigns through the media. The objective of these campaigns is that the results of the analysis – as well as the recommendations – will be published and widely disseminated so that the public will be better informed about the arguments put forward by FITRA. Press conferences, as one of the main tools for working with the media, are also expected to inform public opinion so as to build up public pressure on policymakers to allocate the budget in accordance with the Constitution's mandate.

FITRA is aware that the media is one of the most effective instruments to communicate ideas to the public and to policy makers. As Jurgen Habermas argued, mass media is at the core of the 'living' public (public sphere). Through the mass media, individuals – as equals with the State – discuss, propose, review, criticise

and argue for an agreement for the common good. Mass media is also one of the main forces in a modern democracy that is capable of influencing policies. It is also included in the analysis by Martin Shaw in his book *Global Voice; Civil Society and Media in Global Crisis* (1999) where he describes the relationship of mass media and civil society to democratic institutions as being like fish to water.

Challenges of working with the media

During FITRA's early phase in building a budget advocacy strategy through the media, one of the main challenges it faced was that it was not known by many media outlets, let alone by the public. For months, FITRA appeared as an outsider that could hardly manage to get the media to provide it with even a small spot to publish its reports on budget analysis.

In Indonesia, hundreds of NGOs are spread throughout the nation. With most of them labeled as 'bad' NGOs, due to their obscure activities, it has never been easy to garner public empathy and to be perceived as a 'good' NGO. It wasn't until 2009, when FITRA's budget advocacy work began to find its way to the media, that this began to change.

FITRA had been following the strategy of a particular NGO, which oversees corruption issues and that enjoyed good relations with the media. As a result, FITRA often felt 'forced' to package its budget analysis as an anti-corruption campaign in order to make its way into the news agenda.

However, after following the lead of that NGO for few years, FITRA was still yet to be widely recognised. Its relations with media individuals were still limited. This forced the organisation to reflect on its own approach and it began to explore its own ways to build a unique relationship with the media.

Unfortunately, FITRA's analysis presented in press conferences still failed to win media attention. There were still very few media outlets that were eager to cover and publish FITRA's reports. Apparently, the media still considered 'budgets' an unappealing issue to publish, not to mention their lack of knowledge about FITRA and its work on budget advocacy.

Reflecting on those experiences in working with journalists to advocate for the effectiveness and efficiency of the budget, FITRA identified several factors that explain its failure to achieve its purposes. These factors are:

a. Before 2010, most of FITRA's press releases presented graphs with data that we thought a journalist would not fail to understand. But graphics usually contains a lot of information that could confuse anyone not familiar with the budget. Confused journalists tended to ignore them simply because they failed to find something newsworthy in the data – even though we thought it was clear as water. FITRA also failed to access budget documents completely, and

so could not offer journalists a sufficiently robust and comprehensive analysis. Public access to budget-related documents was very limited to only general information. Furthermore, access was also granted only a few weeks before the House of Representatives endorsed the budget, leaving only a short period of time for FITRA to produce a good and comprehensive analysis. To avoid being 'too late', FITRA always publishes before endorsement by the House, hoping that there would be still chances for budget policymakers to make revisions that take FITRA's analysis into account. But this meant that the data FITRA could use was not always final.

a. In a country where citizen participation in the budget process is not prevalent, the budget is still perceived as something that is taboo to discuss in the public sphere. There is still a serious deficit of analysts who are able to link public policies with budget policies. Most analysts provide comments and criticisms on public policy from normative, social, and political viewpoints. As a civil society organisation that focuses on budget advocacy, FITRA has found this situation to be another challenge: how to familiarise the public with the language of budget advocacy via the mass media, when all the public is used to is general policy commentary?

a. Related to the two points above, journalists do not generally understand the budget and related issues. This was most likely because of a lack of civil society groups who used the budget as an instrument of public policy advocacy, but also of weak media and a feeble journalistic profession.

a. The media has always been more interested in publishing issues related to corruption. Corruption always involves misconduct or abuse of state funds while budget issues mainly focus on how the budget goes through a series of processes and finally results in allocations and actions. There are indeed connections between corruption and budget policies but budget advocacy tends to focus on how policymakers translate the budget into public benefits in the best possible way. Advocating for effective budgets could also play a preemptive role, but this is not the same as an anti-corruption campaign. If the budget is processed through proper, decent and transparent mechanisms, the chance for culprits to misuse it will be minimised. This is something that the media is not so interested in.

How to respond to these lessons?

Although the budget advocacy done by FITRA has not been optimally achieved yet, we have not reduced the intensity of our work. Instead, these reflections led FITRA to decide that budget advocacy had to be carried out on a larger scale.

Hence, since mid-2009, budget analysis has been done more broadly and creatively. Budget analysis is not always carried out based on the stages of a long research method. A simple but significant and easy-to-understand analysis is done by undertaking straightforward comparisons. For example, comparing the proportion of the budget earmarked for officials and that allocated for development programmes.

Some allocations for officials may look trivial but sometimes the sum is considerable. For instance, the budget allocated to provide facilities and services for state officials, travels and food and beverage in meetings, looks too lavish given the low allocations for education and healthcare for the poor. From that simple example, budgetmakers demonstrate inequality and injustice in distributing taxpayers' money, particularly given the deteriorating gaps between the rich and the poor.

Press releases

To channel these ideas to the public and to policymakers, FITRA decided to continue targeting the media. We paid particular attention to our press releases, which are now sent to both print and electronic media via email. About three to four press releases are sent every month. That means that at least one press release must be produced a week. In the beginning, our expectations were rather realistic and we recognised that it would be hard to be taken seriously by all media outlets. Thus, our objective was to introduce FITRA to the journalists, as well as to familiarise the media with a new perspective in public policy advocacy: budget advocacy. FITRA did not expect the media to publish its studies right away.

Some of the lessons from FITRA's earlier reflection were incorporated into the press releases. Press releases must not be complicated. FITRA had to ensure that each press release did not contain 'confusing' graphics that journalists would struggle to understand. However, using numeric explanations in communicating budget analysis is inevitable most of the time.

Sometimes budget issues associated with corruption are effective in making the media more interested in covering them. This is sometimes also effective in helping journalists and the public understand the budget itself: the substance of a budget issue can reach the heart of the people's attention when it immediately poses a real impact: in this case, corruption.

An ineffective and inefficient budget depicted 'merely' as a violation of constitutional mandate and statutory law may fail to garner great attention but when it shows a real picture of how much taxpayers' money is wasted, budget advocacy can look more attractive. Then, it will not only encourage understanding of the importance of budget advocacy, but it will also encourage journalists to learn more about the budget, even though they might have initially tended to ignore it and FITRA's press releases.

Access to information

In budget advocacy, FITRA assumes that the availability of budget documents is a key to success, particularly in advocacy through the media, as FITRA must convince journalists that its analysis is based on reliable data. This is the power of FITRA's good relationship with journalists: relationships that it must maintain, in order to continue advocating in this way. In our experience of budget advocacy, other observers tend towards 'normative' opinions without strong data to support them.

This kind of 'normative' criticism is not effective because, usually, policymakers have the ability to counter it. FITRA believes that only by using valid data can its studies reach legitimacy. Policymakers will have little room to make biased arguments when all of the data together make a strong argument .

Unfortunately, accessing this information is easier said than done. But when it happens it can have highly positive consequences. In 2011, for example, FITRA found that, according to the 2011 State Budget Allocation List (DIPA), each member of the House of Representatives was entitled to a communications allowance of Rp 14 million (US$1,442) per month. The House has 560 members so the total allocation for allowances was Rp 7.84 billion (US$807,520) per month. FITRA issued a press release stating that the amount of taxpayers' money earmarked to support the communications purposes of lawmakers was too big and denied the principle of fairness. In the press release, FITRA argued that such a large amount of money could be more beneficial to the public if reallocated to programmes related to poverty reduction, education or healthcare. This issue grew quickly. Many House members were unable to comment, seeming cornered because the analysis FITRA had used was based on valid and legitimate data. Some lawmakers found an easy way to escape the harsh criticism simply by saying that they were not aware that there were budgets for communications.

Dare to criticise

The budget advocacy approach through the media used by FITRA is dialectic, as its press releases always deliver criticism to budget policymakers. FITRA hopes that this kind of thesis–antithesis–synthesis approach can result in the synthesis of a better budget policy, a change towards the principles of justice, decency and fairness in accordance with the mandates of the Constitution and the law. To us, one indicator of the success of advocacy is when budget policymakers respond to FITRA's budget analysis.

With this dialectical approach, FITRA's budget advocacy tends to focus on the House of Representatives. For approximately one year, FITRA's press releases always positioned these legislators as the guilty party in the flawed budget. It is this House who shares the biggest responsibility when the state budget fails to be attentive to the needs of the people. Lawmakers were not executing their budgeting power well. We expected this approach to push legislators to change their attitude and perform better by actively making a more effective and efficient budget.

In 2010, FITRA shifted its advocacy goals in order to attempt to have a greater impact on budget decisions. FITRA tried instead to address the President directly. At that time, only a small number of analysts managed to criticise the President openly in a public forum. FITRA urged the state budgetmakers to analyse the allocations for infrastructure and facilities for the President and his inner circle. FITRA exposed every item bought using taxpayers' money, from the procurement of a sofa to the expenditures for the President's outfits.

One of the findings that might have come as a surprise to many was that the budget allocated to procure and launder the President's shirts was larger than the budgets for the eradication of maternal and child mortality and malnutrition alleviation programmes together.

FITRA issued a press release on the findings, and concluded that the amount of money earmarked for such facilities was too big and inappropriate. FITRA saw the President, who should actually have been at the forefront of promoting effective and efficient budgets, as endorsing wasteful budget allocation. State budgets should be allocated for the welfare of the people, not for the welfare of the officials.

The downside of this confrontational approach is that it has put FITRA under constant pressure – from both the government and the House of Representatives. It was not a rare scene for FITRA's findings to be totally denied and shot down by officials. Accusations of FITRA's data being invalid, or that it did not know or understand the real conditions 'in the field', were common. Some desperate officials also often accused FITRA of seeking the limelight. They even said that FITRA was a foreign agent who wanted to damage Indonesia. In some way, such denials were good in the sense that FITRA's advocacy through the media managed to gain further attention. And it positioned the organisation as a source of independent, or at least alternative, information.

FITRA's criticism was not only rebuffed by officials: even the President once directly denied FITRA's data. Following the rebuttal, however, the President issued Presidential Decree No. 72/2011 on the prevention of wasteful spending in ministries and other agencies, in the fiscal year of 2011. The President instructed these three main points:

1. Improve the quality and security of state budget expenditures in 2011 by cutting 10% from the budget ceiling of each ministry, after salaries and other routine expenditure.

2. The efficiency of the budget is effected by:
    a.   Limiting travel, except for official journeys considered important.
    b.   Limiting work meetings, seminars, and workshops held outside offices.
    c.   Limiting operational expenditure, except in the defence and civil order sectors.

3. Spare budgets resulting from the increased efficiency must be allocated for:
    a.   Accelerating the achievement of national development priorities, such as infrastructure.
    b.   New policies that have not been included in government planning.
    c.   Programme activities that are urgent.

Despite the presidential instruction, FITRA did not feel it had successfully advocated the budget. The President's instruction indeed showed a focusing of his attention

but more important issues occurred after the issuance of the instruction. FITRA had a much more challenging task in this phase, which was to monitor whether the President's order was actually executed by budget users.

The President's decision was a quite big step for FITRA, particularly in terms of making itself known to the public. The media and the public began to recognise FITRA. Its position as a budget activist grew stronger and became considerably more noticeable to budget policymakers. How could it have such high recognition? FITRA was the first NGO in Indonesia who dared to criticise the budget allocated to procure and take care of the President's facilities. Previously, no other public policy observers or NGOs were willing to do that, indicating that the area was a legitimate part of the President's privacy.

In early 2011, budget advocacy at FITRA had become more popular than ever. FITRA had been able to map the sources that could be used to help find budget documents, including journalists. A close relationship with the media had turned out to be mutually beneficial. Journalists provided budget documents and access to them, while the analysis was done by FITRA.

The budget advocacy dilemma via the media

FITRA's decision to use the mass media as an instrument of advocacy has not been without challenges. As one element of a democracy, the media is faced with two realities. On one hand, the mass media is often seen, and presents itself, as part of the civil society groups that are expected to be a voice for the people. On the other hand, it is also faced with the fact that the mass media is an industry that looks for profit, as once expressed by P. Bambang Wisudo. According to him, the media and journalists are closer to power than to the people. In contrast, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in their book *The Elements of Journalism* (2001), suggest that the first loyalty of the media is to the citizens. Commitment to citizens can even be bigger than professional egoism. But Kovach further states that media companies' employees are not like those in other kinds of industries. They have the occasional social obligation that can be completely opposite to the interests of their employers.

