

7 Connecting scholarly expertise to international policy practice at the United Nations¹

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Scholars have multiple venues for engagement in international policy processes, if they are willing and able to resist the many institutional barriers to doing so. The challenges to effective engagement are many, however, and resistances exist on both sides, from within the scholarly community and from within international bureaucracies themselves. In the chapter that follows I will reflect on my personal experiences to explore the policy engagement of scholars, considering the wide variety of ways scholars are connected with policy practitioners in contemporary United Nations (UN) affairs. I will begin by assessing general barriers to effective engagement before introducing some examples of institutional engagement that currently exist. I will continue with an elaboration of the concept of transnational policy networks as a synthetic concept that incorporates a wide variety of participants in contemporary global governance, one that often includes scholars and policy practitioners from international bureaucracies. I will illustrate the operation of a transnational policy network in the area of international sanctions, with particular reference to the various ways scholars have participated and have contributed to developments in the policy domain. The chapter concludes with some normative reflections on the particular challenges of international policy engagement by scholars.

Classic models of scholarly engagement with policy practice

The literature on policy engagement of scholars has grown considerably in recent years, in part due to the conference themes of two past presidents of the North American International Studies Association, Ann Tickner and Thomas Weiss. The literature generally describes four different mechanisms through which scholars become engaged in and influence public policy.² The first is the “trickle-down” model, suggested by Stephen M. Walt, which argues that new ideas emerge from academic “ivory towers” before gradually filtering down into the world of applied policy analysis and popular discourse.³ This does not necessarily involve any active agency or direct participation by individual scholars. The second is the model of scholars periodically moving in and out of policy positions, using their time out of office to replenish what Joseph Nye terms their “embedded intellectual capital,” which they draw on extensively during their time in the policy world.⁴ A third model is suggested by Ernest Wilson, who describes policy think tanks as important vehicles for individuals with scholarly credentials to transmit focused, policy-relevant knowledge to policy practitioners.⁵ A fourth model is both more *laissez-faire* and less immediate and draws broadly from the ideas of John Maynard Keynes to suggest that it is through the introduction of concepts and theories in their teaching and research that scholars participate in the policy world, in effect planting ideational seeds in the minds of those students who eventually go on to play a major role in policy within a generation or two.⁶ A fifth model of policy engagement is through active participation in forms of informal activity with international bureaucracies. Informal institutions, arrangements, and governance are increasingly common in contemporary international life,⁷ but policy engagement and interaction confront significant barriers on both sides—from scholars and from international bureaucracies.

Barriers to more effective interaction with UN institutions

At a recent conference hosted at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in April 2016 that I co-organized with colleagues from the UN University in Tokyo (UNU) on “Strengthening the UN’s Research Uptake,” we discussed a number of different barriers to effective engagement.⁸ Following an opening plenary on the UN’s needs for research from outside the organization, we discussed disincentives to engagement, challenges of access to information, translation difficulties, incompatible timelines, and difficulties in finding appropriate funding sources.

There are some strong disincentives to policy engagement. From the side of the scholarly community, policy engagement is often looked down upon as applied, rather than theoretical work. Younger scholars in research university settings are discouraged from policy engagement before reaching tenure. While there are clear advantages in policy engagement for those not interested in a full-time teaching and research career, most scholars in research institutions are advised to wait until they have established themselves professionally, and there are only a few instances in which policy engagement is identified as an important criterion for promotion in official university criteria. This is true even in interdisciplinary graduate schools of international affairs that recruit and train students for careers in policy settings. Moreover, once senior scholars are established with the security of tenure, they have already entered into routines in research that take them away from policy engagement. These disincentives obviously do not apply to policy-oriented think tanks, but think tanks are not usually associated with the most innovative research breakthroughs.

