

The Science-Policy Interface discourse

Metaphors, ideologies and institutionalization practices

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This talk

- The science policy interface as a discourse
- Underlying assumptions, ideologies, problem definitions
- Institutionalization in research and governance practices
- Rethinking the science policy interface



Observation 2

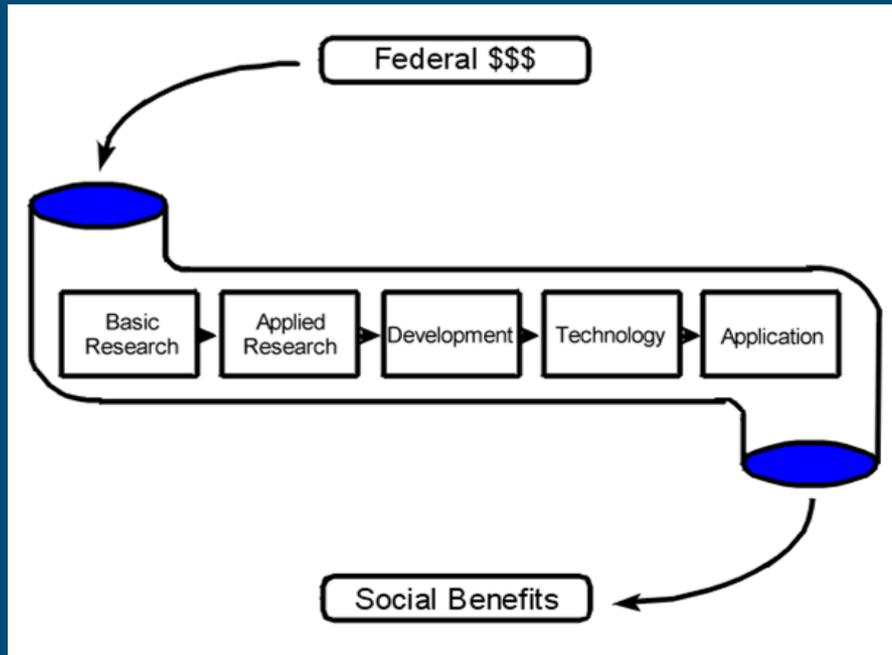
- A proliferation of research projects with broadly that same objective
- The science policy interface in general
- The Wadden Sea specifically
 - Knowledge for Climate
 - NWO Coast and Sea program
 - EU: Spiral, Kneu
 -
- The ISWS symposia

