Commentary: Enhancing Immigration Policy Through Research

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Abstract

This commentary is about the ways in which research can enhance policy making. It opens with a broad discussion of the relationship between research and policy as many have traditionally conceived it, often through the metaphor of a policy cycle into which research is inserted at various points of the cycle. The idea of a policy cycle regards the relationship between research and policy in epistemic terms and arguably represents not a description of how policy is in fact made but stands as a rational reconstruction of the policy process. From here, we move to a more socio-psychological approach to how policy is made and how it is that research is used. Flowing from this, I offer ideas for how researchers can establish effective working relations with policy makers, especially those in governments. In the second half of the paper, some of these ideas are illustrated through the Metropolis Project with a focus on its deployment in Canada, which attempted several innovations in this regard, followed by some reflections on the International Metropolis Project.

Keywords

Many modern societies produce enormous amounts of research through their governments, their think tanks, their businesses, and their universities and colleges. Conducting research and publishing the results have become as, if not more, important to university careers as teaching our students well. And often what we teach our students is how to do yet more research. Much of this research, especially in the humanities and social sciences, is paid for by government subsidies, that is, by the public who may or may not be aware that some of their taxes are spent in this way. Why do governments do this? Beyond satisfying the academics who actively conduct research, does all of this have wider benefits? An economic argument is possible for research in the natural sciences and engineering owing to the possible application of the results to commercial enterprises. But for the humanities and social sciences, an economic argument is harder to make, and this applies to research on human migration. Instead, the case is often made that social science research has value as a foundation for government policy making, especially social policy.

This commentary opens with a broad discussion of the relationship between research and policy as many have traditionally conceived it, often through the metaphor of a policy cycle into which research is inserted at various points of the cycle. The central point here is that the idea of a policy cycle regards the relationship between research and policy in epistemic terms and, in my opinion represents not a description of how policy is actually made, but a rational reconstruction of the policy process. From here, I move to a more socio-psychological approach to how policy is made and how it is that research is used, or not, in the process. Flowing from this are ideas for how researchers can establish effective working relations with policy makers, especially those in governments. In the second half of the paper some of these ideas are illustrated through the workings of the Metropolis Project in Canada, which attempted several innovations in this regard. I will devote some attention also to the International Metropolis Project towards the end of the paper.

By the late 1990s, when I was with the Metropolis Secretariat, it had become routine for government funders of academic research to demand that their financial support would somehow benefit society, benefit the people whose money was paying for the research, and to make funding conditional on the research projects plausibly yielding societal benefits. One way for this to happen, the argument went, was for the research produced to be used in government policy making, this on the assumption that research-based policy would better the lives of citizens, including tax-paying citizens and corporations. The role of the academic was to provide facts, explanations, and analyses, and the role of government policy officials was to interpret and apply the research results to the issues facing their respective societies and to the policy interventions that the government would decide upon. This led to a widespread academic interest in how this could be achieved, as it was not common practice for government policy decision makers to appeal to the universities for information let alone for guidance[1]. Yes, more research came of this question.

For an academic researcher in the social sciences, having one's research used by policy makers was a serious challenge and an important one given the more frequent demands by government funders that research proposals build in policy benefits. There has been a considerable amount of ink spilled over this challenge, some of it articulating various aspects of the challenge as well as offering solutions. I would thus like to offer some observations based on my 25 years in the Canadian federal government, most of it on

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1   Please see the think piece published by the "Networking Unit, Paradigm Shift" at the Technical University of Berlin written by the following team of authors, in alphabetical order: Wiwandari Handayani (Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia), Felicitas Hillmann (TU Berlin, Germany), Gianluca Iazzolino (University of Manchester, UK), Robert McLeman (Laurier University, Canada), Prinscilla Nkansah (University of Ghana), Luisa Veronis (University of Ottawa, Canada), Caroline Zickgraf (Hugo-Observatory, Belgium), Anne Ziegler (TU Berlin, Germany); commentators in alphabetical order: Maurizio Ambrosini (University of Milan, Italy), Anne Güller-Frey (Augsburg), Martin Bak Jørgensen (University of Aalborg University), Christiane Kuptsch (ILO Geneva)]. 2024. Migration-related Challenges, connections, and solutions in times of polycrisis: recommendations for improving academia and migration governance interactions. Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin (July). 10 pages. <https://www.static.tu.berlin/fileadmin/www/40000126/Paradigmenwechsel_weiterdenken/thinkpiece_NUPS_final.pdf>

the interface between academic research and policy making, as well as observations of how this relationship played out in national governments elsewhere. We can consider these aspects delineated as barriers to the use of academic research by policy officials and thereby as reasons why research might not be paid attention to let alone be used. Some of the aspects of this challenge include:

- The limited time that most policy officials have for reading academic research as part of their jobs;
- The often highly technical language used in writing academic publications, language that may be opaque to policy officials;
- The length of traditional academic publications as compared to a typical government policy briefing note, which may be as short as 500 words;
- The time taken in designing, conducting, and publishing the results of a research project versus the need for governments often to make decisions rapidly and without the luxury of waiting for definitive academic research results to appear;
- The mutual suspicion that often holds between academic researchers and government officials together with a general lack of familiarity among them;
- An ignorance on the part of academic researchers of the information needs of policy makers; and
- An ignorance on the part of policy makers of the information and insights available within the academic community.

One might think that the challenge can be largely met by providing incentives to policy makers to take the time to read academic research publications, perhaps by making it part of their jobs. The task for the academic would then be to conduct research that is relevant to a government's policy mandate and to make clear how it is relevant. The publication that issues from the research would be read by the policy official who would then take it from there to apply the results in policy analysis and policy development. Often this is what one sees in research proposals whereby the research proposed is claimed to be relevant to government policy and that the results will be made available through publication. But such a passive approach to enhancing policy through research is unrealistic. Facts and analyses, no matter how relevant to policy, will not find a home there just because of epistemic relevance. Relevance by itself is not sufficient to this enterprise. We need to understand relevance not only epistemically but also psychologically. Policy is made by people who need to be convinced that they ought to take the time to engage with research in doing their jobs. It is not simply an abstract epistemic exercise. Just because a researcher declares a set of findings, analyses, and conclusions to be relevant to a policy area does not mean that it will be regarded that way by a policy maker. Relevance is, like beauty, in the eye of the beholder.

Academic researchers and policy officials live in different institutional worlds with different values and different expectations. People often talk about 'bridging the gap' between research and policy and appeal to various means by which to do this. The psychological approach taken here emphasizes communications over logic and epistemology, arguing that through regular communications among academic researchers and government officials this gap can be bridged successfully. Through regular communications over time, a mutual understanding and respect can emerge along with an enhanced appreciation of the situation and institutional culture of each group, the informational needs of each, and the capacities of each to contribute to a shared purpose of effective policymaking in the field of human migration.

But there is an important consideration to be acknowledged and dealt with first. Academic researchers prize their intellectual independence and freedom, and this poses an immediate challenge to their relationship with government policy makers. Most academic researchers do not want the government to dictate their research agenda, let alone the findings and conclusions of their research. The challenge then is for governments to make known what their informational needs are but in a way that allows researchers to maintain their intellectual independence. At the simplest, governments can meet with researchers and

inform them of what type of information would be helpful to policymaking, about which aspects of their society they need better information. Academics can then decide whether they wish to work in these areas knowing that they would have a policy audience for their work. In this way, the quest for 'policy-relevant research' can be met to some extent or other. But this basic and yet abstract solution ignores the complexity that funding brings, and with it the increasing government requirement that if they fund some social science research, including on migration, it must have application to the real-life policy concerns of the government. We will return to this later.

Ultimately, the policy-research relationship comes down to communications about what governments need and what academic researchers can and are willing to provide. It is, however, far from usual that these two communities are in the habit of working together. It is relatively rare that university researchers even know who in government to contact about the work that they have done and, similarly, it is relatively rare that government policy officials even know to whom in the universities they can turn for the information that they might need or find helpful. Much of the challenge of enhancing research-policy relations is, therefore, a matter of human connections. As noted earlier, policy makers simply do not often have the time to stay on top of research, whether past or contemporary. But in-person meetings can allow a quick conveying of the essentials of the research, as well as an opportunity for policy makers to make clear what they and their governments need. Over time, establishing human relations between the academic research and government policy sectors will build trust and create an appetite for engagement. Ideally, research-policy engagement becomes normal rather than exceptional with the result that policy making is based on stronger evidence and thereby should be more effective. To put this simply, effective policy-research collaboration must be an active process and not the traditional passive process of researchers independently carrying out studies, publishing the results, and hoping that policy makers will read and use their work. The key is creating an appetite on the part of policy makers for the findings, analyses, and conclusions of those in the academic sector.