On the side of the UN, there are also disincentives to bringing in research from outside the organization. Research can be risky politically and is sometimes penalized, rather than rewarded by the organization. Policy entrepreneurs are rare, and it is often safer to keep one's head down and not risk offending Member States' sensitivities than it is to bring in scholarly ideas from outside the UN organization. As one participant in the UN Research Uptake Conference observed, "the UN system does not encourage engagement in research, and does not know how to make use of the research that is done within the organization, let alone from the outside."⁹ Agencies with strong operational roles are likely to cut research budgets first when they confront financial shortfalls. In addition, some of the better-funded UN agencies have large research staffs and budgets of their own and are threatened by outside engagements.

Beyond institutional disincentives on both sides, however, there are other barriers to effective engagement. Gaining access to research information inside the UN can be difficult for outside researchers. Access to some UN databases is restricted by agencies or by Member States, either to protect the privacy of individuals as in the case of refugees, or for reasons of state privacy, in the case of peacekeeping operations or decisions about the application of sanctions. It is also sometimes difficult for outside researchers to promote their ideas for research to UN agencies, particularly if they entail access to sensitive databases. In addition, research organizations located outside the vicinity of the UN's two major cities—New York and Geneva—have difficulties gaining

access, either for their researchers interested in conducting research, or for the presentation of research results. This is doubly unfortunate, since research insights from the peripheries (where much UN activity is focused) was described at the UN Research Uptake Conference as sorely needed by the UN. Those close to the UN may be sometimes too close to the organization to provide genuinely critical assessments of its activities, a point taken up in the conclusion of this chapter.

Problems of access are not restricted to researchers outside the UN system. UN practitioners at the Geneva Research Uptake Conference indicated that they have difficulty in accessing the latest scholarly research. UN Library resources are available, but it sometimes takes too long to access their holdings, particularly for those interested in the latest research findings or methods in a particular policy domain. The cost of journal subscriptions is prohibitive for most UN departments, and copyright restrictions keep the most recent research out of reach for practitioners.

Even if the information were available, however, it may be difficult to comprehend its relevance or applicability to a given problem, due to problems of translation of work produced in the scholarly world. Scholarly publications in leading academic journals are essentially the product of scholars writing for other scholars. Works published in the top journals tend to be full of coded references, either to pre-existing debates and schools of thought in the literature or to particular works published by other scholars. Citations and footnotes are frequently modes of shorthand or signaling between scholars, and in order to be published in high quality journals, a focus on methods and methodological innovation is required. Even if they can get access to scholarly publications, policy practitioners may find them inaccessible due to their attention to abstract theory and conceptual development. Reliance on the latest methodological innovations may also make it difficult for policy practitioners to appreciate fully the significance of a particular finding or research result, particularly those uncomfortable with mathematical abstractions and statistical analysis. This is problematic because it makes it difficult for policy practitioners to interpret data-based results, and given the sheer volume of research currently being produced, creates barriers for discerning which research results are reliable, and which are not.

The use of jargon and disciplinary abbreviation is common to all professions, not just the scholarly one. Problems of translation exist both ways, as UN practitioners also use jargon and coded language to describe internal practices, along with sometimes indecipherable acronyms that can be alienating to scholars. "IAWGs" (Inter-Agency

Working Groups) may be commonplace among UN officials, but are not immediately apparent to scholars outside the UN. Scholars participating in informal policy networks have to learn the language of expertise that constitutes and is necessary for their participation in a given field. Scholars working on UN sanctions, for example, have to be familiar with the shorthand communicated by references to UN Security Council resolution numbers alone, such as “the 1267 regime” or the implications of (UN Security Council Resolution) UNSCR 1989 and why its institutional innovations do not apply to other sanctions regimes.

It is not easy to translate a scholarly article into a policy paper, and vice versa, as I discovered in my work on UN sanctions. Most of my early publications on sanctions were policy reports or manuals, and the work had very little visibility in the scholarly world. Producing scholarly research papers required a re-engagement with the ongoing theoretical and methodological debates to situate the work in scholarly outlets. The same research project is capable of producing both scholarly and policy publications, but the research results cannot be presented in the same way. The forms of argument are very different, not to mention the length of the documents produced. Scholars interested in policy engagement need to learn how to write simply and succinctly. This does not come easily when one is accustomed to teaching students to appreciate the complexity of most subjects. The writing of bullet points does not come naturally to most scholars who immediately feel the need to qualify and elaborate on the simplified points.