Based on FITRA's experience, we can identify at least four dilemmas found in budget advocacy through mass media.

Dilemma 1: important versus newsworthy

In advocating budget reform, FITRA and the media often take different perspectives. Some budget issues that FITRA thinks need to be known by the public are sometimes viewed as not important by newsmakers. In this case, the mass media has its own news agenda, different from FITRA's budget advocacy one. So what is important for FITRA is not always newsworthy for the media.

An example is when FITRA advocated that the executive and legislative branches of the Government   discuss the draft of the 2013 state budget together in September to November 2012. FITRA found it urgent to advocate for the draft as soon as possible after its analysis showed some substantial flaws. We believed that FITRA must engage the media in order to influence policymakers to put the draft under public scrutiny before it was eventually made effective in December. But the issue failed to garner the interest of the media. Instead, the media preferred stories about the battle of opinion concerning the stand-offs between the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the National Police, which at that time was at the heart of people's discussion across the country.

In the eye of journalists, what is being anticipated by the public must be put on top priority. That is just how the media industry works. It is becoming more probably that current issues are chosen for coverage, rather than the issues being advocated by FITRA. The media's policy always prioritises topics already in the public's interest, especially popular media such as *The Jakarta Post.* Therefore, those times when there was 'no news' – and no hustle and bustle of politics – were often the 'perfect' time for FITRA to issue its studies because the chance to get media coverage was much bigger, since the media is required to continually write news, whatever happens.

Given such a deduction, FITRA found it pragmatic to 'package' a budget-related issue that it thought important to be addressed. This finding made FITRA try different approaches, particularly when certain budget issues came amid others that were already occupying most of the public's attention. One kind of approach, which most of the time turned out to be very difficult, was relating the current 'hot issue' to the budget. FITRA believes every issue concerning the government has a budget angle and so we try to use people's attention to certain much-discussed issues as the 'entrance' or 'hook' to put the budget forward for public scrutiny. But finding the right connections has been very tricky and challenging.

Each media outlet has its own agenda. That means its journalists have their own priority scale, especially for media that has limited space such as newspaper. FITRA must also understand that general newspapers like *The Jakarta Post* have a wider coverage area than a specific newspaper like business-focused *Bisnis Indonesia*. The Post is likely to be more interested in politics-related budget issues than *Bisnis*, while Bisnis has a much wider remit to cover certain budget issues that can be related to business. Taking this into account, FITRA can learn who to invite to a press conference based on the topic or which journalists it will approach to pursue their interests in covering the topic.

Dilemma 2: using the media versus being used by the media

Although not often, numerous times FITRA's name was used by the media as a 'funnel' of the voice of the people, not to mention the media's attempt to use FITRA to please its own agenda.

In these cases, FITRA did not issue a press release on a budget analysis but, regardless, a media outlet ran a story containing suggestions as if it was in accordance with FITRA's analysis even though the analysis was actually made by the journalists themselves. It sometimes used supporting statements by FITRA staff, which none of our FITRA members could recall providing. The statement was made as a direct quote from a FITRA member even though it had never been stated. FITRA sees that this phenomenon happened because it was only FITRA who had been consistent in criticising the budget. FITRA's constant moves to criticise budget policymakers were seen as a 'green light' for journalists to make up statements in our name, as long as they were criticising the government.

It has to be admitted that, since the fall of the New Order dictatorship regime in 1998, freedom of the press has continued to grow, almost euphorically. Now that no more permits are required to establish a media outlet, the number of people involved in the press has grown dramatically, unhampered. But this is not without negative effects. A lot of media groups continued to abuse press freedom to please their owners who have affiliations with certain political groups, for example. Today, many media groups tend to prioritise sensationalism over quality. Breaches of ethics occur when the media is involved in fierce competition. Making up statements is undoubtedly a violation of press ethics, regardless of the reasons behind it. But such a practice is indeed still common, not only because of journalists' tight deadlines, but also because many sources allow them to do so. Some figures may say, 'go ahead and make statements that will make me look decisive,' but this could lead to a bad habit among journalists.

One sample case was when a media outlet wanted to raise an issue about the alleged misappropriation of the budget in the education sector. One journalist phoned a FITRA researcher asking for a comment to address the issue. The journalist brought his own data, presented it to the researcher, and asked for FITRA's comment on the data. According to the journalist, the data, which depicted the irregularities surrounding state budget allocations in the education sector, had been obtained from a member of the House of Representatives. FITRA was stunned the next day. The story appeared in the media as if the data showing the irregularities surrounding the education budget were released by FITRA, and a lawmaker instead appeared as the party who commented on 'FITRA's' data.

Journalists are always posed with pressures by their editors to find 'big stories'. The battle between the media is fierce in the era of press freedom, which today has reached an unprecedented level. A tactic of pursuing sensationalism over everything is often used to win the battle, putting aside the press' code of ethics. Sometimes a big story is not always 'big' in the common sense, but a specific story angle is often sought by the editors, probably to please certain interests. In many cases, it is often fruitful to 'twist' a comment as a quick way to fulfill the editors' order. The media always likes sensationalist statements, rather than flat and normative ones. Journalists also often want to express their own opinion, discharging their own infuriation against the government, in a piece they write themselves. To make that happen, they exercise

so-called 'mouth-borrowing'. In this practice, journalists ask lawmakers, analysts, or NGO activists to make a comment that is in line with the journalist's opinion, to make it like a true 'news' piece, while it actually carries the media's own agenda. Despite prolonged back and forth about whether this complies with the press' code of ethics, such a practice is still common today.

Taking this into account, FITRA believes that providing a clear and comprehensive explanation on an issue should encourage understanding among journalists that a certain budget issue is truly important for the public, without positioning FITRA head to head with the government.

Responding to this, the media thinks that, first, what is important does not always look interesting. Second, even though the journalist eventually finds it important and (probably interesting), what about the editors who have the final say on whether a story can be published or not? Journalists are challenged to channel information from FITRA to their editors in the same way FITRA eventually manages to convince the journalists. In many cases, this failed to work, particularly given the complexity of budget-related issues. Most of the time, however, editors' final decisions were made on the basis that budget-related issues were too complex for the readers to understand. How could journalists make their stories interesting and understandable to the readers while they themselves were struggling to convince their editors?

Dilemma 3: suggestions for improvement vs criticism and cynicism

In general, results of FITRA's budget analyses are often perceived in a negative light. But the findings in the analysis are actually aimed at looking for a positive change in budget policy.

The material presented in FITRA's press releases in general depict criticism saying that policies made by the government and the House of Representatives are wrong, wasteful, and not in line with the target set by the government itself. Through it, FITRA actually wants to put forward changes for a better budget management. However, the journalists who write stories based on FITRA's studies often exclude our suggestions of improvement. The media only quotes the parts of the material in the releases that contain criticism.

This is understandable because, in the perspective of the media, matters that have some elements of criticism (or even scandals) have always managed to attract greater attention.

People tend not to be enthusiastic when it comes to complicated budgeting phases, presented alongside complicated technicalities, as they are seen as only being comprehensible for the government. Readers want to read something 'punchy'.

FITRA, however, does not want to be labelled as a 'constant critic' or even a 'specialist on attacking the government'. FITRA wants to be recognised as an NGO that plays a role for a better Indonesia by playing a positive game.

The media thinks that there must be some sort of 'compromise' if FITRA wants to use it as the medium to communicate its ideas. As the 'bridge', the media is the gatekeeper: FITRA needs to comply with its characteristics in order to be able to go over the bridge smoothly.

Dilemma 4: public interest versus private interest

All of FITRA's studies are principally for the sake of the public interest. However, certain groups that tend to criticise the government often use FITRA's budget analyses. As a result, many tend to make assumptions easily and falsely that FITRA has affiliation with the groups, or, even worse, that FITRA and the groups have colluded in a shared agenda to undermine the government and the President.

An opposing political party once 'abused' FITRA's studies to 'attack' the government and the ruling political party. Ahead of the general elections in 2009, some contesting political parties uploaded FITRA budget analysis to their websites to undermine the image of the ruling party supporting the candidacy of incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. To make matters worse, some of the politicians who have media companies abused their outlets to continuously run stories on the analysis only to gain political benefits.

It is undeniable that many media companies in Indonesia are affiliated or even partly owned by political groups or figures. For such media groups, it is almost certain that the consideration of whether or not to publish FITRA's analysis will be based on the analysis' significance to the interests of the media's politically-oriented owners.

Advocacy strategy: how to use the media as an effective instrument for communicating FITRA's ideas?

Communicating budget-related ideas by using the media has still been FITRA's choice until now. The media has the power required to empower and strengthen FITRA in influencing public policy, especially when it comes to the budget. Public policy advocacy requires great power and there is great power in public engagement. The mass media can accommodate public concern or serve as public representation amid an environment of public distrust of their official representatives at the House.

Although FITRA has felt that budget advocacy via the media is quite effective, this kind of approach has also found some dilemmas. Indirectly, the media has helped lift FITRA's bargaining position before policymakers. The more popular an NGO is, the more respect it will get from the government.

In addition, budget advocacy through the media has also provided political education to the people. The budget, which used to be a taboo subject, now can be

widely discussed through the media. In this sense, FITRA has been carrying out its organisational duty to promote transparency of the budget because it should be subject to the knowledge of all people.

As an organisation that constantly uses the media as an instrument for advocacy, FITRA must sustainably maintain its impartiality and consistency. Otherwise, its budget analysis could instead become a boomerang that strikes back. Its bargaining power could also become very low. FITRA has made the commitment not to receive funds from the state budget, even though some ministries have several times come to FITRA's office to offer cooperation in carrying out programmes financed by the State. FITRA has also never received funds from controversial donors. All of this is done to keep its impartiality and maintain its dignity and integrity before the public and budget policymakers.

But FITRA believes there is still much room to improve its 'cooperation' with the media. There are at least two strategies that can be used. First, the media can be seen as part of its extended policy advocacy platform. Press releases and the results of any research must be presented to the media by playing their game: by considering if it is newsworthy. All advocacy activists need to understand this because material that isn't can hardly find any spots in the media. An important factor to achieve this strategy is that every advocacy activist must have political sense and should understand the current political context.

Second, maintain a good relationship with the media. The relationship between journalists and activists and researchers must not be limited to a press conference. In this sense, researchers and activists must be able to treat journalists in a way that means they feel like peers. Establishing good relations with journalist unions is also essential, as well as identifying individual journalists who have interests and concerns that are in line with FITRA's advocacy agenda. Researchers must also always be available to help journalists better understand budget-related issues. It is also necessary to supply journalists with interesting and quality materials and data to support their reporting.

Finding and using the right momentum can also be one of the more effective alternative uses of the media. Recently, for example, the media heavily highlighted a story about the death of a baby from a poor family due to the refusal of some hospitals to treat her. It was the right moment to advocate for sensible healthcare budgets.

Budget advocacy through mass media, however, does not need to rely heavily on current issues that are being discussed by the media. A quality analysis might still be able to attract media coverage even though it does not directly touch current issues. A good and valid analysis can even drive the media and be another hot issue discussed widely by the public. Only following the news that are currently under the media's spotlight can become a boomerang, because many media companies have their own (political) agenda.

Conclusions

Communicating ideas of change in public policy must undoubtedly use the public sphere. In this context, it is the mass media. But, getting media coverage always carries challenges and dilemmas. Not all budget-related issues can be considered to be news. Building personal relationships with journalists can help increase the media's awareness on the importance and urgency of budget advocacy.

Giving great attention to using the right terms in press releases and analysis is also important. This is not an easy challenge. Budget-related issues always carry sophisticated terminologies and complex calculations which can easily bore journalists. Organisations need to practice and make an effort to avoid using specific terms that are only understandable to a few people. If journalists fail to understand FITRA's idea, how can they transfer it to their readers?

Thus, popular language should be used to communicate ideas intended to reach a wider audience. FITRA always tries to find ways to translate its ideas to easy-to-understand arguments without compromising the essence.

