Science-Policy Dialogues

Research

Any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge

Policy

A basic statement of purpose and approach decided on by a governmental authority

A Difficult Dialogue

A Difficult Dialogue

S c i e n c e

P o l i c y

Ideas and Concepts

Understanding the world	Managing the world
"Is" (facts)	"Is" + "ought" (values)
Description	Prescription
Reductionism	Holism
Truth and reproducibility	Rightness and practicality
Uncertainty is a fact of life	Deciding "Yes" or "No" is the goal

(Saner, 2007)

A Difficult Dialogue

S c i e n c e

P o l i c y

Ideas and Concepts

Problem oriented	Service oriented
Clientele diffuse, diverse or not present	Clientele specific, immediate, and insistent
Investigation	Justification
Experiment and observation	Dialogue and judgment
Inquiry and discovery	Imagination and mission
Precision and selection towards truth	Reconciliation of viewpoints / compromise
Independence from context	Situational solutions desired
“Know what and how”	“Know why and whether”

(Saner, 2007)

A Difficult Dialogue

Science

Policy

Ideas and Concepts

Risk: right answer, but wrong question	Risk: unsupported answer to right question
Absolutism in the concept of truth	Absolutism in ethical concepts
Inequality is a scientific observation	Equality is moral goal
Sharing within a world-wide network	Focus on domestic interests
Very open to external expertise	External input is evaluated as “an agenda”
Long-term focus or open-ended	Time horizons often fixed (next elections)
Resources are almost never sufficient	Resource needs can often be defined
Failure and risk accepted	Failure and risk intolerable

(Saner, 2007)

A Difficult Dialogue

Science

Policy

Ideas and Concepts

Derogative term: "lab coats, techies" ⟷ Derogative term: "policy wonks"

Favourite statements about policy makers ⟷ Favourite statements about scientists:

"They should learn some science and statistics"

"They should learn about the process and context"

"They ignore the hard evidence"

"They think they are the high priests of truth"

"Over there, they don't appreciate our value"

"Over there, they always want more resources"

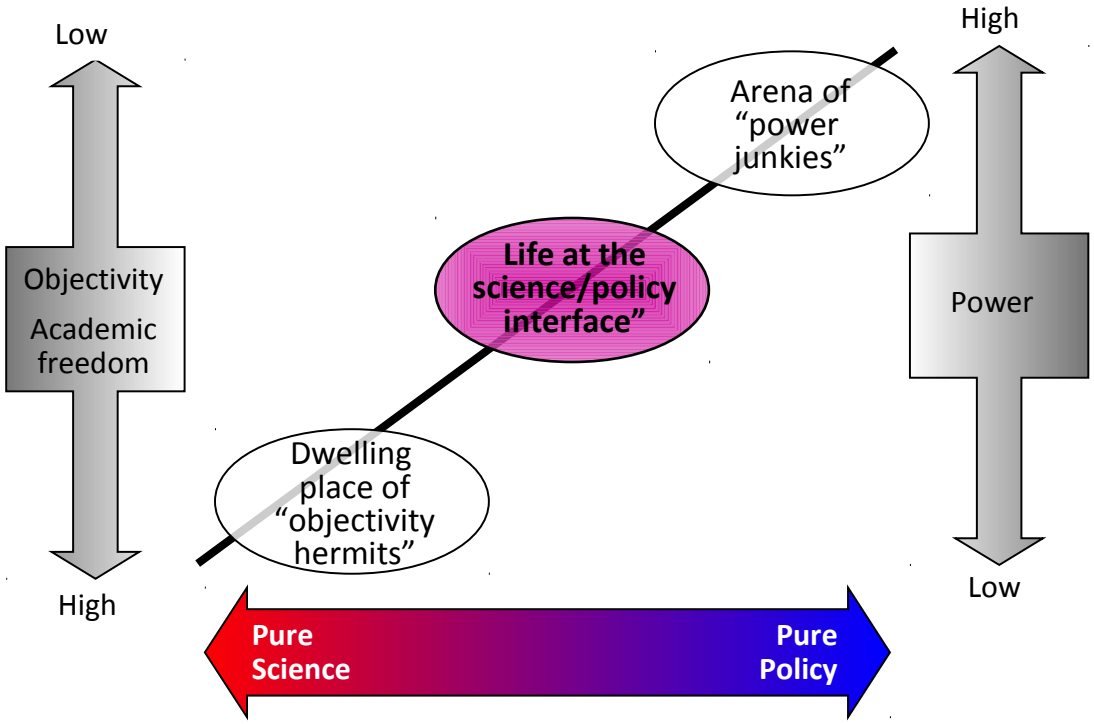
Progress

Power

(Saner, 2007)

