

# LINKING RESEARCH AND POLICY FOR LOCAL ECONOMIES

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This chapter looks at the evidence base for local economic growth policies, and at the wider evidence ecosystem (Shepherd 2014), in particular the relationships between the local growth research community (mainly academics) and policy communities in central and local government. For the leaders of cities such as Birmingham and Chicago, understanding how the complex drivers of economic change play out in specific ‘regeneration economies’ is crucial. Equally, to have a chance of tackling economic and social challenges, decision-makers in these and other cities need to develop policies that draw on robust evaluation evidence from a range of academic disciplines and fields.

I explore how these research-policy interactions and challenges play out by looking at a recently established – and ongoing – government experiment in the UK, the ‘What Works’ network. This has established a number of ‘What Works Centres’ that gather, evaluate and translate evidence on policy effectiveness across nine broad policy areas, and to help public sector decision-makers make better policy. I focus on the findings and experiences of the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, the part of the Network closest to regeneration economies debates.

The chapter begins with a discussion on the role of evidence in policymaking, and identifies a number of constraints in the effective use of research findings in policy development and implementation. It goes on to review a range of responses by Governments around the world: the What Works movement and the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth have

counterparts in many countries. I reprise the key findings from the Centre's work to date, and discuss the implications for local policymakers. I conclude with some broader reflections on the political economy of evidence: the linkages between researchers and policymakers, and some of the systemic challenges that remain, both in effective evaluation of local growth policy and in using evaluation evidence in policy decisions.

## **1/ Evidence-based policymaking**

The need for a good evidence base for public policymaking is well-understood, as are the practical challenges in building such a base and putting it to everyday use. Lindblom (1959) makes a classic distinction between 'root' and 'branch' modes of policymaking. The first involves a comprehensive review of all available evidence, sifting for quality, and then taking a first-best decision that maximises some notion of welfare. The second involves a series of 'successive limited comparisons', drawing on what evidence is immediately available, and taking a second-best decision that minimises welfare tradeoffs. Lindblom suggests that that branch-based policymaking, or 'muddling through', is by far the most common. Objectives are often unclear, conflicting and/or contested; underlying values and agendas conflict; actors have limited information and/or capacity to act on it.

Recent empirical work in the UK tends to support this rather bleak view. In theory, policy development is supposed to follow a strict policy cycle: develop a rationale, establish objectives, appraise options, monitor implementation, then evaluate and feedback (ROMAEF for short) (HM Treasury 2011). However, in a series of conversations with officials and politicians, Hallsworth et al (2011) report that "virtually every interviewee dismissed policy cycles ... as being divorced from reality" (p5). Policymaking is often short term and event-driven; interventions are taken on before clear rationales are established; and the effects of policies are often indirect, diffuse, and take time to appear, making linear evaluation and feedback difficult. As one interviewee explains:

*If you've got to be evidence-based, and inclusive, and joined up, and consultative, and outward-looking, you can't deliver a policy in a week – but ministers want policies tomorrow. (ibid, p8)*

On this basis, we can view the ‘evidence based policy’ agenda as an attempt to make the best of these inherently constrained policy-making systems. Specifically, proponents look for actions that embed the gathering and use of high quality evidence into policymaking; to assess and evaluate current initiatives; and more ambitiously, to change the underlying structures and dynamics of policymaking itself.

At a cosmetic level, all governments at whatever level will profess some interest in evidence based policy and knowing ‘what works’. However, cases of sustained interest and action are rather rarer. Lenihan (2013) provides an overview of international bodies, networks and programmes. In some cases, evidence-based policy organisations are fully independent of government, and are constituted as national or international networks (J-PAL, or the US Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy), or as self-standing institutes (DIW or Bertelsmann in Germany). In other cases, national governments have created new institutions: examples include the National Productivity Commission (Australia) and the Dutch PlanBureau network, which includes the Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, the Institute for Social Research and the Environment Assessment Agency.

