



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Influencing Parliament and Government

Jane Tinkler

@janetinkler

Becoming an Influential Researcher

16 November 2015

Trying to have an influence on policy can feel like



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

We speak different languages . . .

Policymakers and academics are **different breeds who speak different languages.**

Whereas they [politicians] work toward collective goals, we can be isolated loners . .

. Whereas they focus on the short-term while juggling numerous projects, we can devote years to just one research grant.

Whereas they break evidence into small chunks to extract the key messages, we sometimes engage in lofty debates that have no tangible outcome (Goodwin, 2013).



. . . and are working to different deadlines

The caricature of ‘Here’s my policy, now find some evidence’ isn’t fair. Because what you are actually saying is: **‘We’re going to have to make a decision about this, so let’s find the evidence that will help us do that’** . . . the biggest difference is that the policy has to be decided in the here and now, and we have to do it on the basis of **whatever evidence there is available** (Senior government official)



Reasons to be cheerful

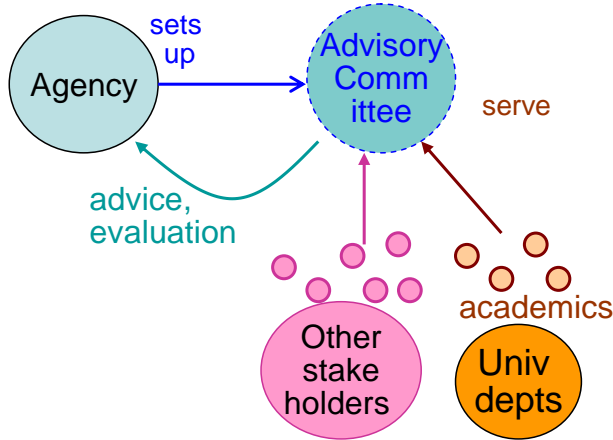
**Greater
demand
in
government**

**Better
supply
from
universities**

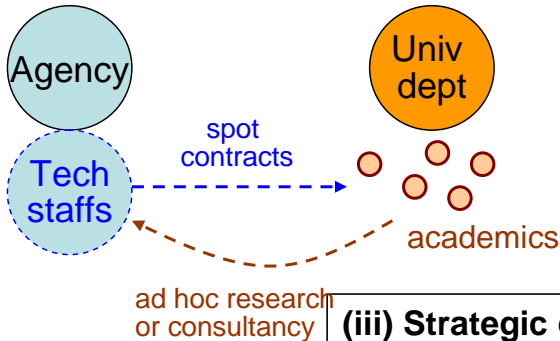
**Lower
transaction
costs**

There are a number of ways universities interact with government

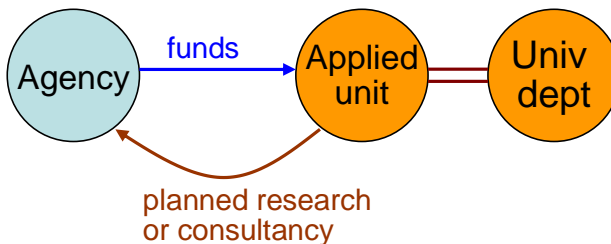
(i) Advisory committees



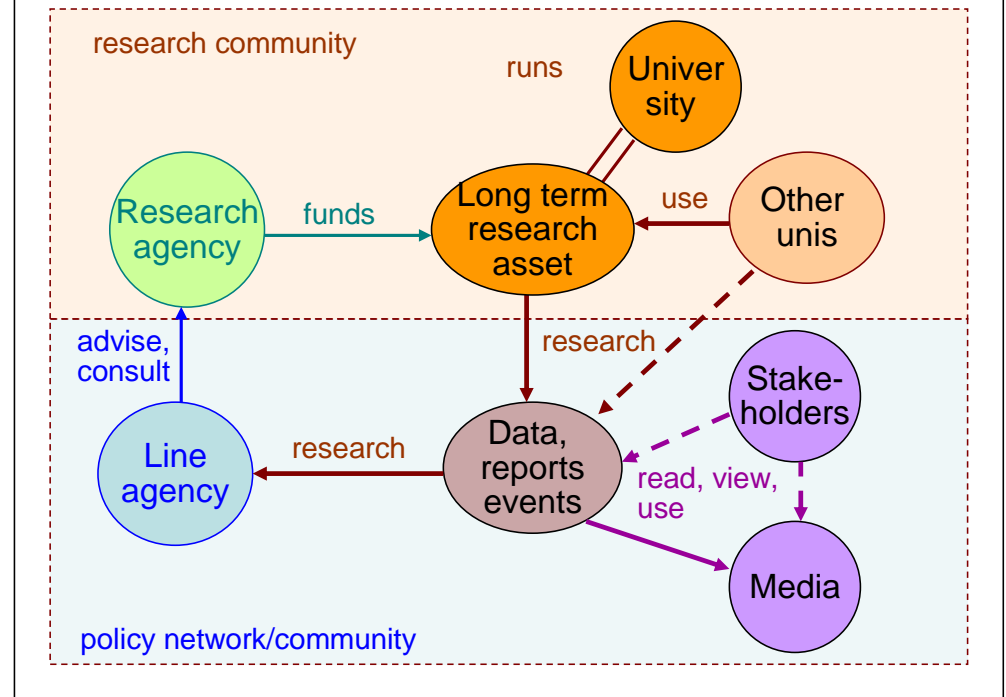
(ii) Episodic contracting



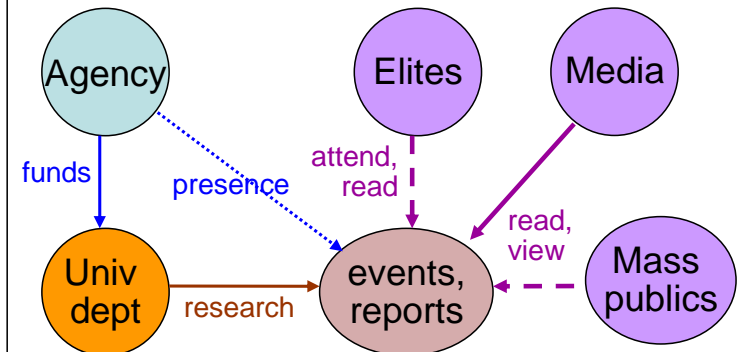
(iii) Strategic commissioning



(iv) Long term research asset



(v) Policy marketing and dissemination



And also with Parliament

Through the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

- This office provides independent, balanced analyses of topics in science and technology for both MPs and Peers
- The office publishes short briefings on relevant topics and also hosts events
- Input comes from a wide variety of sources including both academics and their research