It is not only that the policy side needs to acquire an appetite for academic research. Academic researchers do not always have a natural appetite to work with policy, in part because the standard academic reward structures tend not to give much credit for this type of activity. It is academic publications, teaching excellence, and administrative service within the university that are rewarded by promotion and tenure committees. Giving one's time to government audiences might, in fact, not only take up time better spent with local academic concerns but might be considered negatively by some promotion and tenure committees. What, then, can motivate academic researchers to dedicate some of their time to work that will not be rewarded by their universities? One might say that it is the personal satisfaction that comes with contributing to government policy decisions, in other words, the satisfaction that comes from what amounts to service to their society and in the case of immigration research, service to one's country and to those who come to live there. But then there is one more issue to consider.

A caveat that must be introduced is that researchers cannot expect that their work will often or ever be the principal basis for decisions taken by governments. Governments, especially democratic governments, must respond to the interests of not only the academic research community but to the general public, many special interest groups, business, the media, other governments including foreign governments, and more. There is a high degree of competition among these sectors of society for the attention of government, and research occupies no special place in this competition. Further, governments often must respond to societal situations before all the evidence is available. Decision makers in government are faced with having to make decisions on the basis of incomplete evidence. This is a radically different situation from that of academic research which seeks near certainty in its conclusions before they are made public. This desire on the part of academics has as consequence that research is very time consuming, and it is not unusual that years pass between the beginning of a research project and the publication of results. Policy makers do not have the luxury of time that academic researchers possess and often need to make decisions immediately to

respond to emergencies or less urgent situations. Even when the policy decisions are longer term, the length of their long term is often much shorter than that of university-based research. The urgency that often characterizes government policy decision making poses the challenge of reconciling these different ways of working so that academic research can make tangible contributions to the policy process. It is common for policy makers to see research as simply arriving too late for their purposes, which does not help incentivize researchers to contribute to government policy making.

One way to think of this conundrum is to ask how much indeterminacy of conclusions either side is willing or needs to accept. Government policy decisions often must be made in a context of high indeterminacy that the academic publication environment will usually not accept. But ways have been developed to allow for academic contributions that fall short of the usual degree of certainty that peer-review publication requires. One example is the production of less formal publications, such as working papers, that release work in progress but on the explicit understanding that it does not represent completed research. Often authors of working papers solicit input from readers, whether academic or beyond the academy, and policy makers receive an earlier-than-usual indication of what researchers are discovering and learning about the social environment. Qualitative studies using small sample sizes may indicate, for example, that recently arriving immigrants are finding it especially difficult to integrate into their destination society, but without the degree of proof that larger samples and more robust statistical data could offer. Nevertheless, government policy makers could regard these provisional findings as valuable early warning signs that could warrant government intervention. Further, a government that took these early warnings seriously might provide funding for more thorough and sound research to confirm or falsify the preliminary findings.

For any of this to happen, however, the working papers must have a policy audience, and it is here especially that the policy-research relationship ought to be understood in terms of socio-psychological rather than epistemic relations. For too long, the relationship between policy and research has been conceived in broadly epistemic terms, sometimes invoking a mythical 'policy cycle' which has policy developed partly through the introduction of research leaving the academic researcher to find ways to insert their research into the cycle, the assumption often being that policy analysts will scan the literature for publications relevant to the policy task at hand. But as noted before, this is mostly illusory. Policy makers simply have neither the time nor the inclination to read academic publications for reasons offered earlier.

