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## The importance of feedback: Policy transfer, translation and the role of communication

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In recent years, translation has begun to be employed in multidisciplinary policy studies as a more constructivist alternative to the established policy transfer literature. While both transfer and translation acknowledge the complex nature of communication in the adaptation of policies to new contexts, they are yet to investigate the impact of communication types on the modification of policies. This study draws upon public relations theory in order to develop four modes of translation in the transfer of policy. The modes are utilized as a means of illustrating how two-way communication between both borrowers and lenders, and borrowers and policy stakeholders is most likely to increase the chances of policy success. The practicality of the theoretical model is illustrated through examples of congestion charge translation in Stockholm and Greater Manchester.

**Keywords:** policy transfer; translation; communication; public relations theory; policy success; congestion charges; Stockholm; Greater Manchester

### Introduction

Policy leaders do not always have enough resources to process all the necessary information to produce the most effective solutions to complex problems. Under these circumstances, one of the most efficient ways to yield a plausible policy alternative is to benchmark an example already in use by others. In this light, policy transfer can be seen as a practical approach to policy analysis. Policy transfer research has evolved considerably over the last two decades, and has taken onboard ideas from other fields, including geography (Marsh and Evans 2012). Still, there may be ways in which the policy transfer literature could be further developed by integrating ideas from multidisciplinary policy studies, which we will refer to here as translation (Freeman 2009; McCann and Ward 2013). In particular, we suggest that the relatively greater emphasis in translation on communication could help to deepen understanding of the policy transfer process.

While both the policy transfer and the translation literatures have drawn attention to the need to understand communicative processes (Wolman and Page 2002; Johnson and

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Hagström 2005), the impact which different forms of communication have on the movement of policies remains relatively unexplored. This means that there are gaps in our knowledge concerning whether one-way and two-way communications between policy lenders and receivers lead to different types of transfer or translation, and what the impact is of borrower–stakeholder communications. In addition, although policy transfer research has discussed policy success (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Marsh and Sharman 2009; Squires and Lord 2012), there are still gaps to bridge regarding the ways in which different forms of communication may contribute to the chances of successful policy transfer.

The aim of the present study is to contribute to research on the movement of policies by clarifying the role of communication, and discussing communication processes which can help to promote the chances of policy success. To address these issues, this study outlines the contributions of policy transfer and translation and introduces communication theory through the adaptation of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public relations (PR) model. On the basis of the PR model, four modes of translation in the process of policy transfer are presented; distorted, rational, discrete and democratic. The four modes are discussed with reference to policy success and failure, and finally, the study illustrates the models through examples of the translation of congestion charges in Stockholm and Greater Manchester. We find that Stockholm was able to successfully introduce a congestion charge policy through using discretionary translation, with elements of democratic translation. This involved two-way communication with the policy lender as well as some two-way communication with local citizens. In contrast, the Greater Manchester scheme, which was rejected in a referendum, was based more on rational translation and involved only one-way communication with policy lenders and the public.

### **Theories of transfer and translation**

A frequent starting point in discussions of policy transfer is Dolowitz and Marsh's (1996, 357) definition, which views policy transfer as 'the process by which actors borrow policies developed in one setting to develop programmes and policies within another'<sup>1</sup>. The literature may be seen to centre around investigations of agents, processes and outputs of policy transfer, along with obstacles to policy-oriented learning, and includes process, practice, ideational, comparative and multi-level approaches (Evans 2009). It is important to note that modification and synthesis of policies has long been understood to take place. Policy transfer researchers have been able to account for different degrees of transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 2000; Rose 2005), and more recent research has attempted to further emphasize complex processes of hybridization (Evans 2009) and 'indigenisation' (Stone 2012). An attempt to explicate the communicative processes on which the borrowing and adaptation of policies is based was made by Wolman and Page (2002), who highlighted the motivations of information senders in relation to policy transfer, and revealed the difficulties that receivers have in assessing the quality of information. It has been noted how most policy transfer research is based upon a realist ontology and a positivist or critical realist epistemology (Marsh and Evans 2012). This approach makes it possible for policy transfer research to discuss policy success, although the difficulties of defining success are recognized (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Marsh and Sharman 2009; Squires and Lord 2012).