Through Commons and Lords Select Committee Inquiries

- Committees set an agenda for inquiries they want to carry out
- They also ask for ideas for inquiries on Twitter or their webpages
- They get written and oral evidence from various sources including academics
- The outcome of an inquiry is a report, which Government is obliged to respond to

Through All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

- APPGs are composed of MPs and Peers who have an interest in a particular area, e.g. 'the aluminium industry', 'arts, health and wellbeing' and 'biodiversity' (they are a bit like university societies)
- They hold meetings on different topics with invited speakers who are sometimes academic researchers

Through Commons Library Responses to MPs Questions

- The House of Commons library provides a confidential service for MPs and their staff wherein they can submit requests to the library for answers to questions they have
- Academic research, as well as other sources of information, may contribute to the response

EIGHT WAYS RESEARCH GETS INTO PARLIAMENT*

* /eight ways you could get your research into Parliament

Through Political Researchers

- Some MPs employ researchers to work in their offices, carry out research and gather information for them
- An MP's position in Government, for example 'shadow secretary of state for health', will impact on the sorts of information the researcher is tasked with gathering

Through Commons Research Briefings and Lords Library Notes

- The House of Commons and House of Lords each have a library
- The Commons library has a number of subject specialists who research and write briefings on relevant topics
- The Lords library also produces briefings
- Some of the input comes from academics and their research

Through Commons Debate Packs

- When a debate is planned for a particular topic, for example 'shale gas', library specialists quickly compile briefing packs for MPs ahead of the debate
- Packs may include news items, press releases and parliamentary material
- They may also include information from research centres