The worlds of scholarly research and policy practice also differ dramatically in terms of the timelines to complete their work, another obstacle to effective engagement. Scholarly production timelines are invariably long, taking years for a major research undertaking, while policy practitioners typically want results in months, not years. It took six years from the launch of the Targeted Sanctions Consortium in 2009 to produce a book with a leading university press to present the results of the research.¹⁰ Practitioner’s guides were produced in the interim, but even those results took three years to produce.

Producing interim research publications can lead to problems of their own, however. The initial calculation of the effectiveness of UN sanctions was exaggerated. The figures were revised downward once the research incorporated additional cases, yet those initial figures are still quoted in some policy publications. A similar problem has been reported with regard to the highly influential Collier study on the reoccurrence of civil wars after peace settlements, which argued that a significant proportion of conflicts re-erupted within five years of their negotiated settlement.¹¹ It was a widely reported and influential finding

within the UN, one which was used to justify the creation of the UN's peace-building architecture. A later re-analysis of the results produced lower estimates, but the original stylized facts remained most frequently cited and implanted in the minds of policy-makers.

Finally, securing funding for policy-oriented research conducted outside the UN is often difficult. Cutbacks in government funding have affected both UN institutions and government-supported scholarly research foundations. Beyond the general reduction in government support, however, there is also inadequate funding available for research that genuinely crosses the boundaries between the scholarly and policy worlds. Swiss and US National Science Foundation and European Research Council funding for research can be significant—ranging from a few hundred thousand to over a million US dollars—if one is fortunate to secure it. However, even though some research funders now stipulate that project proposals be related to government policy priorities, they will not fund policy-applied work, particularly with a short time horizon. The scientific review committees of government research councils are composed of other scholars who often tend to look down on policy-applied research.

Even with new guidelines calling for policy applications, in practice, “policy application” tends to be left to the residuals. Decisions to grant an award are based on scientific merit, methodological sophistication, and conceptual innovation, not policy application.¹² Most proposals for policy application make reference to a proposed policy memorandum to be drafted or a policy briefing to be given at the conclusion of the research. Policy application tends to be considered useful, as a box to be ticked in an application, but it is rarely essential for the determination of funding.

Governments with an interest in a particular policy issue are often important sources for research support of policy-related research, either research on the activities of the UN or research on issues of interest to a particular UN agency or department. They are rarely able to provide substantial amounts, however, and are certainly not able to provide funds comparable to the amounts available from scientific research funding agencies. They tend to offer small grants, usually for single, one-off events like a conference or workshop. The standard model for funding tends to be a triangular one that is complex and difficult to manage. It typically entails an intergovernmental organization like the UN interested in the research, a think tank or university based research institute capable of conducting the research, and funding from a sympathetic, Member State with an interest in the subject.