Finding and using the 'right momentum', as mentioned above, can be also used in an effort to get the public interested in budget processes. Problematic and prolonged flaws within budget processes may never appear under the public spotlight because of their complexities. But a related incident, like a corruption case being investigated by law enforcement, can serve as the 'gateway'. FITRA can then bring in people to scrutinise the flawed budgeting processes that have led to misappropriation, making them understand of a topic they used to ignore because it was too 'complicated'. This way, more people will understand the whole budgeting processes. This means less room for culprits to misappropriate the budget.

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Rebranding Breastmilk: Social Marketing in South Africa

Shannon Kenny, Professor Anna Coutsoudis and Patrick Kenny

Introduction

After years of improvement the infant mortality rate worsened from 1995–2003 in South Africa, reversing some of the gains achieved in previous years. Much of the literature attributes this rising mortality to HIV/AIDS, but the response to that pandemic may have had other, negative effects that have had wider health repercussions on the South African community.

It is difficult to attribute causality in studies about the effect of breastmilk on babies, because of the complexity of the confounding variables. The behaviours of a mother who breastfeeds may be typically different to one who feeds a baby commercial infant formula;[1] these behaviours may affect the child in other physical and psychological ways than are direct results of the breastmilk. There are many factors contributing to the health of an infant. However, the best evidence we have so far has proven that breastmilk offers babies extra gastrointestinal protection against infection, which is a serious concern in sub-Saharan Africa. Breastmilk plays a great role in countering malnutrition, as it provides infants with the right amount of protein, fat, sugar and vitamins, in a digestable form. It also avoids the many dangers of formula feeding: poor quality water; poor formula preparation leading to nutritional deficiency; contamination of milk bottles with faecal bacteria (a small study in 2007 found 67% of clinic samples and 81% of home samples were contaminated (Andresen et al. 2007)).

In 2009, the World Health Organization revised its principles to recommend that breastfeeding is best, including for mothers who are HIV-positive (if they are on anti-retroviral medicine), and their Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding

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1 Formula: industrially produced substitute for breastmilk. Sold in powdered form, formula needs to be prepared with water for consumption by the infant, and contains dairy and/or soy protein as some of the main ingredients. Formula attempts to duplicate the properties of, but is nutritionally inferior to, breastmilk.

recommends that infants start breastfeeding within one hour of life. Unfortunately, South Africa still has one of the lowest exclusive breastfeeding rates in the world. Formula feeding is prevalent in South Africa for complex reasons: because it has been distributed at no cost, by public heath bodies, through a 'prevention of the mother-to-child transmission' (PMTCT) of HIV programme; the support of formula milk through the Government's protein-energy malnutrition scheme; inhered cultural practices; and because it has been actively marketed using unfounded claims that the formula milk contains special ingredients that improve baby's health.

The team referred to in the rest of this chapter are working on a project to develop a social marketing strategy to rebrand breastmilk in South Africa, as a counterweight to the prevalence of formula feeding. The team is made up of the authors, along with researchers/lactation consultants and a marketing consultant, all of whom are volunteers. We have, in the development of the rebranding exercise, consulted with parents from various walks of life, policymakers, funding agency representatives, members of the media, private-sector representatives, researchers and health care workers. In addition we have kept a close eye on the media (print, broadcast and digital) to gauge public opinion and how it is being shaped.

Our position and the context for the challenge

Throughout this chapter, we set out our viewpoints and our agenda plainly and clearly. Our position is as follows: exclusive breastfeeding (with ARV prophylaxis for HIV-positive mothers) should be the default feeding option. Infant feeding decisions affect all members of society – regardless of culture, gender and socioeconomic status.

South Africa is among one of the top ten countries with a high infant mortality rate of 40 or more deaths per 1000 according to the *United Nations Progress Report* (UNICEF's Division of Policy and Strategy 2012). At an average rate of 47 deaths per 1000 live births, we do only slightly better than Rwanda (54) and slightly worse than Namibia (42), which are both significantly poorer countries economically. Among the other countries in the top 10 are Cambodia, Zimbabwe, and Senegal, which are significantly more resource-deprived than South Africa (a member of the G20 countries). Preventable diseases, largely pneumonia and diarrhoea, cause most of the morbidity and mortality and significant evidence (Bhutta et al. 2013) in recent years suggests that increasing rates of exclusive breastfeeding will be a major factor in reducing infant mortality rates – in South Africa and globally.

The majority of South African infants are born into impoverished conditions where access to clean running water and sanitary conditions is limited and sometimes non-existent. Under such conditions, the use of formula puts infants at great risk of contracting the diseases that are a major cause of death and illness. The single most effective intervention to save the lives of millions of young children in developing countries is the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding (Jones et al. 2003). Even for infants born into affluence, where they have access to good healthcare, where formula

can be prepared safely and the risk of infectious disease is considerably reduced, breastmilk is still shown to be the best form of infant food, aiding in the child's development and considerably reducing the prevalence of early childhood death. Compared with the use of breastmilk substitutes, breastfeeding has been consistently shown to reduce infant morbidity and mortality associated with infectious diseases in both resource-rich and resource-poor settings, particularly in the first months of life (Black et al. 2003), because of the transferral of gastrointestinal antibodies.

In August 2011, the Tshwane Declaration – by South Africa's National Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi (Motsoaledi 2011) – tabled a committment by the South African government to reposition, promote, protect and support breastfeeding as a key infant survival strategy through the implementation of appropriate policy, which included full adoption of the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (World Health Organization 1981), which aims to protect and promote breastfeeding by ensuring appropriate marketing and distribution of breastmilk substitutes.

In light of Anna Coutsoudis' discussions with various policymakers, researchers and advocates – before and after the Tshwane National Breastfeeding Consultative Meeting – which revealed that there was no proposed mass communication strategy to accompany the government's new policy position, our team decided to seize upon the momentum created by the government support. 'The People, The Planet, The Can', became the beginning of what we hoped would be an ongoing campaign to rebrand, encourage, promote and support breastfeeding through public service announcements on various media channels.

While some policymakers have agreed that an effective communication strategy to accompany the government's committment is necessary, there is still a battle, so to speak, for the 'hearts and minds' of policymakers, their funding partners (the South African Department of Health is heavily dependent on funding from non-South African government funders) and the public (who are often the recipients of confused messages around infant feeding).

To put the challenge in context, only 8% of mothers in 2003 fed children exclusively and extendedly (that is, breastmilk only, with no complimentary solids or liquids for the first 6 months) (Department of Health et al. 2007). In 2008, only 25.7% of children under the age of six months were reported to be exclusively breastfed; 51.3% were mixed-fed (both breastmilk and formula or other substances such as tea, water or porridge); the remaining 24% were exclusively infant formula fed. (Shisana et al. 2010).

The current challenge to rebrand breastmilk is multi-faceted. The contributing factors influencing this low rate range from inadequate maternal counseling, to misinformation, social stigma, traditional medicine practices, insufficient maternity leave and unsupportive work environments and social networks, as well as the effect of and the successful marketing of breastmilk substitutes by the commercial formula

industry. These factors have been acknowledged by government policymakers and Dr. Motsoaledi's declaration especially highlighted the marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

Presently, our challenge is not only to rebrand breastmilk and breastfeeding, but to convince policymakers and their funding partners (who have a say over how funds are spent) that the communications effort – that is, the rebranding and social marketing exercise – is crucial to the successful and continued uptake of this policy.

Despite a recent increase in the availability of infant feeding counseling at hospitals and clinics countrywide and the training of healthcare workers in this regard, there is still a general ignorance about the facts of breastmilk and breastfeeding, and social stigmas still exist in the mind of the general public across cultural and economic strata – demonstrating that communications so far have been less than effective.

There has been a general trend to communicate health issues – especially those directed at the poorest of the poor (who are most affected by disease and mortality) in a didactic, informative, and often unentertaining and unattractive, manner. Often the promotional material in the public health sector (which is utilised mostly by the poorest in the population) is viewed as cheap and of lesser quality than other lifestyle advertising they see see in magazines and on television. Infant formula advertising – in print, in online magazines and catalogues, and in other visual media – has been presented as an attractive lifestyle choice while breastfeeding has been regarded as inferior. As research into decisionmaking and behavioural economics has shown, the design and frequency of advertising and promotional material play a large role in whether messages are accepted or not by an audience.

If the facts are not faulty, the presentation of those facts must change

Traditional public health campaigns have often focused on a specific category of person or economic sector and, in South Africa, this is often the poorest of the poor. This focus suggests that certain health issues and messages were meant exclusively for poor people.

Our team understand that breastfeeding needs to be addressed as a public health issue that affects all South Africans, rich and poor. It is not a practice that we only need to encourage the poor to adopt, for fear of their children dying.

Breastfeeding promotion material in South Africa has, until now, been lacking in knowledge about motivations. We know that people, regardless of whether they are in the poorest or wealthiest groups of society, are more easily convinced to make lifestyle choices based on the promise of emotional satisfaction than on dry facts about health benefits. Commercial advertisers create a need or desire for a product and then, in a process of post-purchase rationalisation, provide further education and more in-depth facts that validate that desire. This approach offers valuable and

urgent lessons for future communications for breastmilk and breastfeeding, and for social marketing strategy in general.

The initial strategy

'The People, The Planet, The Can' started life in early 2011 as a multimedia communication strategy for effective breastmilk marketing that would ultimately affect and effect a culture change. It recognised the need to involve all of society (not just women and expectant mothers) and sought to convince them of the facts by addressing their aspirations. It can be summarised as a 3-pronged 'hearts and minds' strategy to present breastfeeding and breastmilk as normative and desirable, to generate a public conversation around the issue, and to create a demand for breastmilk.

- **The People**. Most importantly, we recognised the issue as a public health issue in a non-traditional way. Traditionally (because this particular health issue affects them most clearly) poor and low socioeconomic status mothers had been the primary focus of education and information campaigns. However, we believe that the issue needs to be something owned by South Africans in general, not just certain individuals or a certain socioeconomic group. South Africans – men and women, whether parents or not, young and old – would be presented with images and messages that showed breastfeeding in a positive light, and which united an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population around the issue.

- **The Planet**. This aspect focuses on the socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis (breastfeeding does not cost money and is therefore more cost-effective than formula), presenting breastfeeding as a part of a broader conversation, locally and globally, around food security (breastfeeding as a sustainable resource, not dependent on markets), climate change (breastfeeding is ecologically sound), and humanitarian/social responsibility (suitable breastmilk can be shared with and donated to those who lack access to it).

- **The Can**. This element focuses more directly on the nutritional and remedial superiority of breastmilk over any other infant food products, as well as tackling – and holding up for scrutiny – the myths and inaccurate information promoted by the formula industry.

As a first step to generating a public conversation around the issue, our strategy aims to address South Africans as equals in a variety of public service announcements (PSAs), in order to create a desire for breastmilk and, ultimately, to help them to make the best infant feeding choice.

We defined some common values and aspirations that transcend gender, culture and socioeconomic status, and drew out some of the myths and taboos around breastfeeding, and then used these as the guide for the development of the campaign and the PSAs. The development process was informed by evidence-based research

around breastmilk and breastfeeding in South Africa; information gleaned from focus groups we had conducted; conversations with parents who had exclusively breastfed, mix-fed or exclusively formula-fed their infants, as well as conversations with people who were not parents, to gauge their attitudes to, and knowledge of, breastfeeding.

Key questions for researcher-communicator teams

The campaign provoked some important questions:

* What are the key characteristics, if any, of a healthy researcher–communicator partnership?

* How does the relationship between policymakers and their funding partners (i.e. aid agencies/foundations; private sector/business partners) affect policy implementation, communication and uptake?

* How can the media (press, broadcast, digital and social media) be used effectively to influence uptake of an idea?

As a researcher/communicator team, we are of the belief that at the heart of a desire to effectively communicate complex research ideas to policy-makers should lie the knowledge that these ideas and findings ultimately will need to be communicated to civil society and that, where possible, a clear communication strategy for this needs to be outlined. Our researcher-communicator team shares an understanding that research communications intended for policymakers should actually have civil society (the public) at large as their ultimate, and proper audience. From our experience of researcher-communicator collaboration, we have learned that:

* Communication is *dialogue*. Constant critical evaluation and review of the communication methods chosen is necessary. This means humbling ourselves to admit what and when we got it wrong, or that we could do it better or in a different way when presented with new evidence.

* Communication is a *process*. There has to be a long-term committment to creating and refining the communication methods and tools employed. We have to recognise that no single strategy, method or medium will be appropriate for all contexts and, sometimes, getting it right will require taking an opposite view or looking at the successes of one's detractors.