Were Science and Policy Meet

Three Locations for Playing the Science/Policy Game



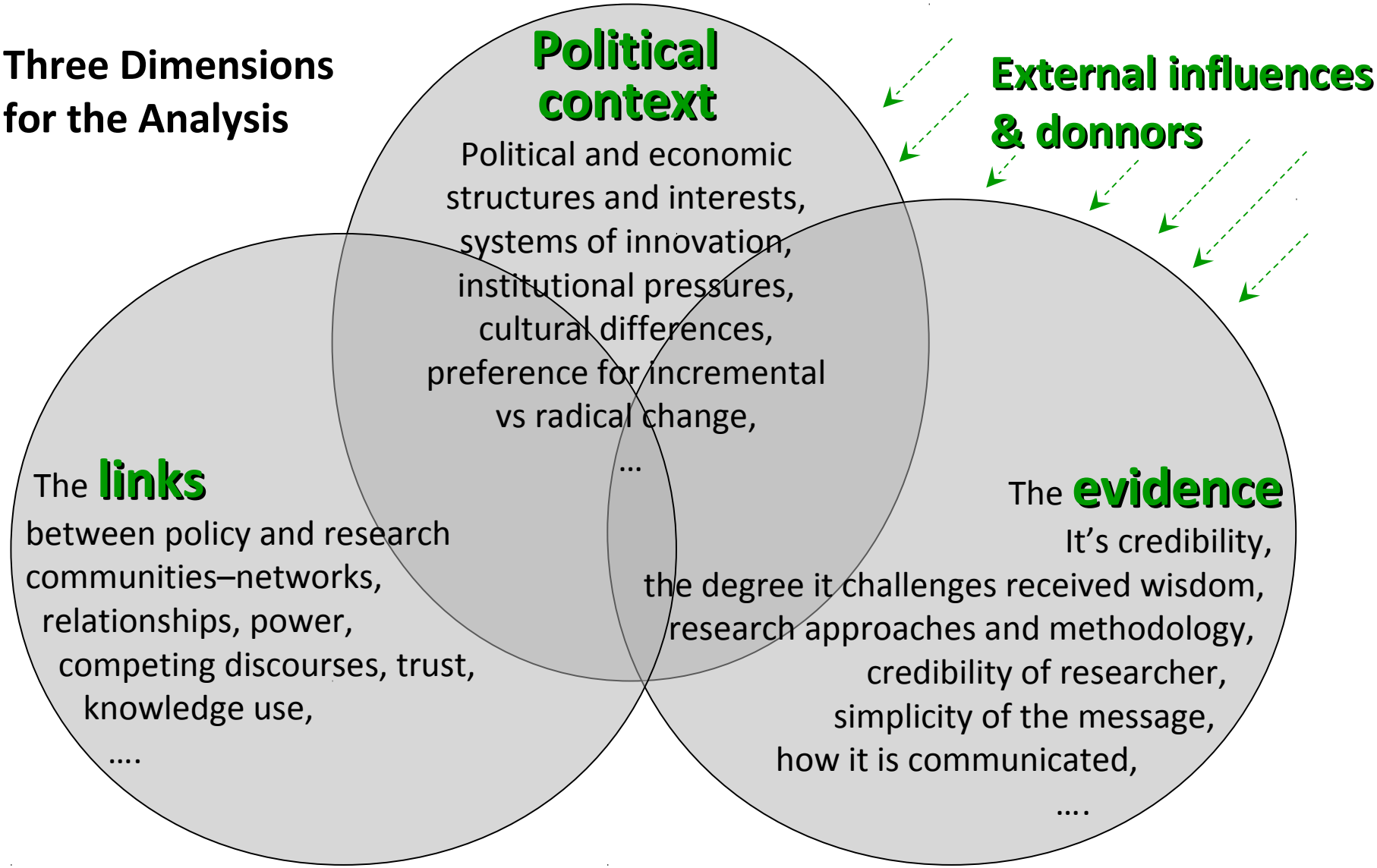
(Saner, 2007)

Why are some ideas that circulate in the research-policy arenas picked up and acted on, while others are ignored?

