



# Academic Knowledge Mobilisation

Cecilia Cannon, Graduate Institute of International  
and Development Studies

# Challenges and opportunities for the SDGs & Agenda 2030



- Taking stock of what sort of knowledge academic institutions can offer the SDGs and Agenda 2030
- Broader challenges relating to knowledge mobilisation and how to address them

# Thinking through knowledge for the SDGs & Agenda 2030



- What does the academic institution have to offer in terms of knowledge for reaching the SDGs & Agenda 2030?
- Who is the target audience for the knowledge we produce?
- What does this audience need?
- What is the best way to transmit academic knowledge to the audience (communicate with them / reach them / resonate with them)?

# Academic Knowledge Products



- Research
  - Research projects – academic / scientific
  - Research projects – commissioned
  - Master's / PhD theses / Applied research projects (partner with orgs.)
- Teaching / trainings
  - Academic teaching
  - Executive education / tailored training programmes
- Dissemination / mobilisation
  - Publications (academic / policy / public / websites / apps...)
  - Events
  - Consultancy work – 'Experts' (review committees, governments, high-level panels, etc.)
  - Involvement in external initiatives / partnerships

# Knowledge mobilisation for whom?



- UN agencies, other International Organisations
- Regional organisations
- Governments (national & local)
- Business community
- NGOs
- Civilians
- Researchers
- Other (health workers, farmers, industry specific groups)

# What does this audience need? How can we begin to organise the knowledge for mobilisation?



- Overall Agenda 2030 and the SDGs
- Implementation & capacity building
  - Multilateral governance (e.g. role of the UN)
  - Regional / national / local policies
  - Business practices
  - Social awareness / behaviour change
  - Partnerships
  - Financing
  - Technology / science (Uni Southampton / Toyota: Green electrics)
- Monitoring & review
  - Indicators, targets, data gathering, analysis
- Specific goals (thematic: health, gender, water, education...)

# Knowledge beyond SDGs and Agenda 2030



- Not about the SDGs or Agenda 2030, but useful lessons to apply to the SDGs and Agenda 2030
  - Social behaviour change (Knowledge generated around health – mobilised for Global Handwashing Campaign)
  - Partnerships (what works and what doesn't)
  - Monitoring and review processes (optimal modes of inclusive processes)
  - Economic forecasting
- Ideas welcome...



# Challenges & Opportunities for Knowledge Mobilisation



# Challenges

(As discussed at UN  
Research Uptake Conference, April 2016)



- Dis-incentives for knowledge mobilisation
  - For academics
  - For policy practitioners
- Resource constraints
  - For academics
  - For policy-practitioners
  - Need for new funding models beyond government funding
  - Foundations
- 'Lost in translation' problems (length, jargon, channel of communication)
- Access barriers to data, knowledge and people (bureaucracies, geographic proximity to the policy world)
- Timeline mismatches

# Knowledge mobilisation for implementation (As discussed at UN Research Uptake Conference, April 2016)



- Close engagement with policymakers – seek out partnerships for collaboration
- Involve policy-makers throughout research cycle: research embedded in policy and policy integral to research programmes
- Improving access / partnerships for research institutions in developing countries (on the ground – lessons from civil society networks with small HQ office in Geneva/New York, and extensive network of local NGOs)
- Publication of flagship reports and high-level panels that involve experts
- Sabbaticals – researchers to policy world, policy world to research institutions
- More effective dissemination of research output (language, length, timing, channel of communication, social media, events)
- Overcoming timeline mismatches (share / discuss preliminary findings)

# Knowledge mobilisation for implementation



- Solicitation of research institutes to establish projects that help states implement policies;
- Solicitation of individual experts and scholars to help states implement laws / policies
- Executive education and training programs for policy practitioners.

# Knowledge mobilised for monitoring & review



- Monitor policies and programme, either formally solicited by international bureaucracies or as independent watchdogs;
- Independent watchdogs can reference monitored data produced by academic institutions in their shadow reports submitted in formal review processes;
- 'Experts' sit on review committees, and serve in official monitoring teams.



How can knowledge be better leveraged to serve implementation?

Communication & ongoing dialogue.

# 1. Govs, IOs, UN agencies, businesses, NGOs to communicate what is needed – what don't they 'know'?



- Sustainable Development Knowledge platform – listing gaps in knowledge as they become apparent in review processes.
- UN resident coordinators – to regularly raise 'knowledge gaps.'
- Governments to raise gaps in their knowledge relating to implementation in their country review reports
- Shadow reports (civil society) to raise gaps in knowledge
- International Organisations, UN agencies, issue calls for expertise or knowledge on specific areas of need – publish on websites
- Instead of viewing these gaps in review processes as shortcomings / failings, they become a call for knowledge mobilisation

## 2. Academic institutions or knowledge producers to communicate what they 'know'



- The IISD knowledge platform – a good start
- Geneva Data, SDG radar, other networks, hubs, forums
- Graduate Institute – web portal in the making to link through to all people, events, publications, teaching relating to SDGs and Agenda 2030
- Academic institutions around the world... varying types of expertise / specialisation to fill the needed gaps

# Matchmaking or generate new knowledge?



- Knowledge sometimes already exists, just a question of putting the relevant people in contact, of bringing a publication to someone's awareness, of presenting research findings in language & format that will reach and resonate with the policy practitioner in need
- Other times, this knowledge needs to be generated – do it together, with the policy practitioners involved in the research design and throughout the research process



Thank-you!