* Communication is *equitable*. Policymakers, as well as their funding partners, are as much a part of society as any other member of civil society and are therefore influenced by prevailing cultural norms, advertising, and promotional materials. Therefore, when communicating ideas that come into conflict with a prevailing cultural norm, researchers and communicators need to take into account that the facts accompanied by a strong emotional argument will be more persuasive than mere facts.

- Communication is *partnership.* An effective communication strategy may require leverage: creating partnerships with individuals or organisations that have resources (skills and/or funds) lacking in your own team.

- Communication is *subjective.* How we, as researchers and communicators, perceive people will influence how we address them: we are stakeholders in the process.

- Communication is *important.* What and how we communicate ultimately affects the lives and decisions of people – individuals, families, communities, nations – and in this specific case, is a matter of life and death.

People's stories are important. Throughout our experience we have chosen to look at the stories behind the statistics – the lives of the people who are affected by policy decisions, communication and marketing strategies, as well as the experiences of individual policymakers and funders. These stories are what have shaped and continue to shape how we address our audiences.

In order to better understand and more effectively achieve our goal, it has been important that we understand the perspectives of the various players who ultimately affect the policies and practices we wish to change; it is this context that has defined how we should proceed.

Team history and initial research

In November 2000, the first iThemba Lethu transition home, was founded in Durban by Anna Coutsoudis (a researcher) and some friends, in response to the growing number of South African children orphaned and/or abandoned as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The funding came from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The aim of the transition home was to accommodate and nurture infants in transition – until their adoptions are finalised and they were placed with permanent families – rather than to institutionalise them for the duration of their formative years.

In addition to the Family Integration Programme (of which the transition homes are part) iThemba Lethu also conducts an HIV Prevention Programme (a youth, parent and teacher programme), piloted through local schools with at-risk children.

Significantly impacting the futures of these young lives also meant providing them with the best form of nutrition. In light of Anna Coutsoudis' extensive research and work in the area of infant and maternal health and nutrition, breastmilk was the most obvious choice.
In August 2001, under the auspices of iThemba Lethu, Anna Coutsoudis opened the iThemba Lethu Breastmilk Bank, South Africa's first community-based breastmilk

bank, with funding from UNICEF. Suitable candidates were screened, and the donated breastmilk was stored. Where possible, donor mothers were matched with infants of the same age as their own children. The impact on the health of the infants (both HIV positive and HIV negative) was remarkable and iThemba Lethu has, since then, prioritised nourishing the 0-6 month old infants in its care exclusively with breastmilk. Initially started as a repository for the iThemba Lethu transition home only, it has grown in capacity and now donates milk to infants at other institutions (where possible), and has been the seed-bed for the establishment of breastmilk banks in the region and around the country. Anna Coutsoudis and Penny Reimers, a researcher, lactation consultant, Director of the iThemba Lethu Breastmilk Bank and a Human Milk Banking Association of South Africa (HMBASA) member, have assisted in establishing milk banks at hospitals in Durban, as well as other facilities across South Africa.

The other authors' (Patrick Kenny's and Shannon Kenny's) involvement with iThemba Lethu began through their friendship with Anna and other staff and volunteers with the organisation. As trainers and facilitators, they offered communication training to the iThemba Lethu youth workers in the schools-based HIV Prevention Programme.
A researcher-communicator team needs a convincing pitch
Initially, the benefits of the approach (to eschew formula for donated breastmilk) were not clear to all. While understanding the need for the transition home as a social intervention, and the importance of ensuring that children were nurtured in families rather than institutions, Shannon Kenny in particular questioned the need for a breastmilk bank and donors – especially when breastmilk substitute (formula) was readily available and – to her knowledge – equal to the task of nourishing the infants in iThemba Lethu's care.

Anna took the opportunity to invite Shannon to see for herself. Infants had been received into iThemba Lethu's care who were malnourished, sickly and neglected. Anna introduced the Kennys to a variety of research, providing evidence for breastmilk's biological superiority over breastmilk substitutes, as well as the psychosocial advantages of breastfeeding. Some of the literature provided insights into breastmilk and breastmilk substitutes within different cultural contexts, and the traditions, taboos, myths and social attitudes associated with these practices. Further evidence for the argument in favour of breastmilk feeding came from Anna's own research within the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Coutsoudis et al. 1999; 2001). Shannon and Patrick further studied the history of formula, the marketing practices of manufacturers and the socioeconomic reasons for its proliferation and ubiquity as an alternative to breastmilk (Baumslag and Michels 1995).

In addition, Anna and Penny presented their personal experiences of having breastfed their own children and described how, before the HIV/AIDS pandemic, breastfeeding and wet-nursing had been quite a normal part of the experience of many South African women. With their curiosity piqued, Patrick and Shannon started to look at various approaches to breastmilk and breastfeeding promotion worldwide.

It must be noted that, within the Kennys' largely middle- to upper-middle-class social circles, comprising working and stay-at-home mothers, mixed feeding or exclusive formula-feeding was still the accepted norm, with very few exclusively breastfeeding for 6 months and even fewer continuing for longer. At the same time, a growing number of people known to the Kennys were becoming parents and some were choosing to exclusively breastfeed their children.

Noticing these two trends (mixed and exclusive formula feeding on the one hand; exclusive breastfeeding on the other), they set about discussing with these various parents the reasons for their choice to either breastfeed or formula feed. One of the first breastmilk bank donors, Shirley, and her husband, Patrick, were friends of the Kennys'. Shirley and Patrick allowed their youngest son to breastfeed until the age of 3 (when he self-weaned). They shed light on the social attitudes their choice had generated, attitudes that would range from the mildly curious, to the supportive, to disapproval.

Shirley saw donated breastmilk as a form of humanitarian aid; and this further encouraged her to participate. Shirley had been matched with an orphaned boy who was a similar age as her youngest son, whom she was breastfeeding at the time. In her own words, the value of knowing that another child was able to benefit as equally as her own son from something unique to her – her breastmilk – was immeasurable. The increase in milk supply that she experienced as a result of expressing more milk every day also helped her to encourage other mothers, who felt that they were producing insufficient milk (a common misconception) for their own children, to continue to breastfeed exclusively. Shirley also recounted her experience as a donor to her son and he, too was able to share in his mother's experience and, Shirley believes, understand his role as part of a humanitarian aid story.

Anna's knowledge of different social contexts, for example, the National WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Programme in the USA (Lindenberger, Bryant 2000) and the LINKAGES Project in Madagascar (WHO 2003), where social marketing of breastmilk and breastfeeding had worked as an agent of change convinced her that social marketing would be a route to culture change in South Africa. The LINKAGES Project is of particular significance because the programme uses a combination of interpersonal communication strategies, group activities, and media to change individual behaviour, while at the same time educating and engaging those who influence mothers' choices. The programme saw significant behaviour change over a relatively short space of time: 45%–47% exclusive breastfeeding at start of programme to 68% within one year and 79% the following year. (WHO 2003). Shannon and Patrick had experience marketing commercial products to a public audience, and so had a good understanding of the dynamics of well-coordinated marketing strategies.

Shannon and Patrick Kenny began to look at their journey from ignorance to knowledge about breastmilk and breastfeeding and the key contributing factors. Their ignorance stemmed from, especially in Shannon's case, a society where exclusive

breastfeeding was mostly unheard of and where formula and mixed-feeding was perceived to be a scientifically sound and modern choice. An even bigger factor was that they were not parents or directly involved in any significant way with infants, so even the issue of infant feeding would not factor into their daily lives. Their interest in the subject came from their involvement with iThemba Lethu and their friendships with Anna, Shirley, Patrick and others, and their curiosity about the breastmilk bank. The body of scientific evidence in support of breastfeeding and breastmilk, weighted against opposing views, was of particular significance.

They had established relationships with, and had access to, experts and researchers in the form of Anna, Penny and their colleagues (with whom they could consult, raise concerns and seek advice) and a growing community of parents who were choosing to breastfeed their infants. Just as important as the published research was witnessing, first hand, the effect of breastmilk alimentation on infants in iThemba Lethu's care. However, it seemed that, away from the experts, researchers and niche media targeted at prospective parents, sound information on breastfeeding was not very accessible.

Social marketing for public health

Policies in isolation, which are not accompanied and supported by an implementation strategy and appropriate support mechanisms, are ineffective as an agent of any significant individual behavioural or wider societal change.

We see social marketing as one such implementation strategy. While there is some support globally for social marketing as effective health interventions (Kotler, Roberto and Lee 2002), ours is the first clear communication strategy around the social marketing of breastfeeding and breastmilk within the contextof South African policy. Having a clear communication strategy, however, is no guarantee of its implementation. Obtaining funds for social-marketing communication and education approaches has been a challenge.While the team recognised that doing things differently in a resource-strapped environment could be a costly experiment and carries significant risk, we took our cue from the success story of Brazil (Rea 2003; Perez-Escamilla 2011).

In Brazil, supportive political will has led to sound policy accompanied by a sustained social marketing campaign, which has significantly driven their high rate of exclusive and continued breastfeeding as well as the high degree of knowledge about breastfeeding in society in general (Rea 2003). In turn, this has been linked to a dramatic reduction of their infant mortality rate (Perez-Escamilla 2011).

The common denominator in these instances seems to have been the close collaboration of researchers, communicators and policy-makers, working with and through individuals, communities, organisations and businesses.

Specifics of the South African situation

Breastfeeding and HIV

In the past, as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and prior to government supplying access to Anti-Retroviral Therapy, breastmilk and breastfeeding acquired a stigma as a conduit for the transmission of HIV. Free formula was supplied at clinics and hospitals to feed infants whose mothers were HIV-positive. Research, however, has shown that a mother who is HIV positive and on the appropriate Anti-Retroviral Therapy can exclusively breastfeed her baby safely without transmitting the HIV Virus (Langa 2010; Coutsoudis et al. 1999).

KwaZulu-Natal was the first province, in January 2011, to stop supplying free formula at clinics and hospitals, only dispensing formula on a need basis, i.e. in cases where there is no access to suitable breastmilk as well as ramping up its training of healthcare workers in infant and young child feeding. Anna, Penny and fellow researchers' lobbying involved making appointments to see the Department of Health officials and to provide them with up to date evidence on the dangers of formula feeding. Some of the information was from their own as well as international research. Anna believes that the most important reason for success has been her and her colleagues' international credibility as scientists and that they were part of the consultative groups on infant feeding. This made it easier to ensure that government would listen to them. Anna continues to provide evidence to the DoH and write policy briefs, and writes scientific papers and appears in interviews on TV, radio and in the press. There are also efforts to establish breastmilk banks at provincial hospitals across KwaZulu-Natal, spearheaded by HMBASA in partnership with the DoH. Anecdotally, according to Dr S Dhlomo who heads the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal, this policy has resulted in an increase in the number of exclusively breastfed infants and a decrease in the number of children admitted to hospitals with diarrhoea and respiratory diseases.

The spectre of HIV looms large in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal, in particular, is the province with the highest rates of HIV and tuberculosis in South Africa. The subject of breastfeeding and HIV has developed into a highly emotive debate because of the polarisation between those whose mandate is preventing the spread of HIV, and who therefore stress the importance of replacing breastfeeding, and those whose mandate is child survival, who promote breastfeeding as one of its pillars. Furthermore, infant feeding, and breastfeeding in particular, remains a contested area in the scientific community, with studies by researchers on either side of the policy debate.   Some argue that the latest South African Government policy is shortsighted, unconstitutional, retrogressive, and are dismayed at what they perceive to be the lack of response from clinicians and civil society (Saloojee et al. 2011). Others argue just the opposite (Kuhn 2012).

However, policy makers at the South African Department of Health have now not only accepted this body of evidence, but are looking at how the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding could relieve the already strained health system of a considerable disease and financial burden.

Social attitudes to breastmilk and breastfeeding

According to the lactation consultants who were interviewed (who regularly meet with mothers at hospital-based support groups and in non-clinical environments), the factors that explain the low rate of breastfeeding include ignorance and little or no counseling by paediatricians and other clinical staff with regard to infant feeding; little or no encouragement for mothers to initiate breastfeeding within the first hour from birth; and infants being fed formula and/or sugar water in hospital nurseries by clinical staff without the knowledge or permission of the mother.

Economic and employment factors include inadequate (or in the case of some casually or informally employed mothers, non-existent) maternity leave; lack of childcare facilities at or close to the workplace; no storage facilities (namely, fridges and containers) at workplaces for lactating mothers' expressed milk. An unsupportive working environment was what most working mothers cited as a barrier to continued breastfeeding (Bester 2006).

