REPORT:

UNIPID FALL SEMINAR

Knowledge Exchange for Better Policy and Practice: A Research-Policy Matchmaking Event

10-11 December 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

UniPID organized its Fall Seminar on December 10 - 11, 2015, with the theme "Knowledge exchange for better policy and practice: A research – policy matchmaking event". UniPID is a network of Finnish universities supporting the strategic global responsibility objectives of Finnish universities. Among other things, UniPID aims to enhance the Finnish research community's societal impact related to global challenges and development issues. With this seminar, UniPID sought to strengthen the communication between researchers and policy-makers to facilitate evidence-based policy and decision making. The more specific goals of the seminar were to explore dimensions and core practices of policy-relevant, "engaged" research, as well as to look for new ways of and opportunities for multi-stakeholder knowledge exchange. The seminar promoted networking between researchers and policy-makers, who were brought together to share knowledge and jointly translate research into the policy realm.

Both policy-makers and researchers were sent a pre-event questionnaire to determine their interests in specific topics as well as needs in terms of knowledge exchange and collaboration.

The seminar was designed to begin with a day-long training workshop for researcher participants on collaborative practices. The second day was designed as a collaborative event where scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers could discuss research on pre-identified core themes and explore further collaborative practices and possibilities. The second day also included plenaries, knowledge-sharing group work, and an informal panel session (see the full programme here).

During the two days, the seminar gathered together some 40 attendees from a variety of disciplines and institutions.

Thursday 10th December 2015	
8:30	Registration and Coffee
PLENARY SESSION	
9:00	Opening and Introductions: *Who, Why & What of the Seminar*
10:00	**Best Practices and Practicalities of Engaged Research** *Not changing but expanding the focus: Academic vs. Applied research - principles and tools*
11:30	**Briefing of the Team Work** *Identifying, Addressing, and Presenting Policy Issues and Possible Approaches*
PARALLEL KNOWLEDGE TEAM SESSIONS	
12:00	**Team Lunch**
13:00	**Team work** (including a coffee break)
PLENARY SESSION	
15:00-17:00	**Debriefing**

DAY2: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE *Facilitated by Minna Aslama Horowitz (University of Helsinki, St. John's University)*	
8:30	**Registration and Coffee**
PLENARY SESSION	
9:00	**Opening Remarks:** *Why Collaborate, How to Collaborate?* • Jussi Pakkasvirta, UniPID/University of Helsinki • Sari Lehtiranta, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
10:00	**Introduction to Knowledge Exchange Team Work**
PARALLEL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE TEAM SESSIONS	
10:30	*First Round*
11:30	*Second Round*
12:30	**Lunch**
13:30	*Third Round*
PLENARY SESSION	
14:30	**Panel Discussion:** *Key areas and processes for future collaborations* • Pertti Haaparanta, Aalto University • Katarina Frostell, Åbo akademi/Human Rights Institute • Marikki Stocchetti, The Development Policy Committee • Suvi Virkkunen, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
16:15	**Closing Remarks**
16:30	**Learning lounge:** *Cocktails and informal networking*

This report summarizes the core insights from the plenaries, discussions, and thematic knowledge workshops:

1. It highlights the **challenges and opportunities** expressed by both policy actors and researchers in terms of collaboration.
2. It addresses three core content areas -- **Food and Nutrition Security, Innovation, and Migration and Development** -- as cases for evidence-based policy development, as discussed in thematic knowledge team sessions during the seminar.
3. In addition, it showcases some **practical solutions** (practices and tools) for knowledge-to-policy collaboration discussed throughout the seminar.
4. Finally, the report highlights some ideas for **future collaboration**.

2. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF KNOWLEDGE-TO-POLICY COLLABORATION

The following table summarizes different challenges and opportunities of stakeholder collaboration and knowledge-to-policy processes from the perspectives of policy-makers and researchers and their shared context. 'Topic' refers to areas that were identified as key to research-to-policy collaboration; 'challenges', to existing barriers and other problems; and 'opportunities', to possibilities that exist for starting or enhancing collaboration.[1]

For policy-makers, the collaboration is defined by their different needs for and uses of research. The main concerns are related to timing, usability of research outcomes and suitable forms of communication.

Policy makers		
Topic	Challenges	Opportunities
Core research needs • Policy development • Localized knowledge • Monitoring and evaluation	Lack of systematic collaboration and practices. How to find policy-relevant issues and themes?	Core areas of future collaboration identified; some good examples exist (e.g., Food Security Pilot, see also below).