Taking evidence-based policy functions out of government altogether – even if the latter continues to be involved through funding relationships or partial oversight relationships – can be read as manifestations of New Public Management approaches to governance (Solesbury 2001, Parsons 2002), or in 1990s policy-speak, ‘Third Way’ models. Notably, the UK’s last sustained engagement with the evidence-based policy agenda came under the 1997 – 2010 New Labour Government. The 1999 Modernising Government White Paper stated:

*This Government expects more of policy makers. More new ideas, more willingness to question inherited ways of doing things, better use of evidence and research in policy making and better focus on policies that will deliver long term goals. (Cabinet Office 1999) (p16)*

As Solesbury (2001) points out, this statement of intent fits New Labour’s pragmatic and relatively anti-ideology stance. A number of concrete machinery-of-government changes followed. Cabinet Office functions were beefed up with the establishment of the Performance and Innovation Unit (later the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit), which conducted strategic reviews of cross-departmental issues; a Delivery Unit focused on implementation was set up

a few years later. The other notable change at the time was the establishment of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) in 1999 (It was renamed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in 2013). The Institute was set up to provide high quality guidance on new and existing medicines and treatments, and on care for specific diseases and conditions.<sup>1</sup> Guidance is based on evaluations of the existing evidence, which is largely drawn from bodies of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), as well as comment from relevant actors, including medical researchers and pharma companies. Crucially, the agency not only makes judgements on effectiveness, but also on cost-effectiveness. Guidelines are not mandatory, but carry considerable weight for NHS Trusts and GPs. 15 years later, this approach has, in turn, become a template for the new generation of What Works Centres.

## **2/ The What Works approach**

Beginning in 2013, the Coalition Government established a network of ‘What Works Centres’ (WWCs) across a range of policy fields. Described by one senior official as ‘a NICE for social sciences’<sup>2</sup>, WWCs are intended to take on and adapt the evidence synthesis functionality of NICE, as well as its emphasis on high quality evidence and evaluation. WWCs have three common functions: to systematically review existing evaluations in relevant policy areas; to provide clear guidance to relevant user communities; and to work with users to help them embed this knowledge into decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of writing there are seven What Works Centres and two affiliate members, each in a policy area where at least £30bn is spent annually. In three cases (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, Education Endowment Foundation, Early Intervention Foundation) existing organisations have been designated as WWCs; in other cases (Centre for Ageing Better, What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, What Works in Tackling Poverty, What Works Scotland, What Works Wellbeing) entirely new organisations have been created.<sup>4</sup> The What Works Network, co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office, links the Centres together through regular communication

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<sup>1</sup> NICE also provides guidance for social care services and users, and on health promotion and hygiene for public sector workers.

<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder interview, July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network>, accessed 1 March 2017.

<sup>4</sup> The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction is largely housed in the existing College of Policing, with a small external team of academic / expert advisers.

and meetups. The Network also helps to link Centres to the wider evidence based policy community, including the Behavioural Insights Team (or Nudge Unit) and international organisations such as J-PAL and the Campbell Collaboration.

The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (WWCLEG) was launched in September 2013 as a collaboration between three partners: the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Centre for Cities think tank, and engineers and consultants Arup. The ESRC, Department of Communities and Department of Business are equal funders.

WWCLEG shares the basic ‘review, inform, enable’ functionality of the other What Works Centres, but with some important differences. First, the Centre works with a wide range of ‘users’ at different levels of government, although first and foremost it exists to help local actors: local authorities, public-private Local Enterprise Partnerships, and other bodies. Second, the Centre is a partnership rather than a single organisation, and is intended to leverage the comparative advantage of each of the partners; academic expertise, think tank communication and networks, consultants’ scale and on-the-ground experience. These organisational features are a response to the wider institutional landscape, a point I return to in Section 4.

### **3/ What works in local economic growth?**

The WWCLEG’s evidence reviews involve systematic searches of the academic and policy literature on local economic development policies. Searches cover all OECD countries, and further afield on a case-by-case basis; there is no time limit on when studies are published.

There are two central features of the review process. First, the focus is specifically on quantitative ex-post evaluations. This means that ex-ante projections of impact and process evaluations (focusing on delivery / implementation, and often using qualitative methods) are not included, as these are well covered by other organisations in the local economic growth field (for example, the OECD, and in the UK, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Centre for Local Economic Strategies). Second, and in common with other WWCs, the Centre focuses only on studies where it can be confident that causal impacts of a policy have been

identified.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, reviews examine both research design and its implementation, with the latter determining the final mark. In practice, this often means that hundreds of potential review inputs are reduced to a few dozen or less. Given the uneven quality of the evidence base across many local economic growth fields, this presents some challenges in generating policy recommendations.