Myths and taboos also play an important role. Talking to mothers, focus groups and lactation experts, we encountered the following myths:

- breastmilk is inadequate at fulfilling all an infant's nutritional needs and therefore needed to be supplemented with herbal preparations, sugar water (also in Kassier et al. 2003), or porridge;

- formula is better nourishment for a baby;

- formula is what progressive, affluent people feed their children and, conversely, breastfeeding is what poor people do because they cannot afford formula.

Breastfeeding is a largely invisible practice in public. Among parents who chose to feed their babies formula, many mentioned the convenience and how it saved them the embarrassment of breastfeeding in public. One very rarely sees mothers nursing their infants publicly; on exception, it is noticed precisely because of its relative absence.

There have been stories in the press, and in local communities, of malls discouraging the practice of breastfeeding in public, instead encouraging mothers to use unhygienic toilet facilities, which have been set aside as baby feeding areas. Public responses seem to have been sympathetic to the mothers' cases.

Parents using formula extol the inclusiveness that formula offers: the father is able

to participate in the feeding of the child, at the same time relieving the mother of the tedium of feeding and allowing her rest, whereas this is not an option if the mother breastfeeds exclusively. These parents also asserted that formula feeding allowed for the greater involvement of grandparents and other carers within the parent/s' support system, especially when mothers needed to return to work.

However, there is still information in circulation that explains to some extent why breastmilk does not enjoy the same social status as formula. In a popular South African-authored baby book, which is generally very pro-breastfeeding, a nutrient table comparing the amount of nutrients in equal portions of breastmilk and formula reveal a significantly higher proportion of nutrients in formula than breastmilk (Otte 1997). This unexplained table indicates that formula is significantly more nutritious than breastmilk. The accompanying text, professing that breastmilk is perfect for babies, does not explain that the disproportionately high mineral content in formula is potentially harmful to the baby's kidneys and gut, as the infant does not have the facility to digest the nutrients in the quantities it is ingesting them.

'Breast is best' is a well-known, and well-worn, motto of the pro-breastfeeding movement. It is a statement that formula manufacturers are required by South African law to print on formula packaging, and in advertising their products. However, the close relationship between this slogan and the formula companies that publish it renders it at best empty, at worst hypocritical, and so it has become somewhat inconsequential as a communications message.

The media's response to the Tshwane Declaration

The media plays an important role in defining the attitudes toward breastfeeding in South Africa. One of the country's most prominent weekly newspapers, the *Mail & Guardian*, featured two articles in response to the Tshwane Declaration hailing it as impractical (Malan 2011). Anna and her colleagues responded to the reports in a follow-up article in the *Mail & Guardian* (Doherty et al. 2011), which outlined the arguments to support the policy.

But the debate has continued. Almost a year after Tshwane, a daily newspaper ran another story decrying the government's efforts to implement the WHO code and restrict the marketing of formula (Naidoo 2012b). Once again, the team responded with a detailed explanation of the importance of protecting breastfeeding and the rights of the child (Coutsoudis et al. 2012).

Other media have also been involved. One of the country's largest national radio stations had their DJs and personalities discussing the declaration – mostly in negative terms. The broadcasters' point of view was that the new policy was unsupportive of working mothers and that the policy was depriving poorer women (who relied on free, government sponsored formula) of the right to choose how they could feed their babies.

Media representations of breastfeeding and formula feeding

The most pervasive image associated with infant feeding in mainstream print and other visual media is of the bottle, which is, in turn, associated with formula feeding (phdinparenting 2011). Breastfeeding images in South Africa have often been of poor women in rural settings. Attractive, aspirational images of formula feeding, on the other hand, have been, and still are featured prominently in popular media, from movies to soap operas to parenting magazines, and even children's toys and their packaging. .
Breastfeeding, however, seems to feature most prominently and almost exclusively in baby and parenting magazines, where it shares space with glossy adverts for infant formula and 'growing-up milk'.

That said, breastfeeding has become a permanent feature in these print magazines and their online versions, with articles and sound advice being dispensed by lactation consultants, sometimes accompanied by attractive, positive images. It also features on the websites of some private healthcare providers in articles and content aimed at prospective mothers and lactating women. Still, most of this content is rather dry and in our opinion, not particularly encouraging. While skirting obvious regulation-flouting by not advertising formula for infants below six months, manufacturers are now concentrating marketing efforts on their 'growing-up milk' or 'follow-on formula' products.

Since articles on breastfeeding and adverts for formula jostle for attention, the sheer volume and ease with which lifestyle-oriented formula adverts are digested do win out over articles on breastfeeding. The reader is still, therefore, served with conflicting messages, and perverse incentives.

On state-owned, free television breastfeeding has been represented in news reports and feature films. In news reports, the most prominent breastfeeding-related images are of rural or impoverished women. Among these was the ubiquitous image of the malnourished African mother and her malnourished child accompanying news items on famine and or aid. The feature films have shown the act of breastfeeding to be either comical or slightly strange (for example, *Grown Ups*). One TV series from the US (*Six Feet Under*), which had been aired on South African television, had an eccentric main character who exclusively breastfed her infant for the first six months and then continued breastfeeding past that period. *Soul City*, a South African TV drama series aimed at educating the public on various health issues, specifically HIV/AIDS, did deal with breastfeeding. However, in other non-education-related South African television shows, breastfeeding did not feature and formula feeding was represented as the norm.

South Africa's biggest-selling weekly English language magazine – with a readership of over 2.5 million – featured nine different articles and comments related to breastfeeding between September 2011 and August 2012, compared to five for the

same period the year before. Two of the articles portrayed breastfeeding in a negative light. One was a comment by a celebrity about how breastfeeding had destroyed her breasts; in another parenting-related article a reader felt that extended breastfeeding was harmful to a child's development (Naidoo 2012a). Most of the articles featured celebrities and mentioned their breastfeeding experience as beneficial to mother and child, tiring but rewarding, and helping the mother to lose weight (*You Magazine* September 2011–August 2012).

Formula manufacturers have also been very adept at pushing the boundaries of advertising regulations, by supplying paid-for editorial content (advertorial) which promotes their products. One such example was a formula brand promotion in an in-flight magazine that acknowledged that 'breast is best' and then went on to tout the convenience of their product over breastfeeding.

The private sector's position

Private healthcare providers (insurers) provide their customers with access to advice, education and counseling on infant feeding and breastfeeding through their various health-plan offerings. These services are covered by monthly premiums paid for by the customer. Whether or not the customer makes use of these services will largely depend on whether these services are included in the premium payment or not.

Some manufacturers of baby products such as Johnson & Johnson also are active in making available and sponsoring advice on breastfeeding, as are private hospitals and clinics who regularly host open days. These are free to the public and, especially since August 2011, lactation consultants are brought in to dispense advice on breastfeeding and optimal infant feeding. Some private hospitals have even partnered with government hospitals to provide advice and resources and to encourage and assist in promoting breastfeeding. Private hospitals and clinics also host antenatal classes, often presided over by a midwife and or lactation consultant, who will provide advice. While this may seem promising there was still, at time of writing, a tendency across private sector clinics and healthcare workers to advise mothers to start introducing complementary foods for infants from 4 months old.

Medela, which has a market presence in South Africa, is a manufacturer of breastpumps and a leading researcher and developer of products that support breastfeeding. The company dispenses free breast and infant feeding advice to expectant mothers via its website. Medela was accused of violating the WHO Code in the US and Canada (because it promoted its BPA-free bottles and teats). In a public statement, Michael Larsson, Chairman of Medela's Board of Directors apologised for the company exercising less than optimal judgment in the marketing of their BPA-free products and emphasised the company's commitment to developing the best products to support breastfeeding (Larsson 2009).

Formula manufacturers also have a hand in providing advice on breastfeeding. Nestlé, the largest producer of formula in South Africa and worldwide, has a

statement on its website indicating its commitment to promoting breastfeeding; however, this is contradicted by Nestlé's continued efforts at marketing its products: from carefully placed print advertisements, sponsorship of events and product placement. Nestle, while the largest, is not the only manufacturer that claims to support breastfeeding on the one hand and then actively markets its products as equal to breastmilk, on the other. Nestlé's empire was built on infant formula (Hill 2003). Promoting breastfeeding while simultaneously marketing an opposing product again renders the impact inconsequential.

The rebranding process: if at first you don't succeed, try and try again

What factors actually affect people's decision to breastfeed? We realised understanding the facts around breastmilk and breastfeeding would not be enough, especially because it was a subject so fraught with controversy. What would positively or negatively influence people's reaction to the subject, what would pique their curiosity and what would make an impression on them?

For the development of 'The People, The Planet, The Can' in 2011, we started looking at breastmilk as a sellable 'product' and breastfeeding as a sellable practice, but not in the sense that breastmilk or breastfeeding should be sold for monetary gain. How did we reconcile this 'product' approach with our opinion that breastmilk is a precious substance and breastfeeding an invaluable practice and that their actual worth should not and cannot be measured monetarily? Well, if a person makes an economic decision to breastfeed exclusively, and not resort to substitutes, there will be long-term measurable, financial gains. As well as positioning breastmilk as being of better 'value' for babies and parents, we were also experimenting with sales techniques, that is, creating a complex of meaning around a product (breastmilk), to make it seem appealing and desirable as a lifestyle choice. In effect, we adopted the most successful techniques of our competitors, by taking a similar approach to that of the formula manufacturing industry.

In 2004, newly filled with zeal, we decided to create a public service announcement (PSA) in the form of a 45 second filmed advert. This was privately coordinated between the Kennys and another couple and no other organisations were involved. This first attempt at producing a PSA film failed because of lack of resources, skills and funding. The ideas and concepts were there: there was a camera, a photographer, director and cast – but no editor. We failed to realise what a fringe topic breastfeeding was at this time, and overestimated our powers of persuasion at being able to involve an editor at no cost.

In 2005, a second effort, supported by the iThemba Lethu Breastmilk Bank team, resulted in the production of short TV commercial called *Substitute Abuse*[2] to highlight the potential harm that incorrect use of breastmilk substitute (formula) could pose to an infant. This time, there was a very small budget and we were

2   *Substitute Abuse* www.youtube.com/watch?v=dStJO7E0Lvs

able to afford some film and courier services (albeit, at a fraction of the normal professional rate). Through various other professional projects, we had developed a good relationship with the local office of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), who allowed us to use their foyer and a studio as a set for four hours at no cost. While the Kennys produced, coordinated, scripted, directed and filmed the PSA, we ensured that we had included an editor (sympathetic to the cause and a former medical student) at no cost as well. All of us, cast and crew, were volunteers.

This PSA showed parents and their baby being taken away for questioning by airport security officials when it is discovered that they are in possession of a white powder. In the interrogation room an official informs them that they were in possession of a potentially harmful substance. The father protests that the powder is only baby formula. The official then says that she would read the baby its rights and the film concludes with the film's key message: 'You have the right to be breastfed'.

DVD copies were made and distributed and the PSA was entered into a local satellite TV channel's competition, where the prize was free broadcast of that PSA on the channel. Although it was not among the winners, it was played at conferences and as part of presentations on lactation and infant feeding. It was also uploaded to YouTube. It is difficult to gauge how many people have actually seen the PSA, but Youtube can give some indication: on YouTube alone it has had over 9000 views at time of writing.

We found by eliciting comment from various people we showed it to, that it's hard-hitting message worked mostly to shock the audience. According to a focus group made up of breastfeeding mothers, it did emphasise the importance of breastmilk and showed the potential harm of formula but the PSA also had the potential to alienate some, especially mothers who had already chosen to formula feed their children. While it caused some controversy, we have no record of anyone who changed his or her mind from being ambivalent or against breastfeeding to being in favour, after watching it.

So, what did we learn? We had overlooked a crucial step in communicating. We, as a team, had already gone through a process of fact-finding, thinking and consulting around infant feeding and had had time to revise our own thoughts on the matter over a period of weeks and months. Here, in less than 60 seconds, we were telling a largely uninformed audience that formula was wrong, breastmilk was right, and that they were bad parents for feeding their child formula.

What was badly formed about the PSA was not the factual information, but the approach. The PSA found favour mostly among people who were already convinced that breastmilk was the best infant feeding choice: researchers and policymakers and parents who had breastfed their own (now grown) children. We were preaching to the converted. Not only that, but even some of those who were in favour of breastfeeding were put off by what they perceived to be the 'finger-wagging attitude' of the PSA.