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[1] Based on the questionnaires as well as the seminar's plenaries and discussions.

Research uses	Academic research needs to be packaged for different uses.	Target audiences identified.
• Modification of policy objectives • Informing partners • Convincing politicians • Informing public opinion/citizens		
Timing	Policy-making: short-term vs. Research: long-term.	Communicating a research need for policy-making so that it can become a part of a longer-term, broader academic research project.
Outcomes	Concrete, precise vs. broader, often theoretical/conceptual.	Communicating a research need for policy-making so that it can become a part of a longer-term, broader academic research project.
Communication	Simple, short vs. theoretically-driven, including caveats and qualifications.	Communicating research needs and possible audiences to researchers so that academic research can be repurposed for them; also opportunities for more systematic collaboration in translating research.

For researchers, the main concerns related to research-policy collaboration are related to limited research funding, different roles of researchers, social responsibility and ethical issues, ownership of knowledge, policy-relevant research design, initiating the policy contacts and the complexity of the policy realm.

Researchers		
Issues	**Challenges**	**Opportunities**
Local knowledge	• Limited resources for development research. Understanding different layers of 'local' realities takes time. • Responsibility. "We all have great ideas but they may not work in localized contexts."	• Sharing local knowledge with policy actors is a very beneficial opportunity for (routine) knowledge exchanges. • Complementary knowledge, understanding different levels of "local"

		(regional, national, etc.). ● Visiting embassies during field work is a great way to connect, share knowledge.
Different roles "Sometimes we already are policy-makers, development actors, etc."	Possible conflicts of interests when working with many stakeholders.	Better opportunities to have impact, more allies, more exposure.
Complexities of policy-making "Evidence-based recommendations are just one aspect."	● How to understand the process? ● At which point to participate? ● With whom to connect? "The first steps of networking seem to be the hardest".	Processes offer different possibilities: Impact through other stakeholders; consultations vs. full-on research collaboration, etc.
Who initiates contact? "Communication is key in collaboration."	● Should policy-makers or researchers? ● Changes in organizations, personnel in ministries, as well as short-term research projects. ● Who is the ultimate driver of collaboration, intermediaries such as UniPID? ● How to communicate potentially policy-relevant issues, ideas, findings?	Opportunity to set up routine knowledge exchange processes that are light, informal, easy to convene/produce/access (newsletters, databases, breakfast briefings...)
Whose knowledge?	Universities as mere Think Tanks? How to know/control the use of research?	The degree of collaboration as a choice: ● informal networking, ● systematic knowledge exchange (briefings), ● cooperation (commissioned research), ● integration (fully collaborative projects).
Design for policy vs. academic research "How to build collaborative research projects?"	"Tangible" outcomes and different time-frames; see above.	● Design consultation and feedback possible even if not full collaboration. ● International academic / academic-policy collaborations as one opportunity.

When considering the shared context for policy-makers and researchers, in addition to collaboration between researchers and ministry officers, attention should be given to engaging politicians and the general public. Economic austerity calls for ever more research-policy collaboration to advance common interests.

Shared context		
Issues	Challenges	Opportunities
Current landscape in Finland	How to engage politicians? The general public? Economic situation: cutbacks in education, research and development cooperation.	- There is an agreement between policy-makers and researchers about the common development issues = cooperation is easy. - The media are a powerful tool in highlighting development issues and approaches. Researchers can be active via media and build relationships with media outlets to have an impact in public debates and political decision-making.
	MFA's support for academic knowledge creation: - The Academy funding for development research will be reconsidered for 2016. - The BEAM programme supports cooperation between private sector and researchers. - The new HEI-ICI programme will be launched soon. This programme merges the two former programmes for mobility and HEI capacity building, also allowing for some research funding. - MFA continues to support NAI for 3 more years. - MFA continues to support UNU-WIDER. - Funding for World Bank's Knowledge for Change program. - Support for the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) programme.	
"Trademark Finland" & the global arena	- MFA rethinking their research policy and allies in development work. - In the global arena of development work and research we are known for an open approach, learning, listening = an opportunity.	