Headline findings from the reviews are set out below. Following the literature, these are grouped into ‘people-based’, ‘firm-based’ and ‘area-based’ interventions based on the main target of the policy (Glaeser and Gottlieb 2008, Pugalis and McGuinness 2012, Cheshire, Nathan et al. 2014, Neumark and Simpson 2014). Note that these categories are largely, but wholly mutually exclusive. Apprenticeships, for example, are primarily aimed at individuals but may also have benefits for the firms who take on the apprentices; people-based interventions may end up targeted on particular places if recipients are co-located for some reason. Also note that ‘area’ here includes a range of spatial scales, from single industrial sites to housing estates to regions to larger chunks of the urban system.

### 3.1 / People-based policies

The Centre’s review of active labour market programmes includes 71 evaluations from across the OECD (What works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2016). Around half show positive effects on employment or earnings. Shorter programmes (below six months, probably below four months) are more effective for less formal training. Longer programmes generate employment gains when the content is skill-intensive. In-firm / on the job training programmes outperform classroom-based training programmes. Employer co-design and activities that closely mirror actual jobs increase effectiveness.

The Centre has also reviewed apprenticeship programmes, with 27 evaluations making the final cut (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015). Of the 11 that look at employment effects, nine find positive impacts, with apprenticeships also reducing participants’ unemployment post-programme. The effect on wages is more mixed in the five studies that examine these, with a couple of studies finding negative impacts. Higher-level apprenticeships deliver substantially higher lifetime wage gains (based on limited UK

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<sup>5</sup> The Centre uses a modified Scientific Maryland Scale to do this. See <http://www.whatworksgrowth.org/resources/the-scientific-maryland-scale>, access 1 March 2017.

evidence). The evidence suggests that apprenticeships are more likely to increase employment than other forms of employment training (unless the latter also involves an in-firm element). Various mechanisms may increase attendance (e.g. pre-qualifications, higher wages and subsidies) but reducing drop-out seems harder to achieve. There is very little evidence on benefits or costs to firms.

### 3.2 / Firm-based policies

The Centre's review of business advice (information, networking and mentoring services) covers 23 evaluations (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015). Around half of these show positive effects on employment or productivity (more consistently for the latter), while results for sales, profits and exports are more mixed. Programmes that use a hands-on, 'managed brokerage' approach (e.g. face to face consulting) may perform better than those using a light touch delivery model (e.g. online info), but they are also more expensive so may not offer better value for money.

A related review of business finance programmes (loans and early stage finance) covers 17 evaluations, and again shows positive effects on firm performance (employment, productivity or sales) in around half of cases (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2016). Programmes have a positive effect on firm access to debt finance, either in terms of the availability of credit or the cost of borrowing (or both), but effects on equity finance are more mixed. There is some evidence that loan guarantees may increase default risk.

The Centre also conducted a larger review on aspects of innovation policy, focusing on R&D grants, loans and tax incentives: the latter are targeted at private sector firms, while the former include spending on businesses and on public science (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015). From 42 evaluations of R&D grants and loans, around half find a positive impact on further R&D spend, innovation or some wider economic outcome; innovation effects are weaker for patenting than for self-reported product/process development. Seven out of 16 evaluations find positive effects on productivity, employment or some other measure of firm performance. Overall, impacts tend to be better for SMEs than for larger firms, and programmes that emphasises inter-firm collaboration tend to generate better results. Notably, sector-neutral programmes do just as well, if not better, than programmes targeted at specific industries. For R&D tax credits, 10 out of 17 evaluations

find positive effects on further R&D spending, including a recent evaluation of the UK's R&D tax credit. However, only three studies look at economic outcomes, and only one of these finds consistently positive effects. Again, impacts are better for SMEs.