Contemporary forms of scholarly engagement with UN agencies

Despite the institutional barriers to effective engagement, there are many illustrations of ways that the barriers can be overcome. A number of different forms of engagement were described at our recent conference on the UN's research uptake, models that varied, depending on the UN institution involved. The Development Policy and Analysis Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) described three different models of interaction with research communities it employs when preparing publications. The Division has a research network which consists of an international consortium of fixed membership of around 80 individuals who assist with the preparation of the publication *World Economic Prospects*. DESA also has *ad hoc* expert groups meetings, in which experts are identified for commissioning different background papers. Finally, it has a multi-layer network model, including experts from a broad spectrum of different research networks where more than 500 experts contribute to different elements of a final report.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has similar institutional models of interaction with scholars. It also draws on a flexible, *ad hoc* network of researchers who are commissioned to provide the theoretical foundations and some of the core research for flagship reports of the organization. UNCTAD also convenes expert group meetings, a series of seminars involving institutions in Geneva, and regular meetings with the UN University's affiliated World Institute for Development Economic Research (WIDER), based in Helsinki. The Rome-based UN agencies have set up the Commission on Food Security and subsequently formed a bureau and panel of high level experts, to identify/deal with key issues of food security, based on open calls to participate in reports. While they had success in obtaining the participation of representatives from the private sector and civil society, they had difficulties gaining the participation of individuals from academia (perhaps for some of the reasons discussed in the preceding section). The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) model of engagement includes more than 100 scholars in addition to more than 600 representatives of industries in some of its major meetings. The UN's Department of Political Affairs Mediation Support Unit (MSU) engages scholarly expertise in peace processes with its academic advisory council and use of country experts.

Institutional forms of engagement with the UN system

The preceding illustrations suggest a variety of different institutional forms of engagement linking the worlds of scholarship and policy practice at the UN, forms that appear to vary according to their continuity and degree of formal institutionalization. Among the most institutionalized is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), probably the best known and perhaps most influential of ongoing arrangements. Environmental scientists from outside the UN organization produce annual reports and provide regular assessment reports on progress toward achieving climate change abatement goals. The MSU of the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) of the Department of Political Affairs has a longstanding Academic Advisory Council that meets on an annual basis and provides both general advice and counsel specific to on-going negotiations. The International Panel on Social Progress (IPSP) would be another example of this continuous and relatively institutionalized form of engagement.

One of the most visible, but less institutionalized forms of scholarly engagement with the UN is the participation of scholars in the authorship of major annual reports produced by different bodies of the organization. Annual publications like the *World Development Report*, the *Human Development Report*, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC)s *World Drug Report* typically have different themes, changing guest editors, and a group of scholars who assist Secretariat officials with the drafting of portions of the reports. Many of the annual reports contain appendices with statistical updates and generally follow the same general structure from year to year. They routinely bring on a team of outside scholars to work on the substance of the reports, but the composition of the teams vary from year to year since they are selected on the basis of the topic or annual theme of the report. Some organizations have ongoing academic advisory councils to help them select the scholars most qualified to guest edit the annual reports. Others, such as UNCTAD, hire guest editors from outside the organization to produce and edit special thematic reports.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are a form of contractual, one-off institutional engagement between scholars and UN policy practitioners. Partnerships typically entail contractual agreements between intergovernmental institutions (or sometimes states on their behalf) and outside individuals or institutional entities to perform a particular task within a specified period of time. Commissioned reports for Member States or UN agencies are forms of partnership. For example,

the commissioning of Brown University's Watson Institute by the governments of Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland to produce a report in 2006 reviewing different mechanisms for addressing due process inadequacies at the UN level with regard to the sanctioning of individuals was a PPP. There were discrete deliverables (a policy report and policy briefings), produced within a specified time frame (during 2006), on a subject of mutual interest and concern (individual human rights), for which compensation was provided.

A more routine, but less structured form of engagement is much more informal than the three forms considered above (advisory boards, periodic reports, and PPPs). It is the convening of seminars to disseminate the products of new scholarly research to larger policy communities. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD routinely convene seminars in Geneva, while the UN Library regularly hosts launches for recently published books. The Graduate Institute, Geneva, convenes special seminars three or four times a year in which leading scholars of governance and international organizations present their latest scholarly research to a group of UN policy practitioners invited by the Director-General's Office. The Swiss government has created a series of policy platforms to facilitate debate and policy development in international Geneva. The platforms are thematically based and involve individuals from the UN, from member states, from the private business sector, and from academe. The platforms convene seminars, hold briefings, organize conferences during ongoing negotiation sessions within international organizations in Geneva, and conduct research. Examples include the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, the Water Resources Platform, and the Internet Governance Platform.