Mothers, and prospective mothers, who had already made the decision to exclusively breastfeed their children, pointed out that while they understood the intention of the message, its execution alienated the target audience. We had overlooked the fact that parents who had chosen to formula feed had made that choice believing that they were making the best nutritional choice for their children: they too, with the information that they had, made an evidence-based choice. Merely telling them that they had made a wrong choice and were placing their children in mortal danger when their children were perfectly healthy was unwise and insensitive to their situation.

What we learned from this was that good intentions don't automatically translate into well-crafted, well-received or correct messages. Also, shock-value may derive a quick response but does not necessarily translate into the acceptance of a message. After *Substitute Abuse*, another concept PSA *Sharing is Caring*,[3] aimed at promoting breastmilk banking, was produced and received a much warmer reception from the focus group. We were also able, through professional relationships with suppliers, to use professional High Definition digital video equipment cost free.

While this was good and well, the team – Anna Coutsoudis and Penny Reimers, as technical/scientific advisors, and Patrick and Shannon Kenny as creative directors – concluded that a successful social marketing campaign could not rely solely on PSAs to encourage breastfeeding, since these would be limited to TV, exhibitions, web-based social media and the internet. We would have to include print media and radio, as well as the coordinated support of the public and private health sector in sharing beneficial information.

Patrick and Shannon, with the input of the lactation consultants, started the next stage of the process by identifying some of the stigmas and myths around breastmilk and feeding, and looking at the social limitations and design oversights and deficiencies in existing promotional material. They then formulated some concepts for print advertisements, using this knowledge. Some were humorous, some were traditional and some were 'soft sell' (casual and friendly). Some were more personal (The People), while others had a broader social and environmental focus (The Planet). Others showed how even the formula manufacturers agreed that breastmilk was superior (The Can).

How would we assess whether we were falling back into familiar patterns of communication? Without the budget to contract an advertising agency or market research company it would be difficult to verify whether we were on the right track with this fledgling strategy.

Enter a volunteer in the form of a marketing consultant. We were cautioned in an initial meeting with the consultant that, because we had already started the concept process, we may have to deal with the potential disappointment of our ideas being off track, having to go back to the drawing board and nursing bruised egos. A decision

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3   *Sharing is Caring* www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMukYDGMjb8

was made immediately that bruised egos were not going to be fatal and so began our workshop and the start of a more focused approach to this rebranding exercise.

It must be noted that this consultant is the husband of a fellow researcher and HMBASA team member: proof that precious resources can sometimes be hiding in plain sight, overlooked and a great deal more obtainable than one would think.

Social marketing strategy in practice

Step 1: Research past and present campaigns and lessons from the formula, soft drinks and tobacco industry

The marketing consultant advised us to look at and think about pro-breastfeeding and pro-formula advertising and promotional material before our first workshop. What set them apart? What did they have in common, if at all? Additional questions he posed were:

- How has infant feeding been portrayed and by whom?
- What messages were being conveyed and to whom?
- How was the media used to promote these messages?
- How were these messages digested?

We found that crucial elements of the marketing success of formula included innovative product association and placement, a strong political lobby and manufacturers pushing the boundaries of legal codes, for example, advertorial content in baby and parenting magazines and sponsorship of infant nutrition workshops; all of which is underpinned by large PR, advertising and marketing budgets.

The consultant encouraged us to view breastmilk as a product that needed 'selling'. The reasoning behind this was that if we approached the subject from a different angle, it would help us to see facets of its character we may previously have overlooked. Our approach, up until then, had been a concentration on breastmilk education, and the results of that approach were no different to the very campaigns of which we had been critical. It was pointed out to us that, in order to create a demand for breastmilk, the practice of breastfeeding needed to be made appealing and normative. Examples we looked at were from infant formula, soft drink (Hill 2003) and cigarette marketing campaigns (Levinson 2007).

We felt that if we could learn from the marketing strategies of these industries – which were particularly successful at marketing products that were socially relevant, but either unnecessary, useless or even harmful – it would only help us to market a product that is necessary and useful. We were further encouraged in our efforts when we discovered that other organisations had also successfully harnessed the advertising strategies of big business for public health causes (Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition 2006).

Cigarette advertising in particular had been successful precisely because of the very innovative approaches to selling products with no actual benefit to the consumer. The alternative to tobacco consumption (breathing relatively clean air and significantly reducing one's risk of developing a variety of diseases associated with smoking and/or breathing secondary smoke) – unlike breastmilk – does not have any immediate commercial benefit to the consumer. However both practices (breastfeeding and not smoking) do have long-term health benefits, such as increased life expectancy and reduced morbidity, which also result in significant financial savings to the individual and the state.

We recognised that the long-term savings would and had served to bolster an argument presented to policymakers but were not what could or should underpin an advertising campaign. For the general South African public (and from the Kennys' experience as former smokers) advertising showing the potential harm of tobacco consumption contributed in only a small way to decreased smoking and certainly did not stop them from taking up smoking as teenagers. What significantly reduced tobacco sales and consumption was legislation that culminated in the banning of cigarette advertising, the normalising of clean air and supportive environments: public buildings and enclosed areas, places of work and leisure were required by law to be smoke-free zones. Smoke-free environments became the accepted norm for South Africans and clean air became the standard. Some of what we learned through this process was that our experiences as individual communicators and researchers have an integral role to play, since we all have our own views, values, perceptions and even prejudices. These should be examined, but need not – and can not – always be 'left at the door'. They should be regarded as valuable in informing how we proceed or develop strategy.

Rather than reinventing the wheel and attempting to do large-scale market research, which lack of funds made impossible, we assessed current successful advertising campaigns by large South African companies such as mobile communications providers like MTN and soft drinks manufacturers such as Coca Cola. These particular campaigns, for instance, MTN's 'Ayoba' for the 2010 Football World Cup and Coca Cola's 'Open Happiness', exploited values of equality, togetherness, the pursuit of happiness and well-being, caring and sharing as being common South African values, in order to create brand awareness, position themselves in the market and ultimately sell their products. We specifically looked at these products because they are purchased by a large majority of South Africans regardless of socioeconomic status and culture. Also, the companies competing for market share in this sector were generally competing for consumer loyalty based more on brand awareness, and less on better prices, since price differences across the board were negligible. Also assessed were gender-specific campaigns for products aimed at a broad spectrum of South African women and men.

Step 2: Who is the target market and what are they to be sold?

The second step was to identify the main audience for the campaign and what would most appeal to them. Based on the South African Audience Research Foundation table of Living Standards Measures, we defined the main audience as urban men and women in the LSM (Living Standards Measure) 6-8 group, who socialised regularly, had access to a variety of media and disposable income and who were aged 18-35 years old.

Our assumption was that this particular demographic desires to be seen as progressive and successful, have an aspirational lifestyle, and looked to role models of 'success' whom they could emulate or identify with. Their aspirations could be targeted by focusing on how the choice to breastfeed would complement and maybe even enhance a progressive, upwardly mobile lifestyle. In addition to this we would need to depict other successful men and women who supported breastfeeding.

We believe that by targeting this group in particular the messages would also appeal to and influence people in the LSM 1-5 and LSM 8-10 groups. This would also allow for the kind of images and messages that had a much more general appeal, like those in popular soft drink campaigns, which present their audiences with a desirable world or lifestyle, which generates a desire for the product.

We concluded that breastfeeding needed to be more visible in public: displayed as normative, with peer support, seen as progressive and 'trendy' and recognised as the best scientific choice. The material would need to be presented in an attractive, desirable format. We were going to use classic sales techniques: the purpose of the initial material was to create a desire and need. Then, follow-up education and information material would serve, in a post-choice rationalisation process, to reinforce the desire and need, and validate the choice.

Step 3: Compiling an audience-appropriate strategy proposal

We then examined some of our original ideas. We threw out what would not work, kept what would and put some on the back burner. We realised that we could not be precious about ideas that we liked but needed to concentrate on what would work best for the audience we intended to address.

Before we could address a wider public audience, however, we had to convince the policymakers and funders whose support we needed. Our first task was to create an appropriate presentation that would sensitise them to the issue and ultimately find favour. During this period we created a new PSA, *2 Ways to Feed a Baby*. It was hoped that this PSA, which highlighted breastfeeding as a food security and environmental issue, would appeal to policymakers beyond the public health sector, as well as funding agencies and private donors.

The idea behind this film was to show the vast human and environmental cost involved in the manufacture of formula in comparison to breastfeeding (which is environmentally sound, in terms of production). The team agreed that the idea was a good one and obtained permission to use the film footage we wanted to re-edit. We arranged to use this film footage at no cost for the purpose of advocating for funding for 'The People, The Planet, The Can.'

Once this was complete, we needed to show it to the right people. Anna contacted national and regional representatives of the Department of Health and aid agencies and informed them that we had a strategy proposal in line with the government's latest policy announcements. We were able to secure a meeting with a regional representative of the Department of Health (DoH) and the national Head of Nutrition for a major aid agency to present 'The People, The Planet, The Can'.

Step 4: Presenting the communication strategy to an audience

'The People, The Planet, The Can' was very enthusiastically received by the regional representative of the Department of Health (DoH) and the national Head of Nutrition for a major aid agency and their DoH partner who was also present.

We presented the sample PSA *2 Ways to Feed a Baby* and mock-ups of prospective adverts, called 'What Do these Women have in Common?' One of these showed photographs of a variety of South African women of different ages and ethnicities, while another showed different women who are identified as doctors. But it is revealed in both instances that what these women actually have in common is that they have all breastfed their children. We also shared other script ideas that depicted men who had in common their support for breastfeeding. Then we played the PSA *Substitute Abuse* which, as we had predicted, would appeal to policymakers. However, this time we used it to illustrate what we had learned, that one commercial could work for a certain audience demographic but not work for another, by recounting the reactions of members of our focus groups.

The presentation worked. Why? Because we had not presented them with statistics and facts with which they were already familiar. We presented our case by recounting some of the stories that had influenced the strategy.

Of particular significance was the story of a group of low socioeconomic status (SES) mothers who had gone on to start a breastfeeding-support group in their community after attending an event hosted by the iThemba Lethu Breastmilk Bank/ HMBASA as part of the International Breastfeeding Challenge in 2011. The group in attendance was made up of lactating mothers, their female friends and/or family. All the lactating mothers at the event exclusively breastfed their infants, were ethnically diverse, but were mostly in the high SES group. All attendees had been encouraged to bring along their older, non-breastfeeding children for whom child-minders had been arranged. A lactation consultant spoke about the work of the Breastmilk Bank and other consultants were also on hand to field questions and concerns or consult with

mothers individually if they so wished. A midwife who had accompanied the group of low SES mums reported to Anna a few days later that these mums were now starting a support group because they were now even more convinced of the importance of breastfeeding after spending time with, in their words 'well-off mothers who could afford formula but chose to breastfeed because it really was the best thing for their babies' and made them realise that 'breastfeeding was not just for poor black women who could not afford formula.' This midwife had been trying for months to get this group of women to start a support group and now, after one event, these women were extolling the importance of breastmilk to others in their community.

Along with such powerful stories, we rather boldly asserted that present breastfeeding promotional material was largely either condescending or ugly. In addition, we presented a strategy for moving forward and made ourselves available for continued consultation. It was in our favour that both parties were supportive of breastfeeding to start with and they both agreed that a new strategy was in order.

Additionally, we had also been quite clear that we really believed in what we were doing and even if government could not or was not going to support this initiative immediately, we would be working independently to see it realised.

The representatives were encouraging and enthusiastic about the presentation. So much so that they even agreed to canvas support via their departments to generate funding to secure the rights to the film footage, in order to publicly exhibit the PSA for exhibition at the then upcoming COP 17 Conference in Durban. Unfortunately, they were unable to convince the other key decisionmakers in their respective circles of the value of this endeavour, but they have continued to look at ways and means of advancing 'The People, the Planet, the Can' as a strategy.

Step 5: Presenting the strategy to potential funders

Fuelled by the encouragement and support we had received from the policymaker and aid-agency representative, we decided to approach the private sector. We were referred by the CEO of one of South Africa's largest private healthcare insurance providers to his company's Head of Corporate Sustainability, Head of Public Relations and Corporate Marketing and Deputy Head of Corporate Social Investment (CSI). This particular company has considerable clout within its industry and the ear of government policymakers. In the words of the company chairman 'When you're our scale, you're a policymaker...' (*Sunday Times* 2012) We had identified the company as progressive, pioneering and somewhat daring – famed for 'doing things differently'. The company had over the past year also adopted a more conciliatory tone with regard to working more closely with government by being more supportive of public policy, especially with regard to the proposed National Health Insurance scheme. It is also a major contributor to the public-health sector through its Corporate Social Investment. We saw this connection as an opportunity and possibly a perfect fit, partnering with a major private-sector player to help to implement and promote public policy.