Policy making, too, is best understood in socio-psychological rather than epistemological terms. The policy cycle is essentially a rational reconstruction of a messier form of decision making. The general idea of a rigorous policy cycle that involves identifying a problem that warrants policy intervention, bringing empirical evidence to bear on the analysis of the problem as well as on potential interventions, making a policy decision, implementing it, monitoring and measuring its effects, evaluating its effectiveness, making adjustments accordingly, and starting the cycle again sounds very reassuring. But these sorts of sanitized accounts leave out the factors of incomplete evidence available at the time, competing external interests such as from various lobbies, the media, other governments, non-governmental organizations, and the business sector that are taken seriously by governments in democracies. Further, there often are difficult discussions within government, such as between a non-partisan bureaucracy and a partisan minister's office, budget offices and policy shops, operations offices and policy offices, and so on. None of this is clear cut. And there are inevitably factors of the inter-personal relations amongst those involved in the policy development process. The point is that the influences on policy decisions are many and varied, and usually competing. Accounts of the policy cycle rarely describe these on-the-ground realities that imply that the role of academic research in these decisions is less than would otherwise appear to be the case.

The rest of this paper will discuss an attempt the Government of Canada made beginning in 1996 to overcome some of these challenges to effective evidence-based policy making in the field of immigration and the integration of newcomers to a society. The Metropolis Project was introduced as a five-year

experiment that year and endured within Canada for 16 years, largely closing its doors in 2012 but with modest activities under its name continuing to this day. The annual Metropolis Conference in Canada continues with enhanced participation from civil society organizations but somewhat reduced participation from government policy makers. The five Metropolis research centres have closed as their funding ceased in 2012. Principally, the experiment that was Metropolis was to see whether academic research about immigration could be stimulated through some form of government financial incentives. Moreover, the way that Metropolis operated was an experiment in policy-research relations, in ways that encouraged policy officials to use research produced by Canadian university scholars and scholars beyond Canada's borders. Metropolis began simultaneously as a Canadian and an international project. Its first major event was the International Metropolis Conference of 1996 in Milan, Italy with Canadian events following soon thereafter.

The Metropolis Project in Canada

In 1995, the Government of Canada recognized that its policy process was often lacking sufficient empirical foundations, that it was not always living up to the ideal of 'evidence-based policy making'. The government's response at that time of fiscal austerity was to appeal to the academic community rather than increase the internal research capacity of government departments. The challenge, however, was two-fold. There were few academic researchers working then on immigration and integration in Canada and even fewer who would be willing to work in direct support of government policy. The challenge was to increase the number of researchers working in the field and to provide incentives for them to work in areas of interest to government policy makers. The government decided that, instead of offering direct funding to individual researchers, it stood a better chance of raising Canada's overall academic research capacity by creating research centres, what they came to call Metropolis Centres of Excellence. In 1996, four centres spread across different regions (Metropolis British Columbia in Vancouver; Prairies Metropolis Centre in Edmonton, Alberta; Ontario Metropolis Centre in Toronto; Quebec Metropolis Centre in Montreal) received funding and were based at Canadian universities. The centres were themselves partnerships of several universities in their region and, on the final count, over 20 universities were involved as partners in five Metropolis centres, a fifth centre having been added part way through the 16-year funding period. Having separate centres rather than a single research institution for universities across the country allowed each centre to focus on the migration and integration phenomena in their region. When the fifth centre was added in Atlantic Canada (Atlantic Metropolis Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Moncton, New Brunswick) in 2004, the government of Canada was explicitly engaged in policy development to help some Canadian regions attract and retain immigrants, the Atlantic provinces foremost among them.

How the government provided the funds to the researchers mattered to the academic community. There was a significant reluctance by academics to the government offering money to individual researchers to do specific projects, except through special contractual or consulting arrangements. Such arrangements would be contrary to standard principles of academic independence, integrity, and freedom. The answer came in two parts. First, the government funds went to the research centres and not to individual researchers. Which researcher received the funds was left to the judgement of the research centres, each of which established its own protocols for distributing the money. Just as importantly, however, was that the government funds were distributed to the research centres by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), an organization that had earned the trust of academics to support research with federal government money but in ways that preserved academic freedom. The system that was established was one that included several federal government departments, each with an interest in immigration-related policy-relevant research, pooling their financial contributions at the SSHRC, which in turn added funds of its own

and provided the yearly total to each of the five research centres equally. In this way, academic integrity was preserved, and the academic community supported the initiative.