The Science Policy Interface discourse

Institutionalized, hegemonic

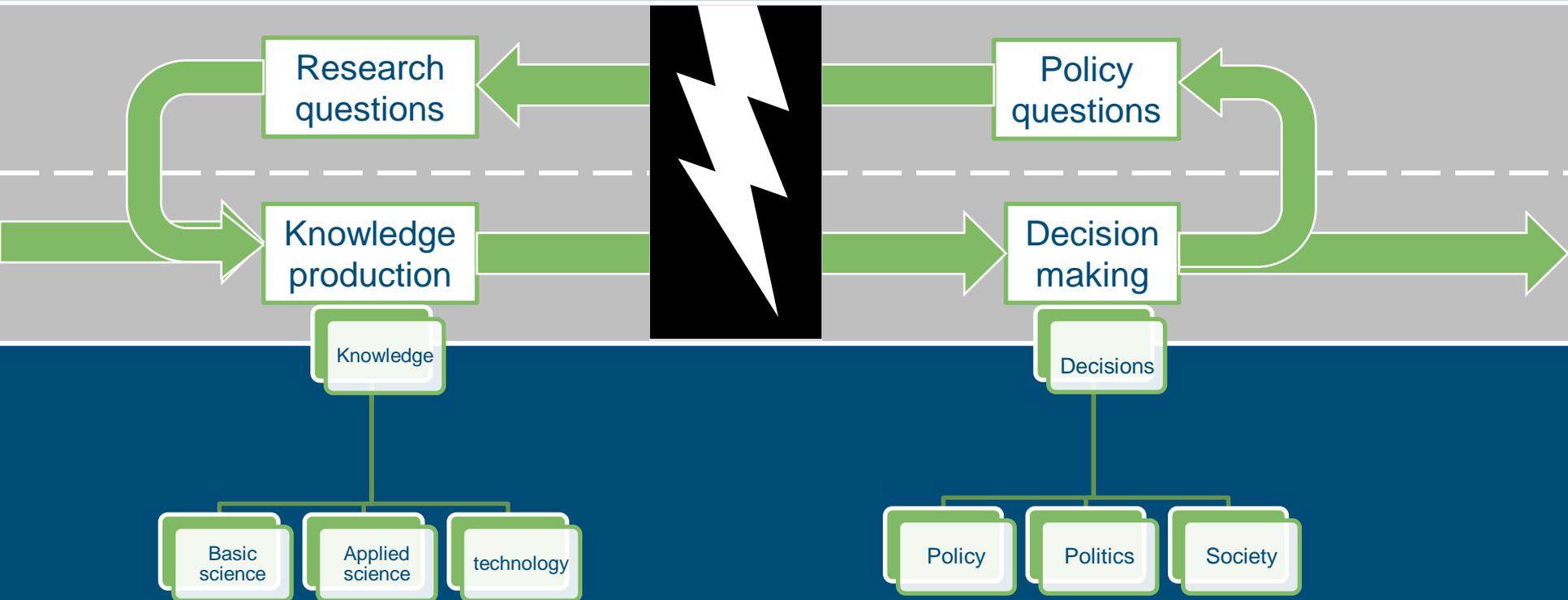
1. Infrastructure
2. Gaps and bridges
3. Intervention and management

Infrastructure

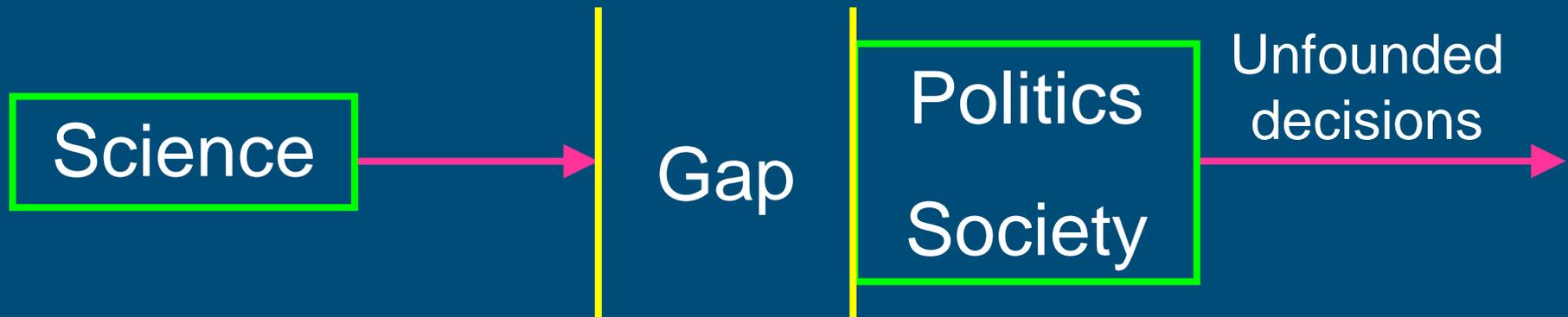


- Flow of knowledge
- Automatic benefits
- Linear
- Instrumental
- Mechanical
- Conveyer belt