In some instances, special multi-stakeholder processes are occasionally convened to address emerging policy issues and concerns. Here the role of scholars tends to be less visible and central, since state officials, practitioners from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and representatives of private sector business firms tend to be more prominent. A small number of scholars participated in the Interlaken Process in 1998 and 1999, designed to develop the instrument of targeted financial sanctions at the UN, and one team of scholars drafted the manual that came out of the process (another example of a PPP). Scholars were more prominent in the organization and management of the subsequent sanctions processes. The Bonn-Berlin Process on arms embargoes, travel bans, and aviation embargoes was co-organized by Professor Michael Brzoska (a scholar then working at the Bonn International Center for Conversion, BICC). Professor Peter Wallensteen played an important role in organizing the Stockholm Process on the

Implementation of Targeted Sanctions (SPITS) in 2003. He worked closely with the Swedish government hosting the four meetings that, due to the focus on implementation, engaged more representatives of governments than of the private sector or academe. More recently (in 2014) the High Level Review on UN sanctions implementation, again with the support of individual Member States, facilitated the formation of an Inter-Agency Working Group within the UN's Department of Political Affairs, but this time the role of scholars was less central to the process. The World Summits on Internet Governance and meetings leading up to the signing of the Private Military and Security Companies Convention would be other examples of multi-stakeholder processes. Both also involved scholars, though primarily at the early stages of the processes.

Transnational policy networks

Considered together, these different illustrations of informal forms of scholarly engagement go beyond the four classic models outlined at the beginning of this chapter and constitute what I have termed elsewhere as participation in “transnational policy networks.”¹³ This idea is based on self-reflection from my research on UN-targeted sanctions and participation in a network of specialists from government, IGOs, private sector enterprises, and scholars interested in the domain. The idea of transnational policy networks (TPNs) is broadly analogous to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a specialized “field” of expertise.¹⁴ They are constituted by a group of individuals who share a common expertise, a common technical language to communicate that expertise, broadly shared normative concerns, but not necessarily agreement on specific policy alternatives. They typically include trans-governmental networks,¹⁵ but go beyond them to include actors other than state officials—actors from the private sector, from international bureaucracies, from international legal practice, and sometimes from academia. TPNs often involve PPPs, but the form of policy engagement is different, because it tends to be more informal and extend for longer periods of time than most PPPs. And unlike regulatory standards schemes or most multi-stakeholder initiatives, TPNs are engaged in the development of policy initiatives and policy innovation, and they are likely to be found in emerging issue domains or in areas where policy is fluid and undergoing rapid change. Different individuals in TPNs tend to play different functional roles within them, they sometimes shift roles in network activities, and they occasionally rotate from one institutional vantage point to another over the course of their career.

Thinking about the different players and their respective roles in a TPN brings individual agency into the core of the norms literature, which, until recently, has tended to cede agency to norms at the expense of individual players. While the literature on norms identifies policy entrepreneurs as crucial actors in the articulation and early development of international norms, there are other actors involved in TPNs. In addition to policy entrepreneurs, individuals who represent state actors, but not necessarily official state policy, often play an important role as brokers of network activities. They can be channels of influence for scholars and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they can provide resources for policy innovation, and they can perform important roles by convening (and therefore legitimating) activities at the UN, an institution where states remain the preeminent actors. There are also gatekeepers in TPNs, institutional or disciplinary conservatives who discourage radical changes or defend past practices that they originally helped develop. Some players act as guardians of expertise, a position acquired by virtue of their previous roles or past accumulated experience. Given the frequent turnover in positions in international organizations, this is commonly a role played by scholars who have studied a particular issue over many years, much longer than recently appointed policy practitioners. Finally, there are legitimators, authoritative individuals who can provide justifications for unorthodox policy positions, often a role played by scholars knowledgeable about the scholarly literature, historical trends, or in a position to draw on the latest research methods to analyze issues from outside of day-to-day policy practice.