How did this arrangement benefit the government whose principal objective was to increase the amount of research of relevance to policymaking in the field of immigration? Metropolis was not created as a handout to the academic community, but rather to serve government policy interests. The solution here was to establish a set of broad themes towards which the government funding departments expected the research to be directed. This requirement was not one of demanding that the research reach any particular type of findings and conclusions, let alone be of direct political support to the government. Such demands would have been utterly counterproductive. The nuance lay in how the research themes were identified and decided upon. Government funders had a choice. They could have unilaterally decided what would be the research themes and imposed them as a condition of funding. After all, it was their money and their policy objectives that were to be met. Doing so, however, would have resulted in a failure to attract many university-based researchers. Instead, the government funders entered into discussions with the Metropolis Centres of Excellence over what would be the research themes where the academics had a strong voice in suggesting, articulating, and deciding on these themes. This collaborative process had several advantages, among them a better articulated set of themes, a degree of acceptance by the university researchers than would otherwise be possible, and the beginnings of establishing trust and collaborative working relations between government and university players in the Metropolis Project. A further benefit of the government funding research centres was that not only did the number of professional scholars in the migration field grow but so, too, did the number of students who decided to work in this field, students who not only did research on migration but whose training involved paying attention to a policy audience.

This matter of trust was important and challenging. In Canada at that time, there was a significant degree of mistrust on both sides, especially within the social sciences. Government was often regarded as the enemy by the research community, as a force to be resisted and challenged. Government officials often regarded academic researchers as not only hostile but as irrelevant to their work, particularly non-statistical theoretical work. The Metropolis Secretariat, which was located within the federal government's immigration department (then Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC), was responsible for building academic-government relations, one aspect of which was developing a sense of trust and shared purpose. It took approximately three years before a modest degree of trust emerged, and from this came collaborative working relations that facilitated the use of research by government policy analysts and decision makers. One of the principal means of establishing this trust was having individuals from both policy and research meet each other, come to know each other's work, interests, and expectations, and sustain this contact through events and activities.

The Secretariat's approach to research-policy relations was inherently psychological, rooted in human relations as opposed to institutional relations that could have become coercive. The ambition was to have policy makers want to work with university-based researchers and vice-versa from a common desire to enhance how the country managed immigration and the well-being of newcomers. Relationship building takes time and effort but in this case it paid dividends. One example of how this worked took the form of conference workshops. Initially introduced at the 1998 International Metropolis Conference (which was managed by the same Secretariat at Citizenship and Immigration Canada)[2], the workshop program, which the Secretariat had organized until then, was turned over to conference participants. The conference participants from both the academy and government were encouraged to propose workshops that would be incorporated into the overall conference program if their proposal met certain conditions. Particularly

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2   Please note that both the Canadian and the international branches of The Metropolis Project were managed by a single secretariat at Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This continued until 2012 when the government closed the Secretariat and ceased funding the Canadian research centres.

important for building academic-policy relations was the requirement that workshop proposals include active participation from both research and policy institutions. Workshops that proposed discussions among only academic researchers or only policy officials were disallowed. It was a firm requirement that accepted proposals bring both sides into the room, and if a proposer needed assistance identifying people to invite, the Secretariat would step in to offer suggestions. In this way, over time, people from both sides came to know each other and each other's work increasingly well with the result that researchers understood better what their policy colleagues needed, and policy officials came to know better what the researchers could offer. Synergies developed to the point that some of these individual relationships endured for many years, and more and more research evidence entered the policy development process for each of the government departments that had a financial stake in the Metropolis Project.

Along similar lines, the Metropolis Secretariat convened policy-research roundtables called Metropolis Conversations that took place within the headquarters of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, which housed the Secretariat. These conversations were held approximately once per week and brought to the table academic researchers from the Metropolis research centres and beyond to offer research findings on issues of interest to government policy. That the events were held in the Department's headquarters made it very easy for policy analysts to participate, hear short presentations, and engage with the researchers in a conversational manner. The Chatham House Rule was invoked, and this freed the discussions and led to yet stronger relations of trust to be built between the academy and the government. Similar activities took place at the research centres, as well as other venues. In addition to these active exchanges of information and views, the Secretariat produced numerous publications intended for a policy rather than an academic audience, with short articles in non-technical language written by both academics and government officials. All these activities had as their goal to foster regular exchanges and stronger relations between government policy makers and academic researchers.