Infrastructure

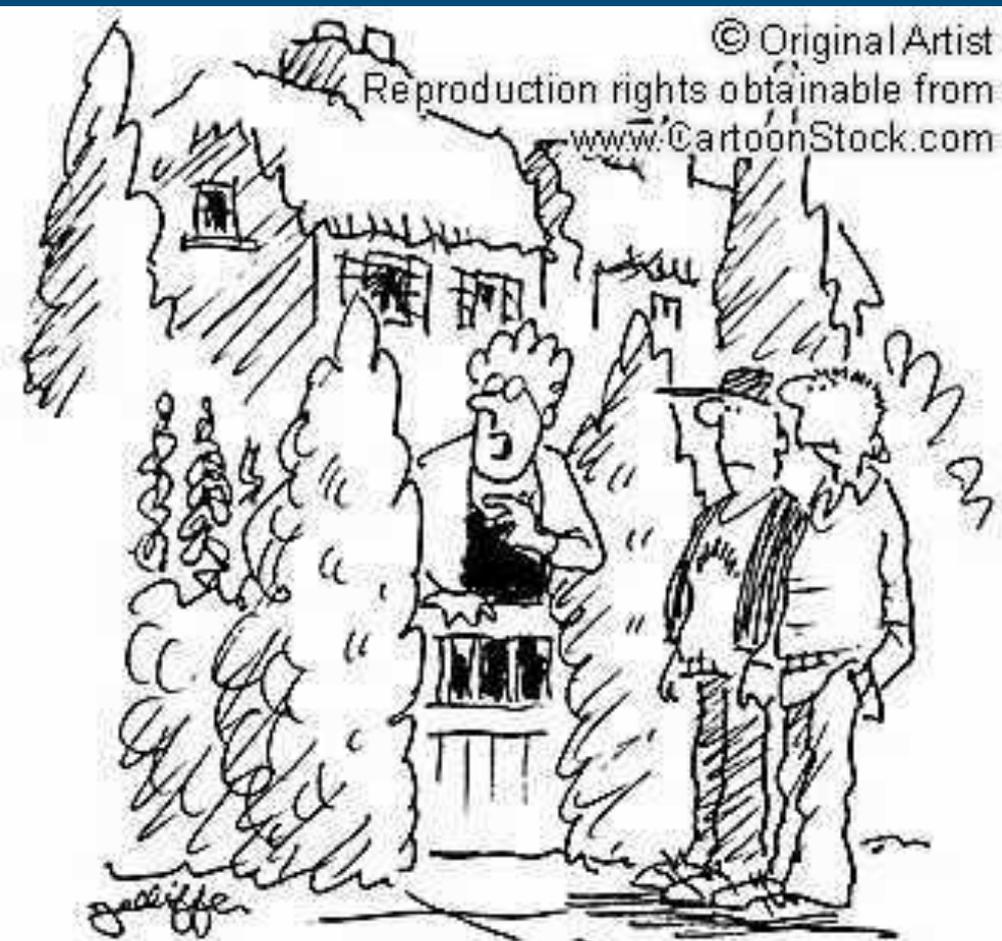


The gap



Taken for granted *assumptions*: rational decisions require scientific knowledge and vice versa, irrational decisions are the result of a lack of knowledge

According to policy makers.....



"Turn right at the *Robinia pseudoacacia*.
pass the garden with the *salvia officinalis*,
cross the road when you see the *stranvaesia*
dauidinia and the pub is on the left!"

- Knowledge is delivered at the wrong time
- Is not policy relevant
- Is too technical and not applicable

According to scientists.....

- Policy decisions are irrational
- Policy makers are scientifically illiterate
- They misuse knowledge to serve their own interests



Bridging the gap



- Technical problem
- Fixed position and size, material, visible
- Bridge as a solution

What to do?