Based on my participation in the analysis of UN targeted sanctions over the course of the past 20 years, I have observed a number of different ways in which scholars participate in (and can sometimes contribute to) policy practice through their active participation in TPNs. First and foremost, scholars can conduct policy-oriented research that policy practitioners are interested in, but often do not have the time to conduct themselves. The new databases and case studies prepared by the Targeted Sanctions Consortium have been used to assess the impacts and effectiveness of UN-targeted sanctions for both UN Secretariat officials and for individual Member States. Scholarly participants in the consortium have been called upon to present the results of research to UN panels of experts and Member States, have produced short reports on the effectiveness of different combinations of targeted sanctions for members of the Sanctions Unit in the UN Secretariat, have offered short courses for newly elected Member States as they have joined the UN Security Council, and have offered advice on a variety of other subjects.

Second, scholars can organize and conduct training workshops to disseminate the results of policy relevant research, explore new concepts and ideas, and simulate alternative scenarios. Academics can serve as agents for policy-practitioner principals who, on their own, could not initiate discussions of certain topics or suggest innovative policy proposals without attracting the attention or potential wrath of other colleagues within their institutions (or elsewhere within the TPN, typically from states). This is something the sanctions project at the Watson Institute at Brown University did during the early 2000s, simulating alternatives to the comprehensive sanctions against Iraq in 2001 and trying out new types of sanctions in simulations involving all fifteen members of the UN Security Council in 2003. Given the length of time they devote to a given subject, scholars can put a contemporary policy challenge in perspective and suggest how things actually once were worse, or better, as the case may be. The sanctions area has evolved so rapidly during the past 20 years that new participants in the TPN rarely appreciate how much progress has been made in the ability of private sector firms to implement targeted financial sanctions, given the improved specification of identifying information and ability to use name recognition software to filter through accounts.

Third, scholars can co-direct and draft manuals coming out of multi-stakeholder processes (such as the Interlaken, Bonn-Berlin, and Stockholm Processes between 1998 and 2003, already described). Scholars participate in these processes, not only by posing critical questions in plenary sessions, but also by serving as rapporteurs, co-chairing sessions, or engaging in third-track diplomacy with government officials obstructing progress on a draft outcome document. Scholars were tasked with drafting the manuals that came out of each of the three processes and disseminating the results of the processes in subsequent training workshops for Member States and UN Secretariat personnel.

Fourth, scholars can sometimes perform important convening functions themselves. This may come in the form of meetings to explore an issue, define a research agenda, or raise points too sensitive for government or intergovernmental sponsorship. Scholars can also perform an intermediary function, for example by inviting officials from the private sector to meet with officials from IGOs to discuss policy options in an exploratory setting. It can be difficult for policy practitioners to do this on their own—either for potential fear of Member State opposition to initiatives from the UN Secretariat or because of concerns about opening themselves up to potential lobbying from private sector interests. Scholars can learn a great deal about

contemporary policy challenges and from listening to the potential challenges of policy implementation by convening meetings between the UN and private sector institutions.

Fifth, scholars can conduct briefings either for public audiences or for closed sessions with government officials. Such briefings not only disseminate the results of research, but they can be used to adjust the terms of debate, either in public or policy settings. Briefings for public audiences are important for raising the general quality of public discourse about a subject, while seminars conducted for policy officials can improve the quality of internal deliberations, particularly if new conceptual distinctions or modes of analysis of effectiveness are introduced.

Sixth, scholars can draft independent reports on emerging policy-relevant issues (participate in PPPs on behalf of states or intergovernmental organizations), integrating knowledge from different disciplines, providing documentation for policy debates, organizing policy options, and legitimizing ideas and proposals. Scholars are able to perform a legitimization function because they possess the authority of expertise. Scholars are ultimately accountable to a larger community of peers (regulated by the peer review process for scholarly publications and reputation), rather than to superiors in a hierarchical organization. As a result, scholars have the independence both to legitimize and to criticize. Scholars can also both suggest the need for policy reform and sometimes even advocate for it. This is something the Watson Institute did with the “Watson Report” in 2006. The original report was commissioned by three Member States (a PPP) and was credited with organizing policy options at the UN Security Council, but its subsequent 2009 report went further to advocate for the creation of a review mechanism at the UN level.