Trust-building led to other benefits that enhanced the research-policy relationship and, therefore, the quest for evidence-based decision-making. As noted above, one of the impediments to the use of academic research by policy is the technical sophistication of academic literature. This is both a matter of the academic jargon that is common in this literature, as well as the complexity of the research process and the analysis done on the empirical findings, especially statistical analysis. Establishing interpersonal relations between researchers and policy makers allowed for conversations that cut through the technicalities and made the research findings and conclusions more accessible and thereby more useful to the policy audience. These conversations also made it easier for researchers to learn how to present their research in ways that a policy audience could appreciate and use.

A further impediment to the use of academic research in policy is the common delay between the beginning of a research project and the public publication of results. A project might take two to three years to complete, and publication could take an additional year if not more. By the time an article or book is published, government interest in the issue might have faded and policy decisions long since made and implemented. Metropolis used several ways to overcome this mismatch of timeframes and standards of useful evidence. This is a sensitive concern. Academic reputations in the social sciences are built in part on the quality of research and analysis and the soundness of the conclusions drawn. Compromising these aspects of academic integrity to meet the needs of policy making is not only distasteful to some researchers but could harm their reputations. The question was how to put preliminary, incomplete work into the hands of policy makers in a way that did not injure the reputations of the researchers and did not run amok of standards of academic integrity. One solution was the production of 'Working Papers' by the Metropolis Research Centres that made no pretense of being final results, that acknowledged that the work was still in a preliminary state, but that was sufficiently solid that it could be made public in this form. The advantage for the policy community was that the evidence, preliminary as it might have been, was available far earlier than had the researcher waited for final results and formal publication in an academic press. That the publications

were openly acknowledged to be working papers only and, therefore, susceptible to significant modification later, allowed the researchers a degree of comfort in letting their work out before it had reached a final stage. It must be admitted, however, that some academic presses expressed concerns to researchers who submitted their final manuscripts for publication that these manuscripts had already been published and therefore refused to accept what they regarded as merely a revision. Fortunately, this was rare. By the end of the tenure of the Metropolis Centres of Excellence in Canada in 2012, hundreds of working papers had been produced and published by the Centres themselves, including on their publicly available electronic libraries. These papers were read by policy analysts in large numbers owing in part to the currency of the findings and preliminary conclusions but also because of the personal relations that had been created between the scholars and their policy readers. Although the conclusions were preliminary, they were highly useful to governments if for no other reason than that they drew attention to social phenomena that might warrant policy interventions or further investigation by the department.

The general point here is that the Metropolis Project in Canada developed several ways to facilitate policy makers using the academic research that was produced through the research centres and that, as shown by formal evaluations, there was considerable success in this regard. This, however, is not to say that all research reports and publications were equally well-received by policy circles. There was, in my experience, a marked preference for research that was grounded in large statistical databases over small-scale qualitative studies. The academic freedom that the institutional structure of Metropolis guaranteed meant that much of the research done followed the general patterns of the day and that included local qualitative work with relatively few participants interviewed or surveyed. Those in policy often found such studies of less interest unless they pointed towards emerging phenomena of concern that could then be examined in a way, preferably statistically, that policy makers considered more robust, especially at a national as opposed to a local scale.

Metropolis was conceived as having two parts: a funded research project within Canada and an unfunded international project. The International Metropolis Project had similar ambitions to the Canadian and encouraged internationally comparative research on immigration and immigrant integration. Annual conferences provided venues for conversation among academic researchers and policy makers from several countries and international organizations such as the OECD, the European Commission, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Migration Policy Institute, and the International Organization for Migration. Although the international project was unfunded, its conferences attracted large audiences and were hosted mostly by governments of the partners in the project. The goal of international comparative research was achieved to no small degree both through formal international research teams funded by national social sciences councils and through less formal collaboration, including conference workshops, that explicitly included comparisons of the experiences of several countries. Evidence was shared, common problems were identified, and best policy practices emerged from the discussions.

The international project was, in principle, independent of the Canadian project and was governed by what was called the Metropolis International Steering Committee (ISC) which was made up of governmental and international organizations (such as the International Organization for Migration, UNESCO, UNHCR, OECD, and the European Commission), think tanks, and academic institutions from several countries growing to a membership of well over 50 institutions from nearly as many countries. Members represented their organizations, not their countries. The Secretariat for the ISC was provided by the same Metropolis Secretariat at Citizenship and Immigration Canada but on the department's understanding that the ISC was independent of the Government of Canada. The ISC was responsible for the annual conferences and members hosted events between the conferences such as seminars, workshops, and organizational meetings. It was often through the ISC that international comparative research projects were initiated, although others grew simply from contacts made among researchers through the annual conferences.