(Saner, 2007)

Were Science and Policy Meet

Three Dimensions for the Analysis



The Political Context

How policy-makers think

- Political/scientific paradigms
- 'Policy narratives' and overriding views
- Agenda-setting process

The political process

- Open political Systems
- Degree of policy-maker demand: own demand or public driven
- Degree of political contestation & interests of powerful political players
- Commitment with change
- Crisis: generate (+) a demand for solutions or (-) volatile environments
- Routine / incremental processes
- Policy windows

Policy implementation and practice

- Motivation and incentives of 'street-level bureaucrats'
- Role of intermediaires
- Policy change = Demand - Contestation

(Court & Young, 2003)

Evidence (research products)

Credibility and usefulness

Is research topically relevant? Does it focus on major issues being faced?
Substantial relevance and operational relevance
Does research provide a solution to a problem?
Is knowledge contextualized?
Quality of the research
Credibility of the research / Contested research
Reputation of research institution or donor

Communication and "packaging"

Communication strategies *throughout* the research process
Communication models: linear / two way
Use of "translators"
Use media to "advertise"
"Packaging" for specific users
Establishing dialogues take time

(Court & Young, 2003)

Links

Feedback, dialogue and collaboration

- Feedback processes
- Involvement of policy-makers in research
- Individual contacts between researchers and policy-makers
- Work with “champions”
- Scientists infiltrating the policy work space

Networks and policy communities

- Networks of researchers and policy-makers
- Informal / institutionalized networks
- ‘Epistemic communities’
- ‘Advocacy coalitions’

Trust, legitimacy and participation

- Trust between researchers and policy-makers’
- ‘Downward’ links to the populations and communities

(Court & Young, 2003)