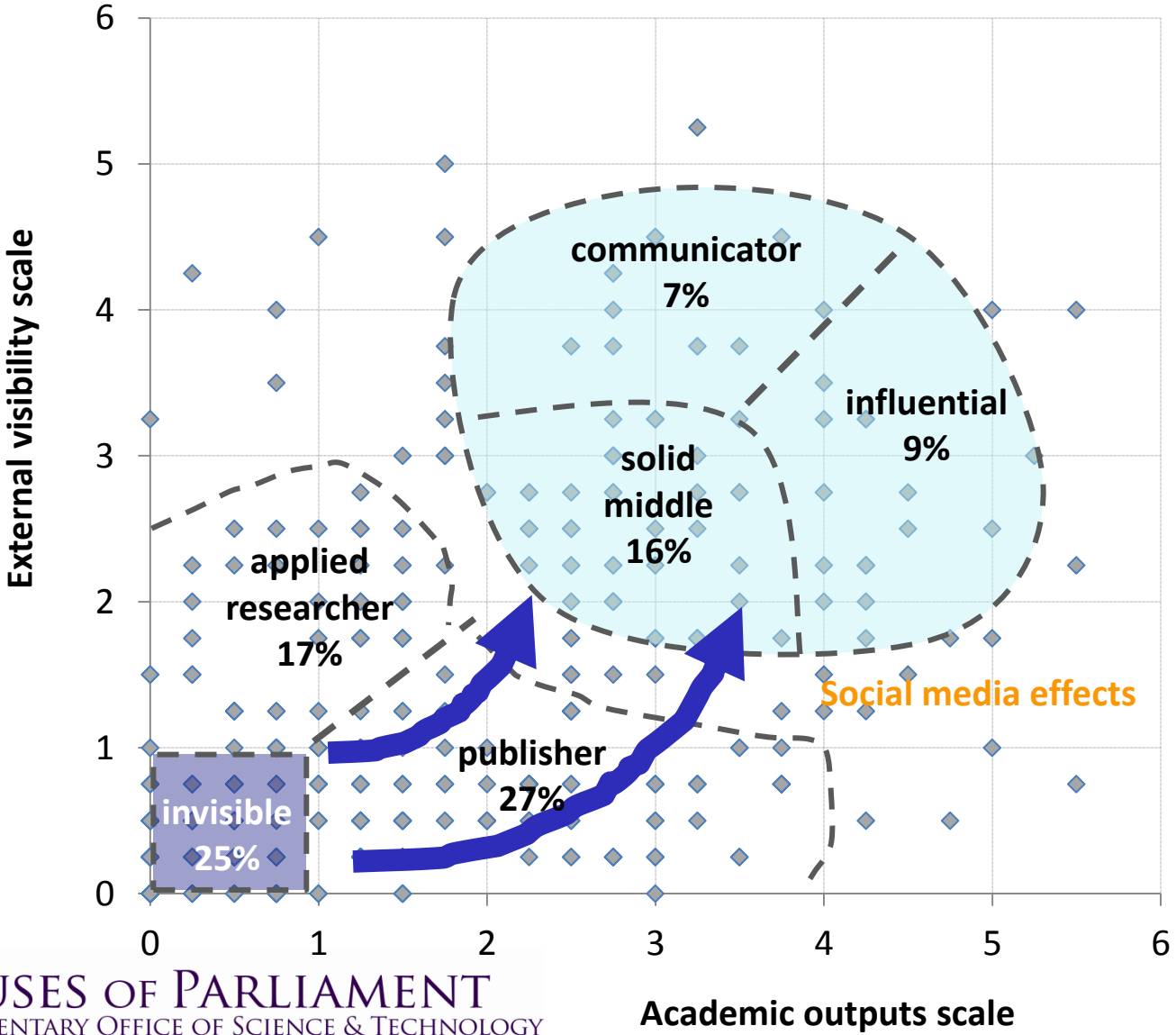
Through Direct Correspondence and Engagement with MPs and Peers