Despite the increasing maturity of policy transfer research, it has been subject to challenges from translation, which also seeks to examine the movement of policies and

programmes from one location to another, but is based on a more constructivist ontology. We use the term translation to refer to the emerging multidisciplinary literature which stresses the importance of temporal and spatial contexts (Johnson and Hagström 2005; Carstensen 2010; Freeman 2009), including research from a geographical perspective, around the theme of policy mobility (McCann 2011; Peck 2011; McCann and Ward 2013). Translation has been defined as ‘an imitation process where meaning is constructed by temporally and spatially disembedding policy ideas from their previous context and using them as a model for altered political structures in a new context’ (Johnson and Hagström 2005, 370). Translation emphasizes intersubjectivity in communication, and therefore, even when senders attempt to spread truthful, high quality information, the receiver may interpret the message differently from how the sender intended (Johnson and Hagström 2005). In this way, the role of the receiver is elevated, as translation focuses on the way that policy ideas have to be created anew when they are applied and appropriated to their context (Carstensen 2010). Thus, translation represents an ongoing process of (re)interpretation, or (re)mobilization (Peck 2011). Accordingly, Freeman (2009, 441) makes the case that ‘The sense of “source” or “origin” is simply a translation we have failed to reconstruct’.

We think that there may be some benefits to the translation approach to communication, due to the emphasis on ways in which communicative processes not only shape decision-makers’ understanding of policies in other contexts, but also the ways in which they attempt to reconstruct these policies in a new location. This is not to suggest that translation should replace transfer as the lens through which to study the movement of policies. Indeed, we share with other researchers on policy transfer a concern for policy success, something that is more difficult to analyse under social constructivist approaches, as policies may be seen as having no role outside of the way they are discursively constructed (Marsh and Evans 2012). Thus, we seek to utilize and adapt translation’s emphasis on communication and modification within a more mainstream policy transfer framework. In the remainder of this study, we will use the term translation to refer to reconstitutive processes, centring on communication, in policy transfer.

As with the transfer literature, translation is related to the concept of policy learning. While policy learning is subject to great variation in understanding, a broad definition of learning is the ‘updating of beliefs’ (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013, 599). Transfer is built upon the premise of learning; indeed, some degree of learning is necessary in the movement of a policy from one context to another (Dolowitz 2009). Learning about a policy does not necessarily mean that it will be used though, as policy-makers may draw ‘negative lessons’ and decide not to introduce the policy (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, 9). Despite the importance of learning for the movement of policies, there is great debate as to how learning takes place. For instance, Dolowitz (2009) argues that the policy learning literature is divided between that of ‘lesson drawing’ which presumes that a rational process of learning takes place (Mossberger 2000; Rose 2005), and that of ‘information cascades’ which seeks to highlight the degree to which there is a drift towards suboptimal forms of learning from the international community (Levi-Faur 2002; Nelson and Morrissey 2003). According to a typology of policy learning developed by Dunlop and Radaelli (2013), translation most closely fits with reflexive learning (i.e. deliberation), and bargaining and social interaction (Stone 2012). The translation approach to learning can be understood as means-end analysis or as an ‘adaptive’ process (Simon 1996). It is two-fold, as first it involves attempting to correlate goals in the sensed world (i.e. a desired state of affairs) and actions in the world of process (existing state of affairs), and

second, it attempts to find differences between these two states and find the processes that will erase the differences. The type of learning that takes place under translation can be contrasted with the epistemic communities approach, which is concerned with how 'rationality, science, and experts' advice' may lead to policy changes (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013, 604), and that of learning in the shadow of hierarchy, which is concerned with the extent to which reflexivity is constrained due to issues such as bureaucracy controlled by elected politicians, or loan conditionality (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013).

There are now a range of theories which seek to further understanding of the ways in which policies and ideas move. Still, despite the abundance of theoretical work in this area, there is relatively little understanding of the communication processes involved. This is significant, as there are many possible forms of communication in the translation of policies. For example, the receiver may or may not give feedback to the sender, and communication may be ongoing or time-limited. This raises questions concerning the ways in which differing forms of communication may impact upon the translation process. We suggest that communication can help to explain the degree of translation that takes place, that is, is translation meant as a quick fix, or as part of continuous inquiry? Similarly, to what extent is the policy modified, and what role do policy stakeholders play? The next section will further explore these issues.