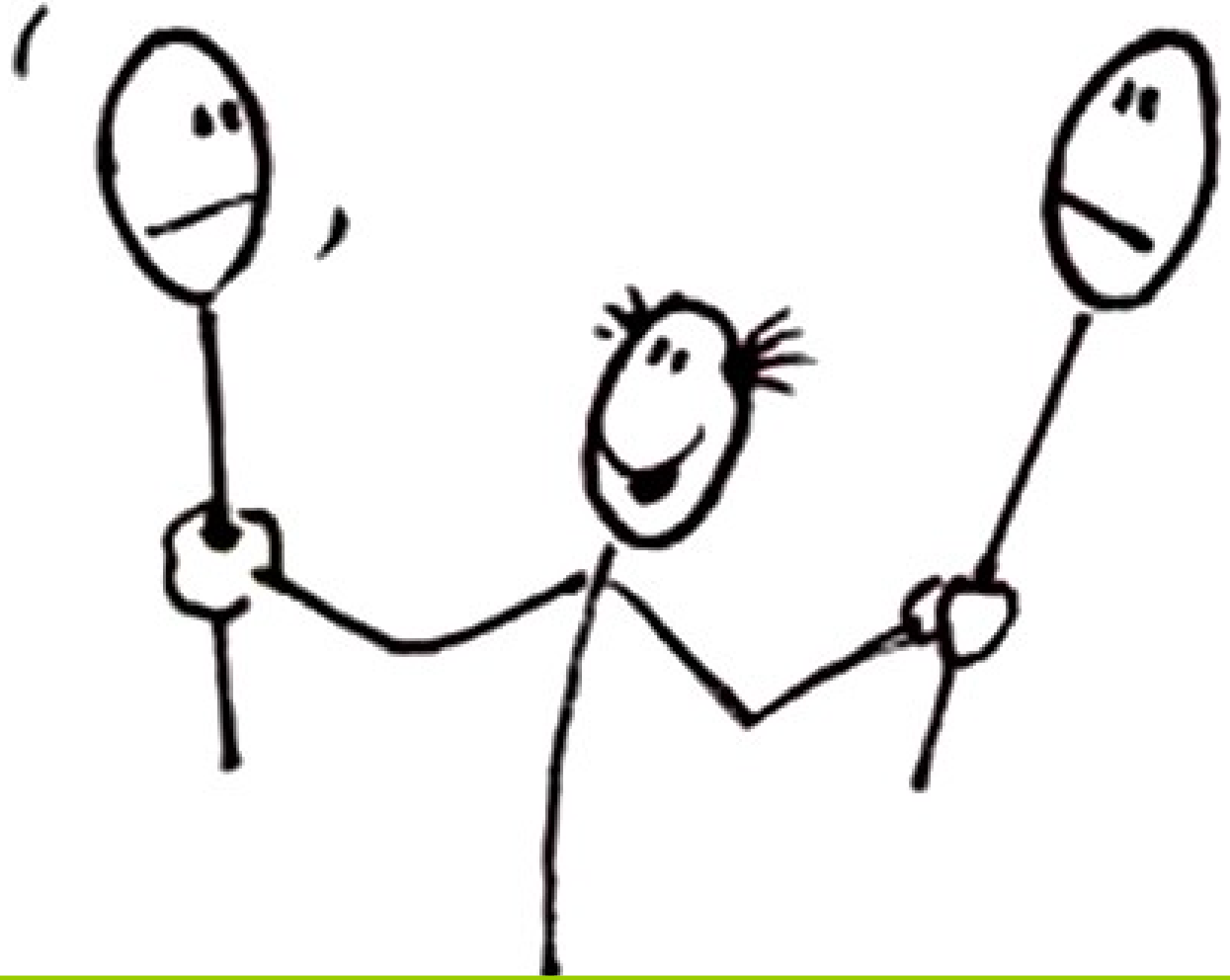
Donors

Donors

Create research capacity and also strengthen policy making capacities
Influence policy agendas
Mould science through funding conditions
Could influence research results

(Court & Young, 2003)

Encouraging the dialogue



Recommendations for Policy makers

- **Provenance of research**: Research is more likely to influence policy if it is commissioned by the policy-makers themselves, and if there are good feedback loops between, research, policy, implementation and monitoring.

- **Capacity and bureaucratic processes**: Policy-makers need skills and experience both to commission and interpret the results of research, and to put them into practice.

- **Incentives**: Manage incentives and constraints on the bureaucrats who actually have to implement policies (the 'street-level bureaucrats').

- **Participation**: Participation by all stakeholders (policy-makers, researchers and the community) is essential for science-based policy-making.

- **Networking**: Policy-makers (or their researchers) looking for new ideas should seek to engage in relevant formal and informal networks

(Court & Young, 2003)

Recommendations for Researchers

- **Understand the context**: Who are the policy-makers? Is there policy-maker demand? What are the sources/strengths of resistance? What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes?

- **Understand the agenda setting process**

- **Get to know the actors**: Be aware of the different actors in the policy community, their position within it and their relative influence.

- **Respond to demand**: Be ready to capitalize on opportunities presented by sudden 'policy windows'. Single studies are unlikely to have much impact, but long-term programmes can help create their own demand or help create policy windows.

(Court & Young, 2003)

Recommendations for Researchers

- **Be practical**: Provide a solution to a problem Recommendations based on research must be operationally useful. Include policy-makers and local people in the research process.

- **Establish your credibility**: Reputation (individual or institutional) could be more important than scientific credibility.

- **Real communication**: Short, clear, jargon-free documents are more effective than academic papers. Interactive dialogue is better than one-way communication..

- **Build networks:** Formal and informal networks are an essential. Use good networkers and 'salesmen' to spread the word. Find and cultivate 'champions' among policy-makers and intermediaries

(Court & Young, 2003)

Recommendations for Donnors

- **Clear objectives are essential**: 'Blue sky' research, capacity-building and policy influence require different approaches in different contexts.
- **Partnerships**: Alliances with local organisations can increase policy relevance and impact.
- **Coordination**: Much energy is wasted through poor coordination between research programmes.
- **Long-term support**: Long-term research programmes have greater policy impact than short- short-term projects. Research institutes need long-term funding to develop strong programmes.
- **Incentive research** products to fit policy needs

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(Court & Young, 2003)

