

# INTERPRETIVE POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 2021

**Panel Title:**

*P23 - Working between the worlds of politics and knowledge: critical approaches to knowledge mobilisation*

**Panel Convenors:**

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**Abstract:**

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the role of knowledge, evidence, expertise, and data has never been made more visible in policy and decision-making. Governments across the world have long professed a commitment to evidence-based policy making (EBPM) or evidence-informed policy making (EIPM). However, even the exceptional circumstance of the pandemic has highlighted the politics of knowledge use, making our panel a timely one to discuss these issues.

Arguments for EBPM and EIPM are typically positivist and normative. 'How to' guides to evidence use in policy have multiplied in recent years (Cairney & Oliver, 2018), yet evidence of EBPM or EIPM is still lacking. Rather than evidence-informed, policy is often determined by the intersections between highly territorially contextual and political factors, such as the specificities of time and place, prevailing policy ideologies and cultures, powerful interests and constraints on time and resource (Stoker and Evans, 2016, Boswell, 2009). And yet, the rhetoric or discourse of evidence is constantly being mobilised by policy-makers and others in the policy community to support, negotiate and oppose ideas.

Where there is policy engagement with evidence, little is understood about the role and craft of knowledge mobilisers and brokers working within these territorial and political policy making processes to bridge the gaps between the worlds of policy makers and research producers. Scholarship looking at the relationship between evidence and policy tends to take either a critical but narrow perspective, sensitive to political context and dynamics, but looking at specific policy fields (Monaghan, 2011; Freeman & Sturdy, 2015) or offers general assessments of the practical aspects of knowledge mobilisation with limited space for critical reflection on what counts as evidence and the politics of brokerage (Boaz et al, 2019). Equally, existing scholarship on actors in policy processes either tend to over assume substantive interest in policy outcomes beyond the application of evidence to decision making (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2017) or focus on practical processes of knowledge brokering; overlooking power dynamics (Parker and Crona, 2012; Wehrens et al., 2013) and subverting questions of interests, agendas and alliances over how evidence is defined and mobilised in the policy process

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This panel seeks to discuss critically the relationship between knowledge and policy. We want to discuss and analyse the evidence-policy nexus, bringing together studies from across disciplines, places and spaces to develop observations on the role of politics, culture, interest and power in defining evidence and determining the practice of brokerage.

We look forward to receiving:

- Theoretical papers, for example addressing
  - political and territorial contexts of knowledge mobilisation,
  - political processes of knowledge brokerage,
  - the role of knowledge mobilisation in countering/reproducing inequalities
- Papers focused on methods of studying knowledge mobilisation
- Inter-disciplinary and comparative papers, for example discussing the different spatial relationships between evidence and policy.
- Critical case studies on the relationship between evidence and policy which develop practical and critical reflections and dimensions for approaching the question of evidence and policy in the everyday work of researchers and policymakers.

## References

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