### 3.3/ Area-based policies

The Centre's area-based policy reviews cover a range of policy fields. Two reviews focus on infrastructure, specifically broadband internet and transport networks (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015, What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015). The broadband review includes 16 studies, and finds positive impact on the local economy in 14 cases. But effects on firm productivity, firm counts, and local labour markets are not always positive or large, and may depend on complementary investments by firms (e.g. training workers, or reorganizing supply chains). Service industries and skilled workers seem to benefit more than manufacturing industries and unskilled workers. Effects tend to be larger in urban areas (or close to urban areas) than in rural areas. The transport review covers road and rail projects. Three (out of 6) evaluations reviewed showed positive impact of road projects on local employment. There is some evidence that road projects have positive effects on wages/ incomes or productivity. They may increase firm entry through relocations, or via new firms starting up. Road and rail projects also tend to have a positive effect on property prices, although effects depend on distance to the project and vary over time.

A review of Enterprise Zones and related 'growth zone' programmes covers 34 evaluations (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2016). Just over half of these show positive effects on employment (typically measured at area level). The best results on employment are for US Empowerment Zones – which have a local employment requirement. There is evidence that positive effects result from displacement in most of the studies that test for it – often from nearby areas. This implies that net local job creation will be smaller than gross zone job creation. Ten studies cover impacts on wages, which may reflect underlying firm productivity changes: of these, half find a positive programme effect.

Finally, two further reviews show minimal economic impacts, but important wider welfare effects. Estate renewal programmes provide important housing and amenity benefits, but the Centre's review finds that their economic impact is limited (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2015). On the available evidence, programmes tend to have a limited

effect on improving income or employment in the local area. Direct employment impacts from construction are not considered; studies use area-level data so that effects on existing residents are not explored. Similarly, spending on sports and cultural facilities and events deliver wellbeing and amenity benefits, but on the basis of available evidence, measurable effects on the local economy are not large and are more often zero (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth 2016). Wage/income effects tend to be small, and limited to particular areas or particular types of workers. Effects on trade/tourism are only considered in a few studies and appear to be short-lived.

### 3.4 / Implications

What does this mean for local economies and local leaders, especially those in regeneration economies? First, and encouragingly, the reviews suggest that there are a number of effective tools that can be used in local economic growth policy. In the UK many of these are currently held centrally; in other countries the institutional architecture is more devolved. However, none of these programmes are magic bullets; effect sizes are often quite small. Around half of the evaluations WWLEG has looked at show no effect (or in a few cases, negative impacts). For restructuring cities such as Birmingham and Chicago, this is not surprising, given that **local economic development interventions are not only dealing with localised market failure or co-ordination problems, they are attempting to push back against much larger structural forces that are generating spatial and other disparities. In that sense, they are ‘micro-solutions for mega-problems’** (Cheshire, Nathan et al. 2014, Nathan 2016). This is a tough set of challenges for leaders of regeneration economies – and presents challenges for national leaders who want to rebalance national economies, and to take more activist approaches to industrial policy (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy 2017). Local leaders need to be realistic about what they can expect local policies to achieve, and over what timescale, and where they should push back on national government for further support, especially under austerity. They also need to think about how to roll out these messages in a way that helps build and sustain local coalitions of support.

Second, the reviews highlight some important features of the research evidence available to policymakers. In general, systematic reviews provide evidence on the *average* impact of a given policy; in some cases, individual studies have a research design that provides *subgroup* impacts on (say) men vs women, different ethnic or birth country communities, SMEs vs

larger firms, cities versus rural areas. Even then, reviews can only provide policymakers with a series of ‘best bets’. They do not say for sure what will work in a particular place, at a particular time, given a particular set of opportunities and constraints. Practically, it is also very challenging to look at the long term, cumulative effects of individual interventions, or how interventions might interact with each other (Kline and Moretti (2014), which looks at the long term economic impacts of a 1930s US New Deal Programme, is a rare exception).

As with all the What Works Centres, the WWCLEG systematic reviews are *inputs into policymaking*: general guidance rather than specific prescription. Linked to this, the evidence base for assessing the effectiveness of most local growth programmes is weak compared to other policy fields (notably education). In many cases the reviews find not so much ‘evidence of no impact’ as ‘no evidence of impact’ either way. An overarching lesson from the review process is that both the research and policy communities need to get better at *evidence creation*, particularly through piloting and robustly testing new ideas.