- Improve science communication
- Enhance the public understanding of science

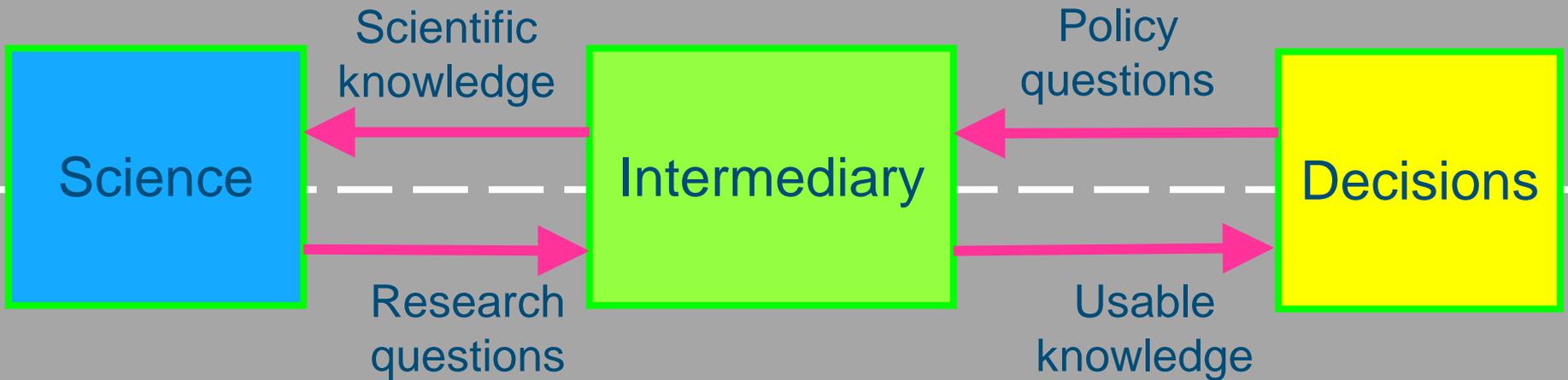
The information-deficit model



- But this is not easy
- Special type of knowledge required
- Special type of communication required



What to do? A more elaborate version



Taken for granted *assumptions*: the science policy interface does not function properly and it requires an intermediary

What happens in the middle?

- Methods and tools to improve the science – policy interfaces
- Close interaction between scientists, experts, and policy makers focusing on the joint identification of knowledge gaps and questions and the joint generation of knowledge
- Participation, social learning, etc.....



The science policy interface discourse

- Not a simple conveyor belt
- But still rather technical and instrumental
- And.....
 - Assumes the existence of a gap that requires bridging
 - Based on a singular idea of knowledge
 - Or, the belief in the possibility of achieving one through deliberation and participation
 - A-political

Close connections 1

- Wadden Sea Policy



- Close network of scientists and policy makers
 - *“It is a [. . .] small world. When [. . .] a workshop is organised you always see the same people”*
- Experts are aware of the importance of political feasibility of science advice
 - *“It is clearly a mix between what is politically feasible and what is scientifically valid”*

Turnhout et al. 2008 Environmental Science and Policy

Close connections 2

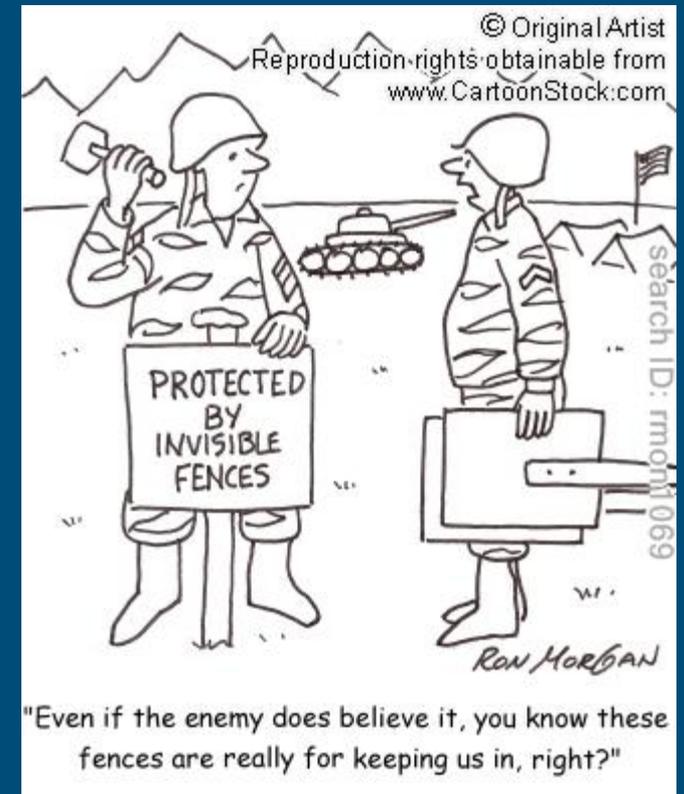
- Cockle fisheries
- Scientific experts and interest organisations joined forces in a controversy between competing knowledge coalitions
- *It is not real science..... but just literature surveys*
- *The director of should make clear to his employees that they are scientists and not activists*