### **Adaptation of the PR model to explain translation processes in policy transfer**

Policy translation requires two or more actors to communicate policy-relevant information, through either one-way or two-way communication patterns. While translation acknowledges the complexity of these communication patterns, the relevant actors in the process are a policy lender, a borrower and policy stakeholders in the borrower location. Lenders and borrowers are those with a degree of power or influence over the policy process, such as decision-makers and policy experts at local, regional or supranational levels of governance. More than one lender may be drawn upon, and the roles are changeable, with lenders also acting as borrowers. Also, policies may be subject to chains of translation and adaptation. Still, in terms of the basic units of policy translation, there are two main types of communicative relationships: (1) communication between a lender and a borrower and (2) between a borrower and its policy stakeholders. Both these types can be divided along the lines of one- and two-way communication, yielding a total of four modes of communication. In this sense, the PR model developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) can be a good tool to diagnose which type of translation the communication is likely to lead to, because the PR model can illustrate the extent to which policy-relevant information and/or knowledge are exchanged.

According to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) PR theory, communicative relationships between information senders and receivers can be modelled into four modes of relations in line with the direction(s) of communication between them: publicity, public information, asymmetric two-way and symmetric two-way (Grunig and Hunt 1984). The press agency/publicity model is concerned with the use of propaganda in order to gain favourable media attention, as practiced by the first press agents in the mid-nineteenth century USA. The public information model next emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, and involves the dissemination of truthful information in order for government agencies and large corporations to respond to attacks from journalists. From the First World War onwards, PR practitioners sought a more scientific approach based on the behavioural and social sciences in order to persuade and to create consent, and this

resulted in the two-way asymmetrical model. Finally, the two-way symmetrical model started to emerge from attempts to ‘facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics’ (Grunig and Grunig 1992, 289). This model advocates the free and equal flow of information between an organization and the public and may result in either one being persuaded to change their opinion, though this is not necessary ‘as long as both communicate well enough to understand the position of the other’ (Grunig and Hunt 1984, 23).

We suggest that Grunig and Hunt’s model can be adapted in order to understand the relationships in policy translation. Nevertheless, it is important to note the differences between policy translation and other forms of communication. First, policy translation can be divided into two main types: (relatively) voluntary and coercive translation. Second, the basic types of relationships in policy translation are based upon borrowing and lending rather than sending and receiving, as is the case in communication model. Thus, in the case of voluntary translation, the activity of translation does not necessarily begin with a sender, but may instead be initiated by a borrower. Usually, when a government faces new or unfamiliar problems, it searches for plausible solutions (i.e. examples of policy alternatives) from abroad, which might be of help in solving the problems at hand. Then, if the example(s) from other countries appear to be a good fit, the policy may be borrowed without informing the lender (or without receiving guidance or support from the lender). This is the case in the one-way voluntary translation model. On the other hand, in the one-way coercive model, a lender (i.e. a transnational institution such as the World Bank) requires the adoption of a particular policy, regardless of whether the borrower originally intended to adopt the policy or not, which is similar to the communicative processes in the original PR model. As the discretion of a borrower is quite limited under the coercive model, we will focus on voluntary translation.

#### **Four modes of translation in the transfer of policies**

Modes of translation can be differentiated from each other according to communication processes and the intentions of policy leaders. One-way relationships between borrowers and lenders can be divided into two sub-types, which we will call distorted policy translation, and rational policy translation, respectively. Two-way communication occurs in the following situations: (1) when a borrower contacts a lender to learn the detailed situation or features of a specific policy and (2) when policy leaders attempt to interpret and create a new policy through open discussion with citizens. Two-way communication can also be divided into two sub-types, which we will call discretionary policy translation and democratic policy translation.