- MPs and Peers have specific areas of interest be on account of: the nature of their constituency; their political affiliation; or their general interests
- One of the ways they find out more about these areas of interest is through engaging with academics in relevant disciplines

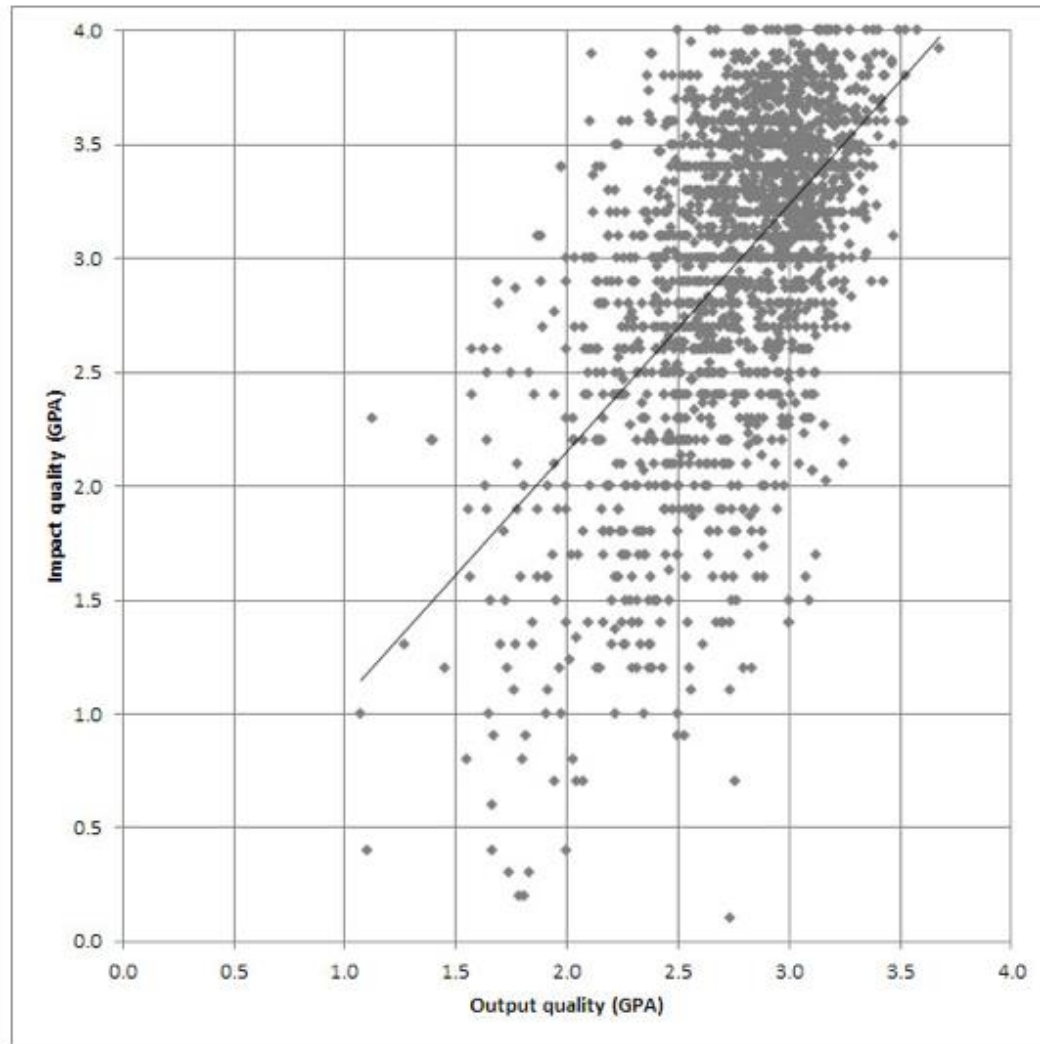
@SarahFoxen /5th October 2015



Can academics both publish and have influence?