3. KEY THEMATIC INSIGHTS

Thematic areas:	Including topics, such as:			
Climate Change	Climate change politics	Energy	Water	REDD+
Economics and Innovation	Development economics	Private sector development and corporate responsibility	Innovation processes and capacities, frugal innovations	ICT and digitalization
Food Security and Health	Agricultural markets and trade	Agriculture and food systems	Nutrition	Health
Human Development and Societal Challenges	Peaceful and democratic societies	Human rights and inclusion	Migration	Other

The following core thematic insights emerged from the **knowledge exchange team sessions**, during which scholars (Day 1 & 2) and policy-makers (Day 2) discussed evidence-based policy ideas, as well as explored collaborative practices and possibilities. Based on the expertise of the scholar-participants, three thematic groups were formed around Food Security, Innovation, and Migration.

Food and Nutrition Security

On a general level, the Food Security team discussed that more focus should be paid to the interlinkages between food security and nutrition-related health issues. Gender and other cross-cutting issues, such as capacity building, human rights and the effects of the global political economy, should be considered in all projects.

More specifically, three thematic areas were identified:

1. Food Supply Chain

Huge impact can be achieved through focusing on reducing waste in different stages and levels of the food supply chain, from local post-harvest processes to transport infrastructure and market access. In addition, credit and insurance structures for farmers should be supported.

2. Health and Nutrition

The linkage between agricultural food security approaches and nutrition-focused health expertise has been underutilized. The intersection of food and nutrition security, health, and gender would be a potentially strong area for Finnish interventions that would also strongly support Finland's current Development Policy. In particular, maternal and infant health and nutrition initiatives similar to the "100 first days campaign" could be a strong area for Finland.

3. Farming Systems

Promotion of crop diversification, sustainability, climate friendly practices, and support for small scale (women) farmers should be the cornerstones of all Finnish agriculture projects.

Innovation

The two major issues discussed in the Innovation team were Public-Private Partnerships and the role of universities in new forms of company-driven development cooperation and funding.

1. Public-Private Partnerships

The new strategy for development co-operation emphasizes cooperation with the private sector. This brings about opportunities to "build ecosystems" by enhancing co-operation and knowledge exchange between different agencies (policy-makers), universities, and companies. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand that reconciling economic interests with development is not automatic but a process that takes time. Universities and other public sector actors play an important role in innovation processes and there should be room for innovations that are not mediated by the market. Universities should partner with Finnish companies and offer knowledge on local realities: social sciences are needed for a broader picture of societies. For universities, the new emphasis could mean engaging in more challenge-based research and teaching. Finland has experience of social innovations that could be better utilized when working in Third Countries, taking societal and cultural aspects into consideration. A part of improving localized knowledge would be to effectively engage diaspora communities and, e.g., visiting foreign graduate students.

2. Universities' role in the new funding landscape for development cooperation

In regard to funding, a major challenge in the current economic reality, the team concluded that in the field of innovation and development, researchers may often have a major role in influencing policy and/or funding in developing countries. However, there is a need for better coordination between different funding agencies, especially in bilateral relations with Third Countries. Finnish academia would also benefit from better utilization of international funding schemes, for example funding offered by major foundations, but there is currently no infrastructure to support this on a national level.

Migration and Development

The Migration and Development group presented a framework for making Finland a trendsetter in immigration management. A comprehensive approach considers the different aspects of immigration related to access to protection, legal grounds, integration issues, and the development of the countries of origin.

1. Access

Related to asylum seekers' access to protection and the legal grounds of immigration processes, Finland could make a difference by keeping up with the high legal standards. To achieve this, the different aspects and the context for migration should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Instead of a collective approach, an individual, human rights-based approach to migration should be used when discussing the access to protection and right to asylum. In this light, for instance, the concept of "safe countries" is problematic when it leads to the idea that anyone coming from a "safe country" is safe.

2. Integration

Finland should build on the existing integration policy and aim at maintaining high standards when planning, regulating and implementing integration. Emphasis should be given to policy coherence and cooperation between different administrative branches: integration is not only related to labor markets and social services, but also to education, culture, and development policy. We should create mechanisms for recognizing and building on the skills of the migrants. Asylum seekers should have easy access to training in Finnish language and in other relevant skills to advance integration. The role of the migrants' own organizations should also be acknowledged; a lot is already being done on a voluntary basis, so the space and voice should be given to support the integration processes. Higher education institutions and researchers have a role in promoting change in Finnish society by developing cultural exchange and raising awareness. Researchers should bring in the facts and also contribute to gathering, interpreting and explaining the big data related to immigrants. Finally, people's legitimate fears should be recognized and addressed.