It is important to note that Metropolis, both in Canada and internationally, was designed principally to stimulate academic research on immigration and related themes, to build relations amongst academic researchers on a national and international scale, and to build relations between academic researchers and government policy officials. It was never its goal to set policy or to recommend that governments behave in any particular ways in their policy decisions. Metropolis was always apolitical. For this reason, Metropolis conferences never issued decisions, recommendations, or manifestos. Doing so would have made the project inherently political and undermined its credibility with both the academic and policy players.

So far, this depiction of the Metropolis Project has concentrated on the academic research and government policy communities. As the project developed in its early years, another important stakeholder entered: civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), principally organizations that served the integration of newcomers in Canada and elsewhere in the world. NGOs in Canada protested their initial exclusion but bringing them into the project was not straightforward. The only financial vehicle in Canada was the funding for the research centres and this meant that any involvement of NGOs would be through those centres. Many academics resisted because this meant sharing the funds available with an additional stakeholder. More important, however, was that the researchers did not see any value in having NGOs participate in their research. To the contrary, many believed that having NGOs as part of a research team would diminish the quality of the research and lengthen the time required to complete projects. Gradually, however, the presence of NGOs at the research centres was accepted and not only because the government funders demanded that they be part of at least the governing structure of the centres but also because having the NGOs at the centres' governance tables enabled them to demonstrate the value that they could add and demonstrate their presence in a spirit of co-operation and not competition for funding.

The role of NGOs became highly appreciated because of the insights that they were able to offer on the conditions that newcomers faced and measures that were being tried to ameliorate the challenges. This on-the-ground experience became highly valuable for academic research projects given that most academics had limited direct access to immigrants and refugees, whereas it was normal business for the NGOs. This was especially the case for qualitative research projects. Quantitative projects that relied on statistical data, especially data collected by government agencies, saw less benefit from NGO involvement, but even there, the lived experience was able in some cases to motivate a statistical study to quantify phenomena observed by case workers. Eventually, the presence of NGOs in Metropolis was fully accepted not only in the governance infrastructure of the Canadian research centres and at the conferences, both Canadian and the International Metropolis Conferences, but also at the Metropolis International Steering Committee where several had a seat. This stance by Metropolis went farther than that of most international organizations at the time. The United Nations came to offer a role for civil society at many of its events, but in general they played this role among themselves inside meetings, at 'civil society days', rather than being in the same room with government representatives. Metropolis came to regard itself as having three equal partners: academics, government and international organization policy makers, and civil society. Conversations such as conference workshops, as a matter of conference rules, included NGO representatives as equals.

Government policy makers benefitted from the active participation of civil society in the same ways that they benefitted from the academic researchers: an enhanced understanding of societal phenomena and a stronger appreciation of the conditions facing immigrants and the ways in which they make their decisions to move to another country. This enhanced understanding was expected to result in more nuanced policy decision making and more effective policies, however the government of the day conceived of effectiveness.

In conclusion, the Metropolis Project was borne out of the Government of Canada's recognition in 1995 that it lacked sufficient empirical evidence to support policy making on several fronts, one of which was managing immigration. The government found a way to bring academic researchers into the broad policy process by offering incentives for social scientists to work on issues related to immigration and in

ways that would be relevant to policy making. When it comes to the International Metropolis Project, the ambition was to increase the amount of internationally comparative work in this regard and in similar ways to bring this evidence to bear on policy making.

The Metropolis project, both within Canada and in its international operations, offers but one example of how to build bridges across the oft-noted gap between academic research and policy. If there is one aspect of the Metropolis approach to highlight, it is its emphasis on the psycho-social realities at play here. Research is conducted by people, just as policies are developed by people. For policy to benefit from research requires investing in the social relations between those who practice each. If they remain in their own silos, the gap will remain. The bridges between them will not build themselves no matter the epistemological merits. Building these bridges takes dedicated effort, and what Metropolis taught was that if the bridges are built and maintained, traffic will flow in both directions.