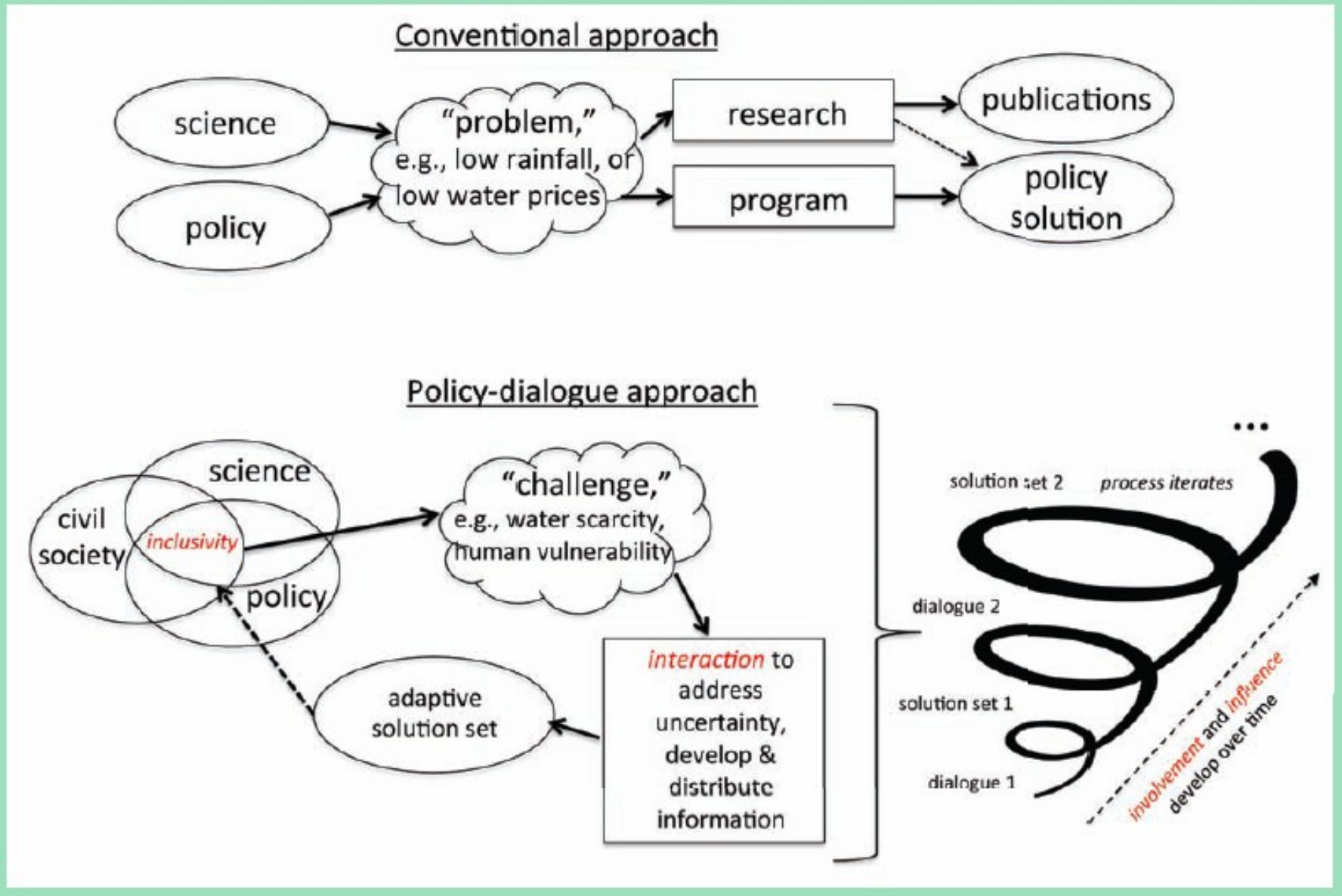
Science-Policy Dialogues for Water Security:

Addressing Vulnerability and Adaptation to Global Change in the Arid Americas

by Christopher A. Scott, Robert G. Varady, Francisco Meza, Elma Montaña, Graciela B. de Raga, Brian Luckman, and Christopher Martius

U.S.-Mexico stakeholder workshop in Tucson, Arizona (2009), on transboundary groundwater, including U.S. and Mexican federal, state, and local officials; NGO representatives; and researchers.

Figure 1: Conventional adaptive approaches tend to offer less robust solutions than sustained science-policy dialogues.



Authors

Four elements to evaluate science-policy dialogues and their effectiveness

- **Inclusivity**: degree to which key scientists, decision-makers, other stakeholders participate in the dialogue and represent an appropriate range of viewpoints… Team members who are multinational, multilingual, and broadly interdisciplinary

- **Involvement**: commitment and continuity of dialogue participants—particularly agency staff, civil society representatives, and, increasingly, the private sector.

- **Interaction**: the degree to which participants discuss, assimilate, exchange, create, and disseminate relevant information among each other and to those outside the process.

- **Influence**: the ability of the dialogue to effect institutional changes, such as policies, laws, inter-agency or intra-agency practices, and intergovernmental or international agreements