3. Development

Instead of focusing on making Finland an undesirable target country for asylum seekers, focus should be on making the countries of origin better places to live. Cutting the budget for development cooperation works against addressing the root causes of migration. For instance, climate change and demographic change are huge issues that will continue to move people in ever growing numbers; these and other major development issues related to migration should be discussed on a regular basis between academics and policy-makers to prepare for this grand challenge. There is a need for information and knowledge exchange to enlighten the public opinion and to justify development cooperation. Development cooperation is also linked to integration issues, since the boundaries between what is done here and what is done in the context of development cooperation are getting less clear. Immigrants should be given an active role in development cooperation, for instance by inviting them to working groups, to comment on development policy and to specifically support the creation of country programmes.

4. PRACTICES & TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE-POLICY COLLABORATION

The seminar began with a section on principles and models of knowledge-to-policy collaboration and multi-stakeholder project design. These issues were then further discussed and elaborated on in other sessions throughout the seminar. Below are some key take-aways on practices and tools for effective collaboration between scholars and policy actors.
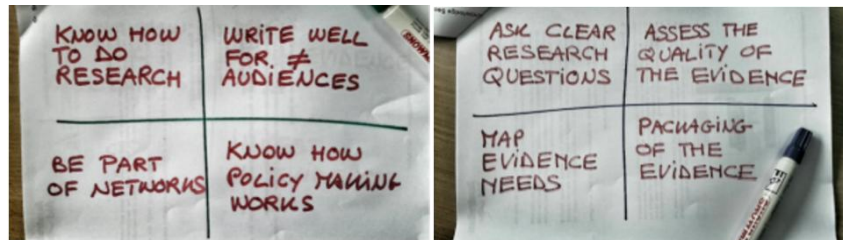
How to communicate more effectively about research to policy makers?

For researchers: Decide how you want to be involved

- Inform about research by repurposing it for different audiences.
- Incorporate policy needs and related communication needs already in research design.
- Consult and evaluate development projects; and/or
- Create fully collaborative research efforts/agendas.
- When applicable, make sure that research for other stakeholders reaches policy-makers as well. That does not happen automatically.

For policy-makers:

- Know what you need.
- Share your needs and related processes.
- Can you help in repurposing research? Can you share within your networks?

[To-do for researchers and policy-makers](#)

How to design and conduct a research project based on successful knowledge exchange ([The LSE Model](#) of 5 Steps)?

1. Design

- Set goals for knowledge exchange from the outset and devise a knowledge exchange and communications strategy.
- Build in flexibility to knowledge exchange plans so they can respond to changing user needs and priorities.

2. Represent

- Systematically identify likely users of your research and other relevant stakeholders and embed them in your research process. This includes considering the ethical implications of engaging with different stakeholders.

3. Engage

- Engage in two-way dialogue as equals with the users of research and build long-term relationships with them. Understand what will motivate research users to get involved.
- Work with knowledge brokers/intermediaries.
- Create opportunities for **informal** interaction and learning.
- Work with stakeholders to interpret the implications of your work for policy and practice, and co-design communication products.

4. Impact

- Get your timing right: Identify quick wins where tangible impacts can be delivered as early as

possible in the research process to reward and keep likely users of research engaged with the research process.

- Regularly reflect with your research team and key stakeholders on the effectiveness of your knowledge exchange. Learn from your peers and share good practice.
- Identify what knowledge exchange needs to continue **after** research funding has ceased and consider how to sustain this in the longer-term.

How to foster contacts as an emerging scholar?

Work through senior colleagues and let them know your interest. When the door is opened, people get back to you. Remember that networking with colleagues as well as different stakeholders is the first step.

Different ministries have specific personnel who can facilitate connections between specific researchers and their relevant ministry counterparts. For example, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Department for Development Policy has programme officer Marianne Rönkä (email: marianne.ronka@formin.fi) working on Development Research and Higher Education Cooperation.

Why, when & how to write policy briefs?

Academic publications are often not directly applicable to policy-making, but they are "business cards". They can be adapted to the audience's needs. Parliamentarians, policy makers, and other stakeholders often need very easy and simple information, clear messages with recommendations.

Useful questions to ask before composing the brief:

1. What problem will your brief address?

2. Who is the audience? Why is the problem important to them? What do you know about them (e.g., technical knowledge, political or organizational culture or constraints, exposure to the issue, potential openness to the message)?