#### ***Distorted policy translation***

The policy leaders in a borrower country may distort the original meaning of the policy or programme for purposes of self-interest or in order to justify a pre-determined solution. In this type of translation, (1) there is no subsequent communication between the lender and the borrower because the policy leaders in the borrower country do not deem it necessary and (2) the communication between a borrower and policy stakeholders is limited to propaganda purposes or there is no communication at all. The final results from this translation will be arbitrary utilization of the original policy for the borrower’s own sake. Such processes are well documented, and in several cases are attributed to the justification

of new policies within a broad ideological framework (Robertson 1991; Wolman 1992; Peck 2011).

### ***Rational policy translation***

The policy leaders in a borrower country operating under technical rationality attempt to analyze the original policy as objective information (i.e. policy-relevant information), and after attempting to calculate the optimal solution to the problem, introduce the policy that appears to be the most beneficial in their situation. In this case, the policy leaders do not need to engage in two-way communication with the lender as long as they can collect enough information for technical analysis of policy alternatives. With the results of the technical policy analysis at hand, the policy leaders would disseminate the policy as truthful information to policy stakeholders (i.e. the public information model of PR). This mode of policy translation may work or lead to policy success only when the following conditions are satisfied simultaneously: (1) the translated policy is technique-oriented and/or introduced in a value-neutral field and (2) under the assumption that a borrower perfectly understands the policy-related technical information and the reasons why the policy is effective in its original context. Policy failures in this area are well documented and may be connected to the acontextual nature of the translated policy (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). It is enormously difficult to be aware of the context of a lender without two-way communication. As such, the absence of two-way communication is likely to eventually result in what Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) term uninformed, incomplete and inappropriate transfer.

Along with the possibility of misunderstanding the original policy, this approach is also open to the selling of initiatives, where a leader extols the virtues of a particular policy or programme at the expense of giving fair and balanced information (Wolman 1992; Wolman and Page 2002). In sum, the peculiar feature of the two modes utilizing one-way communication is their acontextual approach, which leads to policy selection. The borrower can understand or learn only on the basis of openly available information from a lender. With this limited understanding, the borrower must decide whether to utilize the policy or not.

### ***Discretionary policy translation***

A borrower may contact a lender to learn the appropriateness of a policy before borrowing. After learning more about the lender's environment, the borrower modifies the policy at their own discretion, possibly with limited input from the public. By this two-way borrower–lender communication, at the minimum level, policy leaders can learn whether the policy of the lender is suitable to the new context or not. Once policy leaders in a borrower country decide to translate, they publicize the new policy, and while there may be some feedback from stakeholders, communication is dominated by the government (i.e. asymmetric two-way communication). In this situation, policy leaders may have enough information including knowledge of the context of the lender as well as limited knowledge of their own policy context. This translation may lead to policy success. However, after the initial translation, it may become apparent that policy leaders in a borrower country do not fully understand the way the original policy works (i.e. there has been uninformed or incomplete transfer).

**Democratic policy translation**

The fourth type of policy translation is similar to discretionary translation, albeit with one important difference; this mode takes one more step in terms of communication with policy stakeholders. Policy leaders in this mode want to work together with citizens to adjust or modify the translated policy. Since most policies are inherently value-laden, democratic policies or decision-making by consent can be made through adjusting values following communication. For this reason, policy leaders would engage with the public to discuss the feasibility of translating a particular policy. In other words, they not only release relevant policy information, but also encourage citizen participation and welcome interpretations which reflect citizens’ own contexts (including values, preferences and practical feasibility).

Policy-relevant knowledge in democratic policy translation emerges through two processes: (1) communication between a borrower and a lender, then (2) democratic discussions and collaborative relationships between policy leaders and policy stakeholders. Through these procedures, policy information that initially may not reflect the borrower’s contexts becomes policy-relevant knowledge which is congruent to the desires of policy beneficiaries. Table 1 summarizes the communication types of the four modes of policy translation.

**Linking communication to success**

Policy success and failure are overlooked aspects of policy transfer (Marsh and Sharman 2009), and so it is important to explain what is meant by the terms. A good starting point when considering policy success is to distinguish programmatic success (effectiveness, efficiency and resilience) from political success (lack of political upheaval and public satisfaction with policy or confidence in authorities and public institutions; Bovens, t’Hardt, and Peters 2001). It is necessary to acknowledge that the term policy success is problematic, as the normative nature of policy evaluation means that success is difficult to measure. Consequently we must consider success ‘for whom?’ and ‘we should not expect government, politicians, civil servants, interest groups, citizens, etc. to all agree on whether or not any aspect of a particular policy is successful’ (Marsh and Sharman 2009, 284). While accepting the idea that policy success is problematic and should not be taken at face value, we suggest that two-way communication can increase the chances of policy success in four main ways: through increasing the practical usefulness of policy

Table 1. The four modes of policy translation.