In theory, local government in regeneration economies ought to be able to play a leading role here. In practice, there are both opportunities and constraints. To see these, we need to understand the wider political economy of evidence, linkages between research and policy communities, and the capacity of both groups to work effectively together.

#### **4/ Linking research and policy**

There are real, inherent constraints in using research evidence in real-world policy settings. An ‘evidence-based policy’ stance provides a set of moves to work around the worst of these. The biggest challenges are well known: timescales for evaluation and policymaking are often out of sync; evaluation findings are not brought into decision-making; elected leaders, in particular, may prefer to rely on descriptive ‘league tables’ rather than understand more complex policy impacts; and as we have seen in the local economic growth field, there is often a lack of impact evaluation (Parsons 2002, Hallsworth, Parker et al. 2011, Shepherd 2014). This chapter concludes with some reflections on the local economic growth evidence ecosystem, in particular the relationships between research and policy.

First, the local economic growth institutional system is diffuse, in ways that make effective linkages between research and policy communities especially hard to do. Broadly speaking, policy fields such as health, education and policing have hierarchical systems with relatively few delivery partners. By contrast, fields such as local economic growth (or social inclusion, or early intervention) plug into multiple departments of central government and multiple policy functions at sub-national level. These are much more diffuse systems, with a wider spread of actors and more complex decision-making processes. Problems of ‘joined up policy’ are more pervasive here, reflecting challenging co-ordination problems.

In the UK, and England in particular, the current devolution agenda is creating opportunities for better co-ordinated policy at the city-region level, reducing fragmentation. For researchers, in principle, this should create better-equipped and easier-to-reach research users in cities. However, existing capacity in local government is variable, and in the UK, continued austerity raises further risks that at least in the short term, some local leaders will be technically empowered to make better use of evidence, but with fewer resources to do so in practice (Pike and Tomaney 2009, Pugalis and McGuinness 2012). At the time of writing, big English cities such as Birmingham are under severe funding pressure in public services, and are reducing staff numbers: this both reduces capacity to engage with researchers, and reduces the city’s set of feasible policy options (regardless of effectiveness).

In the UK, Brexit-related policy uncertainty adds another element of risk: not least, UK cities account for 62% of British export activity, with 46% of exports from cities into the EU (CFC ref) (Centre for Cities 2017). Other key issues for cities include the loss of EU grant funding; supply chain disruption; shifts in foreign investment; labour market shocks as migration regimes tighten; and a series of shocks for local universities, including changes in student numbers, researcher exit and potentially, loss of access to EU research funding schemes. In 2017, the What Works Centre will be working with the Centre for Cities and others to develop ways to respond to the challenges of Brexit.

Second, the diffuse nature of the local economic growth field also presents challenges for evidence review. In academic terms, ‘local economic growth’ is not a field or discipline, but rather the intersection of multiple fields and methodologies. In this it is much like geography, the body of knowledge that arguably sits at its core (Peet 1998). As such, researchers work with diverse analytical frames and analytical techniques, both quantitative and qualitative. A

common body of ex-post evaluation methods *is* emerging from urban and labour economics, and quantitative researchers in sociology and political science, among others (Gibbons, Nathan et al. 2014, King 2014). But these methods are still new to many researchers, and require specific technical knowledge.

This means that, for now at least, systematic reviews in local economic growth will almost never involve the formal meta-analysis practised in education, development or medicine. Here, a large body of studies using identical research designs is selected, and overall effects are derived from averaging impacts across individual studies.<sup>6</sup> Rather, researchers looking at local growth need to use a form of realist synthesis (Pawson 2006) in which higher level patterns of results are combined with interpretation grounded in underlying theories of change. For example, researchers can develop typologies of impact (positive, zero, negative) and ‘vote count’ outcomes in each category (Card, Kluve et al. 2015). This strategy will only work, however, if the bodies of evidence in question are coherent, and can be scored for quality on criteria that make sense for that body of evidence. The WWCLEG, for example, focuses on ex-post evaluations that use quantitative techniques, uses the Scientific Maryland Scale to assess quality, then applies a combination of vote counting and interpretative analysis.