And results from the UK Research Excellence Framework in 2014 agree

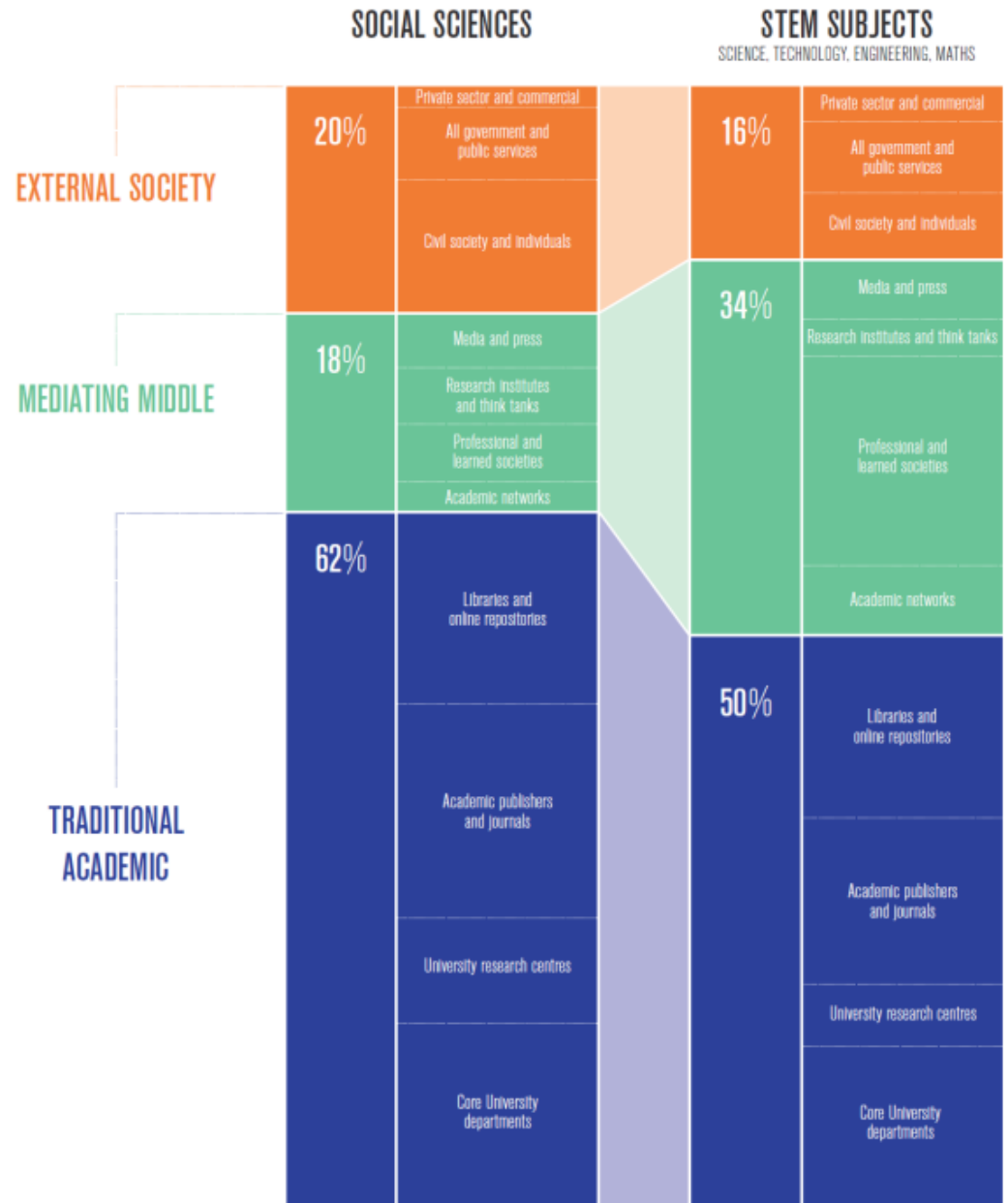


Five steps to creating influence

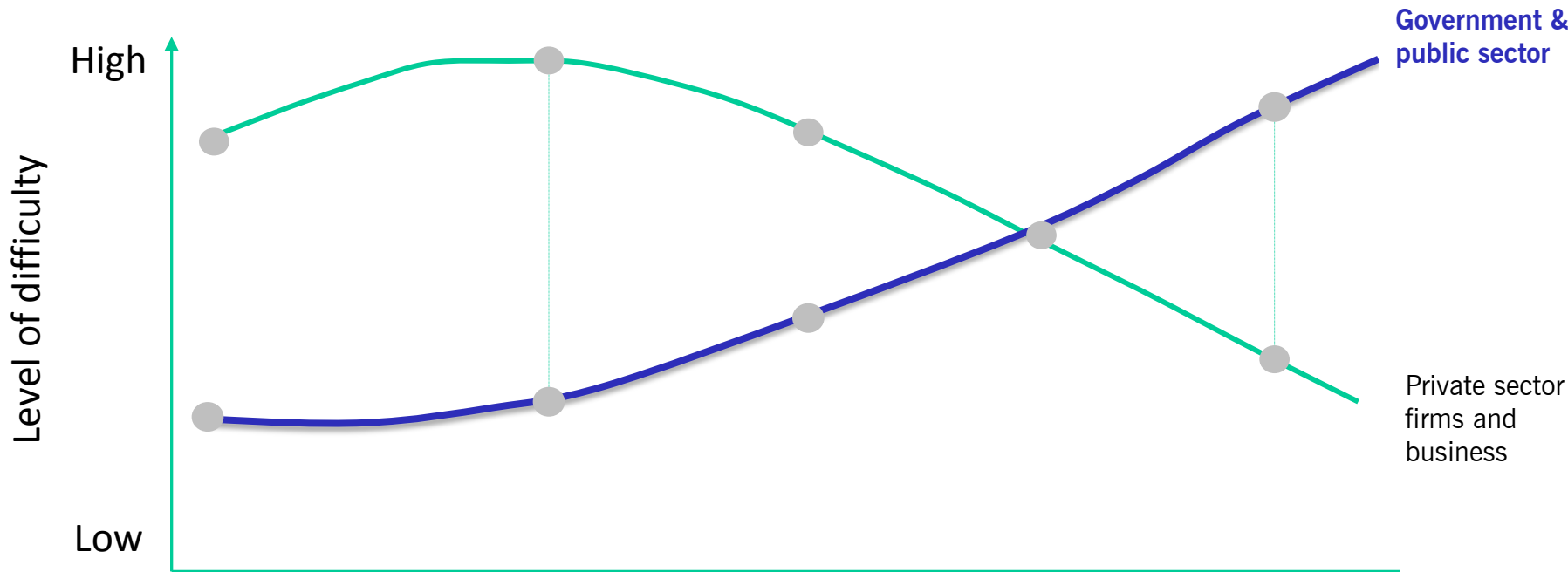
- Step 1: Think about what you research, how it might be relevant to policymakers, and therefore what types of outputs you produce.
- Step 2: Think about how you interact with intermediary organisations and research users.



A key problem for the arts and humanities and the social sciences is the relative lack of 'mediating middle' that builds long-term links and identifies impacts



Crunch points in the influence process vary for different sectors



- 1 & 2 Identifying potentially interested external organizations. And connecting with these organizations
- 3 Identifying a 'quid pro quo' in applying research
- 4 Finding traction for applying research within the organization
- 5 Building and extending the relationship
- 6 Demonstrating specific impacts or benefits to the organization