Conclusion

Despite the barriers to scholarly engagement in UN policy practices outlined earlier in this chapter, there are a great many institutional forms of participation for those interested and able to participate. They vary, primarily according to their degree of institutionalization and duration. Some are relatively *ad hoc*, one-off engagements, such as seminars and multi-stakeholder processes. They emerge if funding is available and last as long as funding continues. Others are more institutionalized and vary according to the form of engagement. Formal advisory councils are rare, but the most institutionalized and relatively permanent. The use of scholarly expertise in annual reports is also

fairly institutionalized, though the scholars vary from year to year. Scholarly participation in TPNs is more informal and less institutionalized, but if there are benefits to both sides, their engagement can be extended over a number of years and begin to approximate the engagement of scholars in formal advisory councils.

In general terms, effective collaboration between scholars and UN policy practitioners are the product of years of relationship building. UN practitioners need to know their collaborators, not just from their CVs and scholarly reputations, but from years of sustained engagement and productive exchange. The problem for the practitioner is that there is so much information and data available on the Internet, that they need scholars they can trust to help them filter out the good from the bad. Strong relationships can be fostered by engaging policy practitioners at the outset of the research and by keeping them involved throughout the process, rather than waiting until the end of the research process to present final results. Too much scholarly advice to policy practitioners is in the form of criticism of their activities, frequently without adequate appreciation of the time and institutional constraints under which policy is formed and implemented. The criticism is often placed at the end of a concluding chapter of a book or report, resulting in a one-way form of communication. Ongoing engagement with policy practitioners from the start of a project (where they can be engaged in selecting some of the research questions asked), with periodic interactions to test preliminary findings mid-way through the research process, are more effective forms of engagement because they create trust and strengthen relationships. Relationships have constantly to be renewed (or created, given the high level of turnover within the policy domain).

While the benefits of scholarly access to policy practice can be numerous—to test theories, obtain new insights, learn about the complexity of decision-making, and to influence policy formation—access comes with certain responsibilities. There are some important normative and ethical considerations of which scholars engaged in policy need to be aware, what Stanley Hoffmann once described as the “peculiar problems” of scholarly engagement in the policy process.¹⁶ Hoffmann observed that “in their relations with the real world, the scholars are torn between irrelevance and absorption.”¹⁷ He perceptively noted that the practice of international relations is often “an insider’s game” among policy practitioners, and he was particularly insightful about the slippery slope of policy engagement.¹⁸

Given the ongoing, iterative nature of the work of TPNs, there is always a built-in constraint against saying anything too radical or

critical. There are ways of being critical, but denouncing pronouncements in public meetings (“speaking truth to power”) are not advisable if one wishes to retain access to and participation in the policy network. This is a problem common to all research dependent on elite access, one that journalists also face. As Hoffmann warned, there is often a trade-off between maintaining continued access and public criticism of a given set of policies. It requires both learning patience and practicing diplomacy, two things that are not always learned, rewarded, or practiced in the academy.

The privilege of academic tenure gives many of us the freedom to study and say what we think is important. Just as the institution of sovereignty entails both rights and responsibilities, however, so, too, does the institution of tenure in higher education. The challenge is figuring out how best to navigate the terrain between maintaining access and speaking critically; one sometimes has to decide when principle matters more than continued access. The desire to have one’s policy work taken seriously and acted upon can lead to a form of self-censorship that can compromise the independent, critical edge of scholarly inquiry. And if we begin to compromise that standard, we undermine the basis of the authority of scholarly expertise itself.