3. What other policy or issue briefs already exist? How will your brief differ (e.g., different information, perspective, aim, or audience)?

Basic Outline:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Approach
4. Conclusions
5. Recommendations

A simple example

Additional resources

Basics

- Engaged Scholarship. A Guide for Organizational and Social Research.
- Planning with Complexity. An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy.
- Five strategies for researchers to consider when conceptualising new research are proposed, each of which addresses something about the mechanism of policy change.
- Policy-relevant v.s. policy-adjacent research and evaluation (The World Bank).

Collaborative practices

- The IDEO Human Centered Design Toolkit.
- Collaborative Practices and Partnership Toolkit (for education, but principles apply for any practical multi-stakeholder collaboration).

Knowledge sharing and knowledge management

- Knowledge Sharing Toolkit Wiki by several international development organizations, the special section on research.
- K2P principles and tools for researchers at www.researchtoaction.com.
- ODI Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers.

The art of policy briefs:

- Toolkit for researchers by IDRC.
- Preparing policy briefs by FAO.

A great example of a collaborative project: Food Security Pilot - "a process of discussion, mutual learning, trust-building".

5. IDEAS

The last section of the seminar was dedicated to informal discussion and brainstorming about future opportunities. The ideas ranged from core principles of multidisciplinarity to concrete tools, events, and other forms of collaboration.

Support interdisciplinarity & collaboration among development researchers

There is a continuous need to develop common language, concepts, and frameworks between disciplines in order to communicate within the academic community as well as with other stakeholders.

Organize regular thematic dialogues between researchers and policy-makers

Organize short, informal, focused, "routine" knowledge-policy briefings. Specific thematic groups work most effectively and create the most concrete outcomes.

At the same time, don't forget that the broader context and enhanced multidisciplinarity bring new ideas and contacts. This is important for complex "wicked problems" and in fostering connections between different research and policy areas.

Share successes of knowledge sharing

Beyond issues and themes, different networks and organizations should meet to share best practices of collaboration.

Build and strengthen access to info: databases

We need commitment from scholars and policy-makers to contribute to and update research databases, as well as to access them routinely. This could be systematized, for instance, by requiring database submissions as part of the research funding application processes.

Build and strengthen access to info: Country Fact Tools

There is a need for a fact tool for countries, from the "Finnish" policy and research perspective. A joint project for researchers and policy-makers?

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Address the need for Monitoring and Evaluation expertise

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) could become one of the key ways in which scholars and policy actors collaborate. Academic expertise in methodologies and conceptual discussions in the field can help to develop and improve different kinds of assessments and evaluations, from dispersed evaluations of individual projects to centralized evaluations of broader programmes and policies.

- A separate research funding instrument for M&E could be created.
- In addition, workshops/master classes on M&E could be offered for PhD students via UniPID's DocNet.

Funding

- Researchers: Researchers need informal opportunities to network for joint funding proposals. They need platforms to share information about, and connect with, international partners.
- Funders: In designing funding opportunities, thematic calls are important, but leave some funds for an open call and for exploratory research that may not respond to a direct need but that may bring forth new innovations.

The Development Policy Committee - an advisory network to the government as an opportunity

The network includes different stakeholders. The role of research could be strengthened, with the agenda 2030 as the mandate.

The next steps for UniPID to advance research-policy cooperation

As a general next step, the "Societal Impact" section of the UniPID website will be updated to better serve both researchers and policy makers by offering links to useful cooperation and communication tools and other relevant information.

Policy Development

UniPID will keep on gathering and delivering the research community's comments on development policies and on higher education institutions' global responsibility strategies.

Local context and thematic issues

UniPID will continue to promote research expertise to the different ministries related to: specific

countries and regions, certain global challenges, and development issues. UniPID will keep on developing and promoting the [FinCEAL Infobank](#) for both researchers and policy-makers. The Infobank showcases Finnish research projects and expertise related to the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean and can be used by policy-makers to identify experts for their knowledge needs. Possibilities for creating other virtual tools, in cooperation with the ministries, to facilitate country- and theme-specific knowledge sharing will be explored. Possibilities for coordinating so-called breakfast meetings in the ministries and/or organizing thematic workshops in cooperation with relevant ministries to bring together researchers and policy-makers will be explored.

Monitoring and Evaluation

UniPID will continue discussions with the MFA on how researchers could be better involved in developing and implementing the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of Finnish development cooperation. UniPID's possibilities for contributing to M&E training will be explored.