Third, there are specific challenges in evidence creation – not only the need for more high quality evaluation evidence, as notes above, but constraints on the *kind* of evaluation evidence it is possible to generate. Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) are often held to be gold standard in evaluation, since randomisation controls for both observable and unobservable characteristics of policy recipients that might be confused for policy effects (Glennester and Takavarasha 2013). Trials are also relatively straightforward to explain to non-expert audiences, including policymakers. Critics of RCTs point out that randomisation *per se* tells us little, and that it is often hard to generalise from individual trial (Deaton and Cartwright 2016). In practice, high quality trials already handle many of these criticisms: they are grounded in proper theories of change, are able to explore impact channels as well as average effects, and are already rooted in what Deaton and Cartwright term ‘cumulative programmes’ of knowledge – used alongside other evaluation methods in an integrated fashion, and so able to contribute insight across a range of local cases.

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<sup>6</sup> For an example see [http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/resources/effect\\_size\\_input.php](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/resources/effect_size_input.php), accessed 8 September 2016.

These issues are highly salient to policy development in ‘regeneration economy’ cities. In theory, we might like to use RCTs to evaluate programmes. In practice, this is not feasible for a range of physical interventions such as housebuilding and estate renewal; industrial site remediation; transport infrastructure and ICT networks. More broadly, local economic growth ‘treatments’ often take some time to take effect, and are not easily reversible (Gibbons, Nathan et al. 2014). For this reason, researchers need to think about an array of evaluation methods, while keeping evidence quality concerns in mind. For example, quasi-experimental techniques can often be used in interventions where funds are awarded on a competitive basis: researchers can compare changes in outcomes for winning / losing bidders. At the same time, it may be possible to use RCTs *within* winning bidders to compare variations on a given policy (for example, comparing the effects of intensive versus non-intensive support). This kind of ‘what works better’ setting is particularly important when we do not come to policy with strong priors: as we saw in Section 3, this is often the case.

In practice, policy communities will need to work closely with researchers to bring these techniques into everyday policy development. WWCs provide one vehicle through which to do this. Some UK government evaluation guidance is already being revised to mandate minimum evidence standards, and this can be developed further. Beyond this, researchers and policymakers also need to consider local capacity and the minimum efficient scale of evaluation: even if policy design functions and budgets are devolved, it will often make sense to have at least some practical co-ordination of evaluation activities.

More seriously, some current evaluation norms – such as the UK’s ROAMEF cycle discussed in Section 1 – arguably make it *harder* to do high quality ex-post testing, by placing impact evaluation planning at the far end of the policy cycle. This may result in theories of change, baseline data collection and so on all taking place late in the process. If ‘evaluation thinking’ is built into the research design process – for example, via piloting – robust testing of impacts becomes much easier. Revising such frameworks around an evaluation mindset is critical.

Fourth, and linked to this, some wider political economy factors come into play. There is a strong political appeal in presenting a given policy as evidence-based. Insisting on robust evaluation is also sending a signal of confidence in that policy. And in times of austerity, there should be a strong incentive to know how effective a policy is, so that limited funds can

be put to best use. However, more often than one might hope, policymakers may not really want to know whether or not a policy is effective – particularly if they have already invested political capital in it, and/or are more concerned just to be seen to be doing something. Similarly, officially commissioned evaluations may look at a very wide range of outcomes – this may reflect a real attempt to do joined up policy, but it may also reflect a desire to mechanically increase the chances of finding a positive effect, even if this has little to do with the original policy objectives.

Conversely, academic evaluations often privilege the research design to the exclusion of any useful policy detail or policy implications, tendencies amplified by the space constraints of peer-reviewed journals. In turn, this makes these (often high quality) research findings of limited use to policymakers. More broadly, the majority of academics select into a profession which is research orientated, and where career development generally depends on publications over engagement with policy, business and the wider public. This is a fundamental division of labour problem, which can only be partially solved by shifting individual incentives and budgets. In many countries, bridging institutions and networks – such as What Works Centres – will likely always be needed to cover the gaps.

**[5692 words including title, author info, footnotes and references]**

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