A related challenge is that those who specialize in the study of the UN and its operations can become so close to the UN that it becomes difficult for them to provide genuinely fresh and original criticisms of its operations. Participation in TPNs requires the appropriation of a language of expertise that differentiates members of the network from those who are located outside of it. It is striking, for example, to note the extent to which specialized sub-fields in the scholarly world distinguishing between sanctions, mediation, and peace-building specialists replicate the institutional pathologies that hinder inter-agency cooperation on a common strategic framework within the Department of Political Affairs in the UN Secretariat.

Finally, with regard to the funding of research, for reasons described earlier in this chapter, many scholars seek out government funding to support their policy-applied research. Government funding is more likely to ensure the influence of their research results, but there are times when government funding should be avoided, to prevent excessive interference in the content of research. We encountered some of these challenges in our research in the 2006 “Watson Report,” upsetting some of the legal specialists in the governments that sponsored our research by not taking a more uncompromising position on individual human rights and by making statements in our independent report that differed from the common position of the “like-minded states” group

(of which all three of our sponsors were members). The lesson here is that states, IGOs like the UN, and NGOs for that matter, need to recognize that this is one of the risks of commissioning scholarly based research. While they might be able to gain credibility from endorsements derived from the authority of scholarly expertise, they cannot control the outcomes of research.

Scholarly engagements with the UN system can be beneficial for both scholars and policy practitioners. The interactions are not always easy, however, and in addition to structural barriers to effective engagement, both parties have to navigate difficult normative issues. There are a great many different institutional forms of engagement, but in the final analysis, relationships of trust are essential for effective engagement. Once trust and credibility are established, it is easier for both scholars and policy practitioners to navigate the normative challenges both confront.

Notes

- 1 A few sections of this text are adapted from Thomas Biersteker, "Scholarly Participation in Transnational Policy Networks: The Case of Targeted Sanctions" in Mariano E. Bertucci and Abraham F. Lowenthal (eds) *Scholars, Policymakers and International Affairs: Finding Common Cause* (Baltimore, Md. and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 137–154. This version develops the points first introduced in that essay and offers reflections drawn from a recent conference on strengthening the UN's research uptake, co-organized by the Graduate Institute, Geneva and the UN University, Tokyo in Geneva during April 2016.
- 2 I am grateful to Mariano E. Bertucci for suggesting three of the four elements of this typology.
- 3 Stephen M. Walt, "The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8 (2005): 40.
- 4 Joseph Nye, "International Relations: The Relevance of Theory to Practice," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 657.
- 5 Ernest J. Wilson III, "Is There Really a Scholar-Practitioner Gap? An Institutional Analysis," *PS, Political Science and Politics* 40, no. 1 (2007): 149.
- 6 John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1936), Chapter 24, concluding paragraph.
- 7 Randall W. Stone, "Informal Governance in International Organizations," *Review of International Organizations* 8, no. 2 (2013): 121–136.
- 8 I benefitted from my collaboration with both Sebastian von Einsidel and David Malone in this enterprise.
- 9 "Strengthening the UN's Research Uptake: Conference Report," Co-published by the UN University, Tokyo and the Programme for the Study of International Governance, Graduate Institute, Geneva, <http://gradua>

teinstitute.ch/home/research/centresandprogrammes/international-governance.html.

- 10 Thomas J. Biersteker, Sue E. Eckert, and Marcos Tourinho (eds) *Targeted Sanctions: The Impacts and Effectiveness of UN Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- 11 Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, "Understanding Civil War: A New Agenda," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 3–12.
- 12 One of the reviewer comments in a recent proposal rejection I received stated: "This does not seem to be scientific research but rather seems to be policy related work that is (and should be) done by international organizations."
- 13 Biersteker, "Scholarly Participation in Transnational Policy Networks: The case of Targeted Sanctions," 137–154.
- 14 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice (Le sens pratique)*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990). A field is a structured social space with its own rules, roles, hierarchies, and range of legitimate views.
- 15 Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).
- 16 Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. James Der Derian (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), 233.
- 17 Ibid., 235.
- 18 Ibid., 236.