The meeting with the panel would be 45 minutes long. To maximise our time with them we determined to send the concept sheet for the funding proposal three weeks in advance in order to give them enough time to scrutinise it and advance questions, ideas and concerns.

The proposal explained how the communication strategy had the backing of government and the support of a major aid agency, how their partnership in the campaign could serve their client base and the general public. Included in the document were the reasons behind – and the finer details of – the strategy. The idea we would be pitching to this company was that the promotion of breastfeeding would not only benefit their clients' overall health, but that healthier clients meant fewer claims against their insurance, which would be beneficial to the company's bottom line. We drew on the company's own example of how, a decade previously, they had embarked on a successful campaign to encourage their members with gym memberships, with the same rationale. In addition to making good business and public relations sense, the company would be supporting government policy and spearheading a sidelined public health issue that could only be beneficial for their clients, and the country as a whole. We also explained how we already had the support of government and a major aid agency for this strategy, so all we needed was their support and access to the resources, which they could provide.

We proposed to partner with the company as advisors on the communications strategy, using their existing resources – website, online magazine, benefit schemes, partnerships with other businesses and organisations and access to healthcare facilities – to pilot this communication strategy through their client base. Building on that, we would then roll out the programme further into the public arena.

In preparation, we had agreed that Anna would give a brief introduction of the team and the purpose – preventing infant deaths and morbidity through breastfeeding – of the campaign proposal. Patrick would present and give a brief summary of some of the campaign PSAs (in effect, the sales pitch). Shannon would deal largely with the specific media and messages and how this campaign would practically serve the company, its clients and ultimate serve the country. All would tackle questions presented by the panel.

Further encouraged that we had received no questions of concern from any of the parties on the panel we were to meet with, we flew to Johannesburg quite confident of a smooth meeting that would end in further discussion of a 'way forward' for the campaign and an exciting partnership with both government and the private sector.

Anna's introduction to the panel was personable, free from scientific jargon (which we assumed they would be unfamiliar with) and explained the team's relationship and the case for a social marketing strategy. We introduced the visual concept for the strategy with the '2 Ways to Feed a Baby' PSA. The dramatic footage, sweeping music and accompanying copy was an ideal way, we felt, to kick start the discussion around

our strategy proposal and show how breastfeeding was not just an issue for the poor. Patrick succinctly explained the various other concepts for PSAs and gave a brief summary of the campaign.

When we asked the panel whether they had any questions at that point, the head of the panel asked what the purpose of the meeting was and whether we had a more detailed strategy proposal. It was at that point that we realised that none of the panel had even read the strategy proposal we had sent ahead. Not only had they not read the proposal, they had no idea why were meeting with them. We were flabbergasted!

Impromptu teamwork and a quick rethink of the intended plan resulted in Shannon taking the panel on a step-by-step guide through the proposal and the team fielding questions from the panel.

After explaining our position and motivation, one representative questioned the validity and effectiveness of a social marketing campaign of this nature, based on their failure as a company to dissuade their clients from increasingly opting for elective caesarian section births. This company had also been the recent sponsors of a short (and well-meaning) film on breastfeeding. As a team, we had been critical: not of its production value or factual content, but that the film would have limited appeal and audience reach and ultimately be a less than effective resource.

The intended 45-minute meeting was extended to an hour and a half. Still, the panel was less than enthusiastic about our proposal and explained that any key business decisions (which our proposal entailed) would have to be reviewed by a board. This would require us to resubmit our proposal, which this (less than enthusiastic) panel would then submit for review.

What we took away from this meeting was that strategies, plans and projects (good and bad, in the public and private sector) often come to fruition because a key decisionmaker champions them. Also, the Government is often criticised for being slow or reluctant to act on issues and here we experienced first hand the reluctance of the private sector to advance a policy issue, even one that could directly benefit them.

Breastmilk social marketing strategy outcomes

At present, we are still persevering in efforts to bring this social marketing strategy to fruition. We have experienced on numerous occasions the disappointment of unsuccessful funding applications, due to other projects taking precedence or the slashing of budgets. At the same time, we have maintained open communications and continue to enjoy cooperation with policymakers and funding agency representatives. The aid agency representative in particular has championed the case for the social marketing of breastmilk.

The regional and national press have published our rebuttals to articles and two community publications have published supportive stories about and related to the

Breastmilk Bank. HMBASA and iThemba Lethu Breastmilk Bank continue to support and resource antenatal clinics, milk banks, expectant mothers' support groups and the training of lactation consultants.

There is infant feeding information and counseling available at private and public antenatal clinics, in addition to parenting magazines. This information is mostly championed by breastfeeding advocates, which include healthcare professionals such as midwives, doctors, lactation consultants and infant feeding specialists in private practice or connected to NGOs.

Thus far, there is still no coordinated, national strategy in place to fill the communication gap that exists between government policy and the public. A further avenue for us to explore is to approach like-minded teams and organisations with a view to pooling resources to develop a national, coordinated social marketing strategy, in order to fill this gap.

A note on campaign team working practices

As a team, we are all volunteers. Our professional work and personal lives facilitate – and sometimes constrain – our participation as a team. Mutual respect, an appreciation of each team member's role, contribution and expertise has been vitally important. A desire to see each team member excel in their role has provided us a platform for genuine encouragement and a willingness to provide – and an openness in asking for – both emotional and professional support. We understand that not all teams or organisations are comprised of groups of friends but friendships can and do develop out of these contexts. Even if they don't, respect and mutual appreciation need not be dependent on friendship.

For this campaign, it is incumbent upon us to continue to keep abreast of the latest research and press – local, national and international – on the issue of breastfeeding, and to keep one another updated. We have, and are continually learning to cope with, very limited resources and how to use what we have effectively and to be appreciative of and enjoy the support of other volunteers. A passion for the issue that goes beyond personal contributions and an empathy (or compassion or, dare we say, 'love') for the people affected by this issue is probably the glue that holds our team together and has been the major factor in our healthy team relationship.

One of the positive outcomes is that our team has shown (to ourselves, at least) that we can work well together even in unfavourable circumstances and that we were able to coordinate efforts not just as planned, but also that we were also able to change tack when the unexpected presented itself. This, we believe, is largely due to us having a good grasp of each other's work: the communicators are well-versed in the science and facts of the research that informs their communication strategy and the scientist is a part of the communications process and strategy creation.

In conclusion

Funding is always an issue, whether one is in a resource-rich or resource-poor setting. Ultimately, funders have to be convinced of the importance and worth of any project. In our case, a project proposing a different approach has been at a distinct disadvantage, since it is competing with traditional approaches. Funders may actively view traditional approaches as adequate, correct or better, and we must not forget that there is also always a bias towards the status quo. We believe that expenditure on communication in particular is still difficult to attain. It may be regarded as not important and possibly even frivolous, since the results are not immediately measurable. If communication strategies were regarded as an investment in – and an integral part of – policy uptake, significant changes in approach would be more possible.

Understanding media usage and access is a key to policy uptake and implementation. Within our context in advocacy, the press, TV and radio are important channels to attract the attention of key policymakers. In communicating policy to the public, the radio, the tabloid press, mobile devices, magazines and TV are important channels. Understanding how and where media is accessed and used is important for us in the formulation of budgets and allocation of resources, specifically for paid-for advertising. Sources such as the South African Audience Research Foundation and the Human Sciences Research Council provide valuable, accessible research which can guide the development of communications strategies, advertising and media placement. Fostering good relationships with members of the press cannot be overlooked. Also being vigilant at rebutting inaccuracies – and seeing these as opportunities for advocacy rather than an attack on one's cause – provides cost-free press.

The disappointments that we have experienced during our journey as a team have only served to cement our resolve around the issue of infant feeding and child survival and we believe that our strategies and ideas for 'The People, the Planet, the Can' could well be adapted for and applied in other contexts.

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Shedding light on complex ideas

Goran Buldioski

Communicating complex ideas has never been easy. Nor will it ever be, since evidence-based research most of the time yields complex findings. This volume documented five different ways on how to go about disentangling the complexity of policymaking. CIPPEC plunged knee-deep into the muddy waters of Argentinian politics. FITRA enticed, educated and emboldened journalists to peel back the opacity of Indonesia's national budget. Researchers at the American University in Cairo were wary about cultural patterns, and explored how they affect education research and changes in education policy. Grupo FARO researchers adapting to activism took on harmful pesticides and agricultural practices in Ecuador. South African researchers took the activist role one step further by engaging in the social marketing and rebranding of breastmilk in Africa. In this concluding chapter, we explore the commonalities and differences between these approaches in an attempt to draw more universal lessons to assist other researchers exploring the developing world.

Untangling the web of assumptions about communicating policy relevant research

All five cases, to some degree, expose several (often wrong) assumptions about the communication of policy relevant research. First, they demonstrate that communication is not just a layer to be added to a predetermined research design. Second, they describe that possessing knowledge and confidently marching through with evidence are insufficient sources of legitimacy when trying to change policies or practices. Third, the communication strategy each employs was conditioned, if not shaped, by the purpose of the overall intervention. Fourth, each case looks at the overall barriers for social change before identifying the specific impediments to research uptake. Finally, a comparison between the cases leads us to differentiate between efforts addressing more technocratic challenges and those that put the improvement of governance and democratization at their core.

Analysing the advent of pesticide technology and its ramifications in Ecuador, Grupo FARO's case study digs the deepest in identifying the position of communication (or research uptake). Defining communication as a co-constituent process, they not only ascribe meaning to communication, but also expect communication to add

meaning to the research findings. For these researchers communication is not a film of 'messaging' added to a base of research findings and compelling evidence gathered about the effects of pesticide poisoning. Communication efforts are embedded in the *inter*action with all affected stakeholders, but also are at the heart of the *trans*action. In this context *trans*action signifies how – through processes of communication – those involved can undergo cognitive, behavioral, cultural and social transformation. Communication design has to be an integral part of all policy relevant research projects. As such, the communication approaches continuously engaged in a delicate dance with the evidence gathered. They continuously shaped each other and equally contributed to the ultimate goal: diminishing the negative effects of pesticide technology as a model for agricultural modernisation in Ecuador.

It is necessary to view research communication as evolving *practice*, not static *theory*. Embedding oneself fully in one's time and space seems to be the call in every of these cases – and, in the Group FARO case particularly, it is to *join the movement* of people, rather than to stand aloof. At the same time, there seems to be a lesson about the value of learning/trying out different approaches, i.e. without trialing Development 1.0, there is no Development 2.0 or 3.0.

Possessing knowledge and confidently marching through, armed with data and evidence are insufficient sources of legitimacy in today's world (irrespective of the many academics who continue to hope for and teach the opposite). When the individuals or organisations tried to change policies or practices in the five cases in this collection, they all had to add other sources of legitimacy in the mix to complement or amplify their knowledge-based arguments. Coupling its efforts to change the Argentinian electoral laws with those of a political party, CIPPEC went the farthest in adding a new source of legitimacy. Clearly, bringing politics directly into the policy world is not for the faint-hearted and is beset by a lot of controversy. But, enlisting a political party in the case of CIPPEC it added a necessary layer of political legitimacy to the initial policy effort spearheaded by the think tank. Similarly, the South African researchers added an emotional spin to the compelling evidence for the healthy practice of breastfeeding. Demonstrating empathy and sympathy with the mothers affected by those practices complemented their policy solution. Both South African researchers and FARO enlisted many citizens' associations and other groups to bank on the legitimacy stemming from member-based organisations. FITRA used 'normative' argumentation on what does it mean being transparent in a democratic society. Political power, emotional appeal, membership-based organisation and value-based standpoints complemented knowledge in all of these successful communication efforts. Assuming that knowledge alone will do the job is becoming a fallacy in an increasingly populist world.

At the onset of every project or when devising overall organisational strategy each think tank usually makes a principal decision about the limits of its communication. The specific goals that individuals or organisations would like to achieve shape the chosen communication strategies. But, this is an iterative process following the evolution of policy and changes within the context and environment. FITRA's

work on budget transparency and accountability in Indonesia best illustrates the incremental and iterative changes of research and communication efforts. At first, they provided information about the budget – without directly criticising. Their intervention was premised on the normative authority of democracy and the power of laid-bare facts – of rampant budget abuse – to influence MPs. Once their communication strategy of approaching the MPs failed, they readjusted their goals and communication methods. Adopting a much more confrontational approach, FITRA positioned mass media as the key intermediary to convey and communicate their findings. While managing to put the issue on the public agenda, media was never meant to be an unbiased channel for getting evidence-based messages across to the political class. FITRA was being used by the media and by their interest for newsworthy, provocative data (usually reporting on corruption scandals), which sidelined the policy-worthy analysis, so they had to perfect the timing of their press releases. This is only one example to illustrate how the specific goal of the intervention and its underlying 'theory of change' have shaped the choice of communication tools and channels; but also to show how adaptive communications must be to operative successfully.