Five steps to creating influence

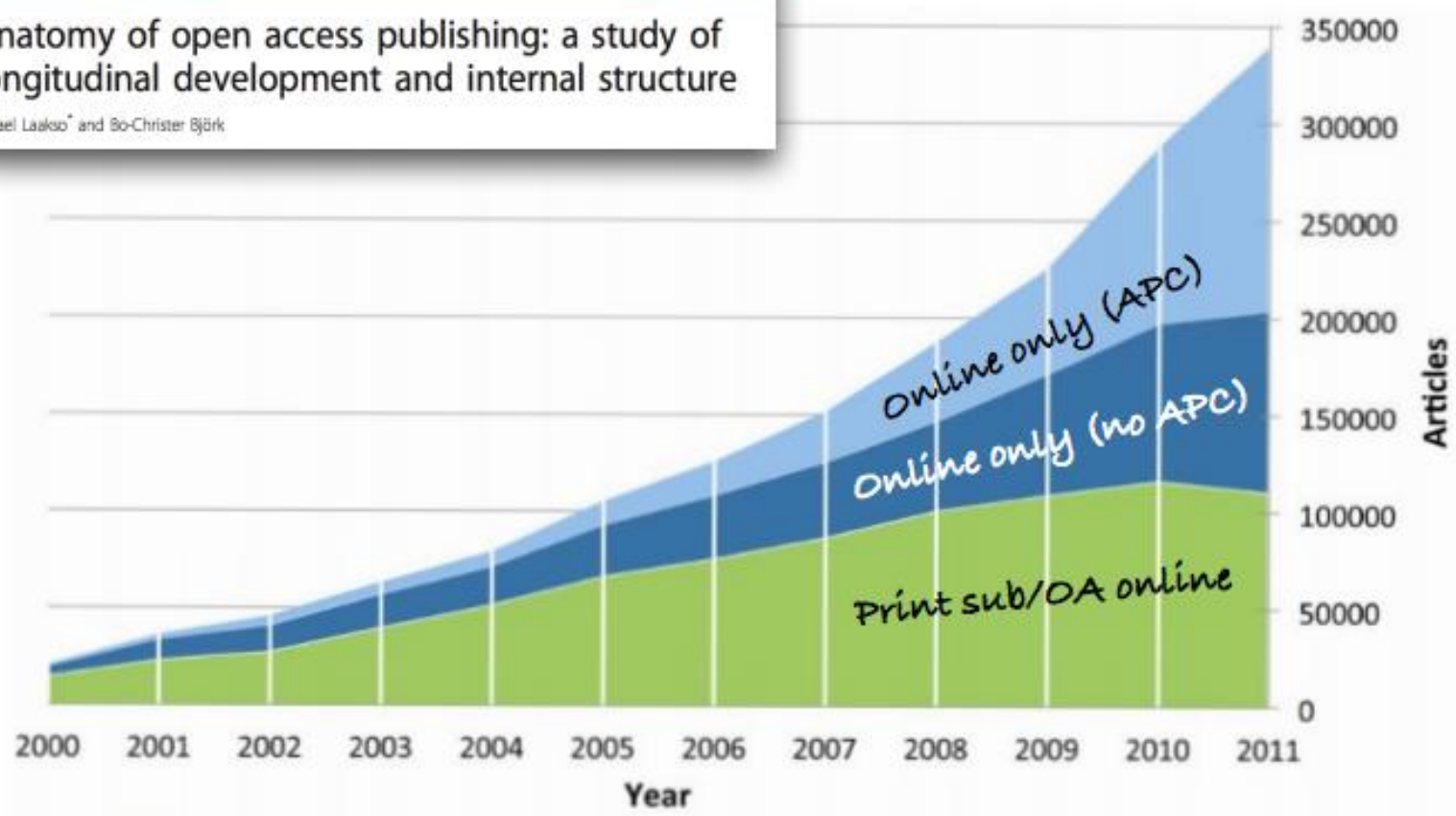
- Step 1: Think about what you research, how it might be relevant to policymakers, and therefore what types of outputs you produce.
- Step 2: Think about how you interact with intermediary organisations and research users.
- Step 3: Make your research more visible.



The increase in open access publishing in the UK



UK: 35% Green OA
UK: 5% Gold OA
World: 17% Gold OA



Five steps to creating influence

- Step 1: Think about what you research, how it might be relevant to policymakers, and therefore what types of outputs you produce.
- Step 2: Think about how you interact with intermediary organisations and research users.
- Step 3: Make your research more visible.
- Step 4: Build communication and dissemination plans into research projects early on.
- Step 5: Make full use of your university's resources (like online depositories, Expert directories, knowledge transfer schemes). And networking opportunities like conferences, fellowships and submit evidence.



Specific examples from REF: University of Sheffield Alcohol Policy