Turnhout et al. 2008 Environmental Science and Policy



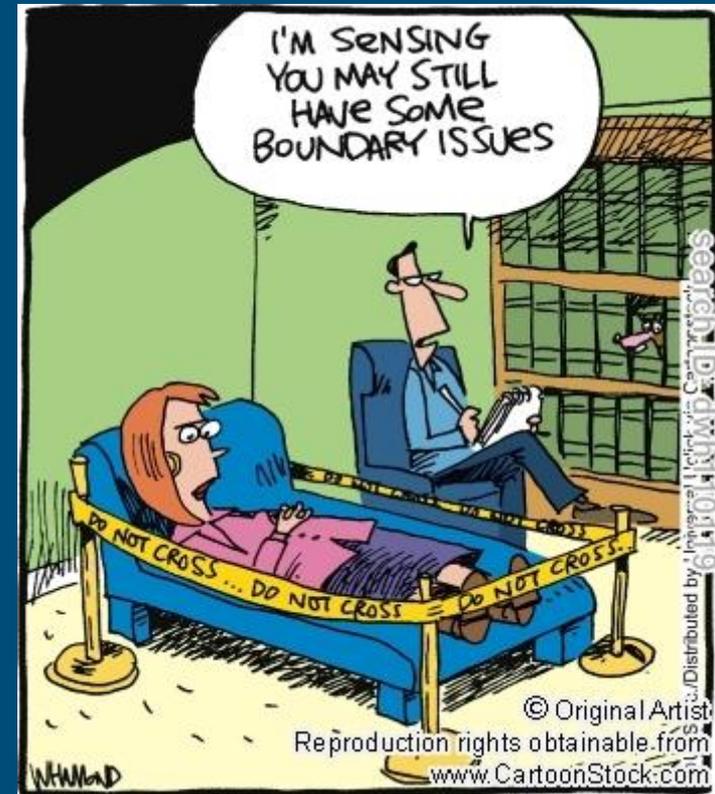
Interaction is everywhere

- Gap is an inadequate metaphor
- Boundary work
- Boundary objects
- Coproduction of science and social order
-



Managerialism and interventionism

- Boundary work, boundary objects, coproduction have become things we apparently do not have enough of....
- They become solutions for problems implied by the science-policy interface discourse
- They need to be organized coordinated and managed



The science policy interface discourse

- Maintains the gap
- Reifies differences and separation
- Promotes a-political, technical and managerial solutions
- Jumps over more important issues and questions

- How can current interactions between knowledge production and knowledge use be understood?
- Is the science policy interface really malfunctioning?
- Or, alternatively, is it perhaps functioning too well and is the Wadden Sea network overly elitist and exclusive?
- Is the science policy interface an appropriate site of intervention; is the problem really a problem of knowledge?
- What normative perspectives are used to assess the problem and design solutions?
 - Instrumental rationality?
 - Technocratic rule?
 - Democracy and social justice?

Engaged scholarship

1. Does not take the science policy interface discourse for granted
 - Does not assume the existence of gaps and the need for bridges
 - More science and more knowledge use is not necessarily 'better'
2. Considers knowledge as plural
 - Recognizes that the Wadden Sea can be legitimately known and represented in multiple ways, scientific and other
 - Science should alone is not in charge of judging the credibility and relevance of knowledge and of prescribing how it should be used
3. Recognizes the politics of knowledge
 - Who decides about the management of the science policy interface?
 - What kinds of knowledge, actors and solutions are silenced?
 - How does that affect the legitimacy of Wadden Sea research and governance?



**From 'let's make things better' to
'let's shake things up'**

Thank you for your attention