The individuals and organisation involved in the five described cases acknowledge the overall barriers for social change before identifying the specific impediments to research uptake. While one could argue that policy-minded researchers and think tanks alike often look carefully at the former and neglect the latter, the Egyptian case study, for example, captures the interplay between the two types of obstacles. As they point out '… implementation of the revised curricula has been fraught with socioorganisational challenges'. The culture of memorisation has been at the heart of the problem: one which was once a policy problem now transformed into a ubiquitous social obstacle. In spite of the democratisation wave that engulfed Egypt at the time of writing, as well as the related increase in political participation, a cultural transition was what was really missing.

A change of cultural values related to education was the key for the desired transition. Clearly, the researchers understood the challenges: that they and the policymakers stood a slim chance of implementing the changes they identified. On one hand, borrowing successful models from developed countries did not work; on the other, it was not the policymakers who needed to change first. Therefore, to address the social barriers, the project first addressed the parents and the teachers. The conceptual changes notwithstanding, this adjustment entailed a need to change the style and language of communicating. There was a need to employ language that that parents and teachers would easily understand – which heralds an imminent departure from the technical analyses tailored by experts and policymakers. Perhaps it is not surprising that the researchers failed in this endeavor. Often this is not what they have been trained at in academia. Yet this case study found researchers to be an improper conduit of reform messages to a general population; perhaps the local sense of disaccord with the nature of the intended reforms (promoting science education) was relevant to this conclusion. However, this volume brings together varied examples of how researcher practices have flexibly adapted to their

circumstances. Researchers are certainly experts at identifying and describing problems in a scientific manner, but many of them could be better trained as good general communicators. Or in, the case of think tanks, success can be about involving different sets of skills from the beginning of the project in order to produce a comprehensive message to a lay audience through teamwork. Irrespectively of what an organization or team of researchers chooses, either way should lead to integrated research-communications products, where communications and research strategies are not so easily divorced. Communication is therefore engaged from the beginning in a central role and not in supporting role to research.

Finally, we should not oversimplify complexity. It will be there even with the most brilliantly executed communication efforts that have put a complex message across in very simple terms. This compilation's intention and mandate is not to engage in developing taxonomies for complexity. Yet, it is good to differentiate between efforts addressing development challenges and those that put the improvement of governance or democratisation at their core.[1] The former focuses on evolution of dominant sociotechnical solutions, technical transfer and the spread of coherent practices. Communication efforts, such as promotion of breast milk in Africa and pesticide control in Ecuador, were dealt within the paradigm of development work. The projects in Indonesia, Argentina and, to some extent, the one in Egypt engage within the preexisting governance and democratisation framework. Therefore, in addition to the efforts listed above, these projects had to deal with party politics, continuously assessing the preferences by dominant political forces to calibrate their own communication and not overstep the political boundaries.

One for all, all for one: what roles for think tanks, researchers and communication specialists?

Some of the case studies in this volume touch upon – though do not explicitly focus on – the roles that the organisations and individual researchers undertake in their communication efforts. The five cases identified several roles for the organisations involved (i.e., teams of researchers and communicators) that fall in a spectrum of possibilities:

> Thinking (analysis only) > thinking and advocacy > thinking and demonstration > thinking and doing.

For example, researchers at the American University in Cairo took the role of policy analysts. A priori, they did not assume that sustainable development is a function of providing only good information. Yet, when confronted with the failure of their communication efforts to reach out to teachers and parents effectively, they distanced themselves from taking action to complete the next step. Moreover, they declared researchers inept for communication to the public at large. This is an attitude indeed practiced by many academically oriented research institutes. While there is nothing

1   A succinct and relevant discussion on the perils of linking policy and politics can be found in Donovan, C. and Larkin P., 'The Problem of Political Science and Practical Politics.' *Politics* 26 (1), 11–17.

bad in only providing information or knowledge, by distancing themselves from the complex and complicated ways of bringing the information closer to the people, these researchers inevitably risked failing to make an impact.

FITRA's work is undoubtedly based on advocacy. Their analysis is mainly designed to feed in the media that, in turn, will pressure the government to adopt more transparent policy around the national budget. The organisation suggested standards on how to make the budget more transparent, but never planned to engage in direct assistance with any of the government units in improving their transparency. Thinking and demonstrating the recommended policy solution in practice is the CIPPEC's case study offering in the spectrum covered in this volume. They first carried out the analysis and acted as an advocate for an alternative electoral system. Once such an approach proved insufficient, they partnered with one political party in a specific district and demonstrated the benefits of the policies they had previously suggested. Faced with increased risks of politicisation, this is where they stopped and decided not go on and multiply their effort in another federal state or nationwide.

FARO's efforts are a borderline case between demonstration and implementing the recommended policy alternative. The sheer size and ambition of their implementation effort surpassed the boundaries of a demonstration project. Researchers not only communicated research results but also their own belief system and values. Under the given circumstances, the institutional change is not simply a matter of communicating knowledge but also about conveying and legitimately demonstrating attitudes and coherent practice. Perhaps, the South African researchers went the furthest in their efforts to implement the policy they advocated for. After the initial years, the time spent in promoting and using the breastmilk outstrips the effort put into research. At the end of the effort, they were evidence-informed activists, but certainly as much activists as scientists.

It is obvious that moving from left to right on this spectrum, organisations (and teams of researchers and communicators) evolve from providers of knowledge and development initiatives to participants in a social movement. Those who limit themselves to be only researchers will never be scrutinised about what they do. The consequences for the organisations or teams that transformed themselves into embedded local actors and contributors to social movements have to bear much more challenging consequences, e.g. they will be scrutinised, not only about the knowledge they are sharing, but also about the way they communicate it through their practices. For those organisations and individual researchers at this stage, it is no longer sufficient to say the right things, but also to practice those things in their own lives. FARO Ecuador and the Southern African researchers offer the best examples of living those consequences in this volume. To maintain their credibility, simply, FARO researchers have to eat products without pesticides and the South African researchers (if applicable) have to breastfeed.

The Grupo FARO case perfectly pinpoints the operational and ethical challenges posed by their choices:

'... in the case of researchers who study public health services but use private services for their own health needs, or promote changes in public education but send their children to private schools: do they have the legitimacy to participate in these systems? But if, on the other hand, they were embedded in the system, how could they maintain their claim of objectivity?'

Clearly, the depth of engagement and consequently the communication approach raise much more fundamental questions about the objectivity of analysis as well as the legitimacy of the organisations involved. Hereby, while vital to point out these deeper and profound dilemmas, it is also fair to acknowledge that their analysis goes beyond the goal of this collection of case studies.

Hereby, it is worth exploring how different organisational choices determine the roles of the individual researchers within. Using a slightly revised version of the taxonomy offered by the FARO case study, the roles could be also ordered in a continuum.[2]

Analyst (expert) only > expert + advocate > entrepreneur (demonstration projects) > activist (implementation).

Moving from left to right, the researchers are expected to add more tasks to their list. Illustrating this complex point briefly, the following paragraph looks at two dimensions a) various knowledge the person has to possess as s/he moves from left to right on the continuum (Nutley 2003) and b) the percentage of time s/he spends on research and other non-research tasks. The experts would be able to define the problems and identify policies that work. In ideal scenario they would know how to put the policy into practice. With regard to time, it is normally expected that researchers and experts would spend most of their time in research and considerably less time in communicating the results of that research. If an expert is also an advocate, s/he will have to know whom to involve. But more importantly, experts-advocates would spend considerable portion of their time delivering many presentations, attending conferences and briefing decision makers with their opinion. Advocates turn into policy entrepreneurs when they have the ability to put some or all of their policy recommendations in practice (in a limited setting or environment). A simplistic definition of an activist is a policy entrepreneur who lives by a set of values shaped by the policy solutions s/he recommends.

Reading through all these high expectations from the researchers, one should ask if the policy researchers 'have been turned into supermen and superwomen'. The case studies in this collection only implicitly invoke this question. Notwithstanding CIPPEC and Grupo FARO hinting at team work and division of tasks throughout their respective efforts, all cases fail to depict how the teams of researchers and communicators worked out. The Egyptian case relied more heavily on the perspective of the researchers. The public campaign in the South African case was mounted

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2   The interplay that we missed to a great extent in these articles is the role of the communication specialist.

directly onto the research findings and the value set of the researcher–activists and later executed by external collaborators. Grupo FARO, FITRA and CIPPEC have all got communication specialists on their staff. In the case of CIPPEC, it is worth observing that the key messaging was neither provided by their researchers nor by their communication department. Instead, it was a member of their advisory board. This is a good example on how think tanks could often tap into outsider advice and demonstrate the added value of the organisational brand, as opposed to a team of researchers. It is also good advice for research organisations and teams that they need to design a set of competences for a team rather than cram everything on the shoulders of researchers. Those teams would include communication specialists, part time or full time, or researchers with accented communication responsibilities on top of regular research tasks. It is the team, not every individual on it that has to possess both research and communication competences.

Communicating complexity for policy change

Communication is an integral part of all research projects that aim to impact policy. The communication efforts have to be built into the research design and thought through at its very outset. By no means does this imply that there will not be adjustments in the communication strategy at later stage. But, when planned properly from the beginning, communication efforts tend to be well-organised. This last point is often a key deficiency in research-based efforts. If we assume that successful communication efforts are about making sense, having meaning, and being organised, most research efforts – the five documented cases in this collection included – fulfill the first two criteria. Once these two are fulfilled and researchers have done their 'core work' well, the art of making the policy impact will depend on the design and management (orderliness). Good management (organisation) of communication will lead to proactive action, instead of an ongoing reaction to political and policy changes. CIPPEC demonstrated this proactivity by taking the initiative to implement their recommendations in one of the Argentinian federal states. Good planning and the ability to gauge their audience properly will allow organisations to utilise the right analytical formats. For example, FITRA arrived at the right formats by trial and error. Once they removed the jargon and shortened the length of their analysis, the research uptake increased. But it was only when they trained several journalists and timed their press releases better, that the coverage of their issue improved in mass media.

These five case studies depict a host of ways that complex ideas are communicated. With no exception, all have moved away from the simplistic paradigms of 'bridging the gap between knowledge and policy' (McGann with Johnson 2005). In fact, this volume offers a radically nuanced range of examples of knowledge–policy interfaces, in previously uncovered detail. While none was necessarily inspired directly by the work of Nicola Jones et al. (2009), the areas in the latter's assessment framework (types of knowledge; political context; sectoral dynamics; actors; innovative frameworks; and knowledge translation) could provide further, productive lenses through which to analyse the complex knowledge that was generated in these case

studies. In embracing or discussing the complex nature of many policy problems, and by eschewing reductive conclusions, all cases present research as part of the solution: but none declares it a panacea. Communicating complexity for policy change, in sum, has been shown to go beyond mere interaction. It is a process of transaction, by which – if we, as researchers and communicators, continue to cross predefined borders and journey beyond them – we will transform ourselves and our societies.

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Enrique Mendizabal

What links the worlds of academia and policy, of theory and practice,
of research and its application?

Think tanks – and their researchers – work at this junction: pulling elite
discourse into public conversations, encouraging political changes,
finding social evidence to balance subjective decisionmaking.
But communicating complex ideas has never been easy.

This book lays bare those practical efforts to communicate what matters.
Its cases range widely, from CIPPEC's team in Argentina campaigning for
electoral reform, to Grupo FARO's social scientists taking on harmful pesticides
and farming practices in Ecuador, to researchers at the American University
in Cairo exploring STEM education reforms amid the preestablished
cultural conditions of the Middle East. FITRA's work on transparency
enables journalists to expose the opacity of the Indonesian
national budget, while independent local researchers in South Africa
engage actively as social marketeers, rebranding breastmilk.

'It is necessary to view research communication as evolving practice, not static theory.'

With an introduction by Enrique Mendizabal (On Think Tanks), and a
conclusion by Goran Buldioski (Open Society Foundations Think Tank Fund), this is
essential reading for anyone communicating at the intersection of
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