	Borrower–lender communication		Borrower–stakeholder communication			
	One-way	Two-way	One-way		Two-way	
			Propaganda	Public info.	Asymmetric	Symmetric
Distorted	✓	×	✓	×	×	×
Rational	✓	×	×	✓	×	×
Discrete	×	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Democratic	×	✓	×	×	✓	✓



translation, increasing policy legitimacy, helping leaders to understand contexts, and encouraging feasibility tests of policy.

### *Practical usefulness of policy translation*

When original policy-relevant information is interpreted through ‘identification of an audience, capturing context, and apprehension of the values at issue’ (Bobrow and Dryzek 1987, 20), the borrower can make use of policy-relevant knowledge which increases the chances of successful policy translation. Identification of the audience is concerned with who benefits from the translated policy. If the (hidden) goal of policy translation is primarily to benefit policy leaders at the expense of citizens’ interests, the audience of the policy translation is the policy leaders themselves. In contrast, if the goal of policy translation comes from the needs of the public, then the public is the vital part of the audience. There are two contexts which policy leaders may attempt to capture: first that of the lender and second, that of the borrower’s policy subsystem. Only when policy is adapted according to both contexts can democratic policy translation be achieved. Apprehension of the value at issue could be possible through the processes of the two-way persuasion process which is a method of mutual learning through discourse (Majone 1989). Most of all, these processes will lead to policy-oriented learning as the communicating of new information and knowledge about the policy may lead to changes both in the definition of the policy and in the policy tool.

As highlighted in Table 2, democratic policy translation is able to fulfil all of the criteria regarding practical usefulness, due to two-way communication on the part of the borrower with both the lender and the policy stakeholders. Furthermore, the degree of adaptation and modification of the original policy means that extensive translation takes place. Under the discretionary mode, this process is less complete, as while capable of identifying the audience, the borrower is less likely to be able to modify the policy to its new context, and cannot apprehend the values at issue due to minimal two-way communication with the public. While rational translation is able to identify the audience through technical rationality, it is less likely to capture the context and apprehend values. Finally, distorted translation is unable to fulfil any of the criteria of practical usefulness.

### *Policy legitimacy*

Policy legitimacy is important from the perspective of political success, as it is directly related to public confidence in government. Andrews (2007) argues that there are two different sources of policy legitimacy, namely legitimacy of authority and of consent. Decision-makers who introduce a pre-determined alternative using one-way communication are likely to rely upon their legal or professional authority as a source of legitimacy.

Table 2. The four modes of translation according to practical usefulness.

	Identification of audience	Capturing context	Apprehension of values
Distorted translation	Policy leaders	No	No
Rational translation	Policy leaders or citizens	No	No
Discretionary translation	Citizens	Lender: yes, citizens: no	No
Democratic translation	Citizens	Yes	Yes

This type of legitimacy ultimately results in justification of the policy. On the other hand, more democratic decision-makers who favour two-way communication with relevant policy stakeholders encourage them to develop their knowledge or interests and to adjust their views to reality through persuasion (Majone 1989). Democratic policy leaders make decisions according to policy consensus and gain legitimacy from the consent of policy stakeholders. These policy-makers will prefer democratic policy translation to distorted or rational translation. Democratic policy translation increases the chances of political success, as there is less chance of political upheaval and more chance of public satisfaction.

### ***Leadership in context***

Policy leaders have an important role to play in ensuring policies are modified to contexts. This first of all requires policy leaders to understand and clarify the given contexts surrounding the policy translation processes, and two-way communication with both borrowers and policy stakeholders is beneficial in this respect. Here, the given contexts include the existing social, political, economic and technological systems of the borrower as well as those of the lender.

### ***Feasibility test***

Even if policy leaders reach apparent agreement about the desirability of a policy translated through two-way communication with the lender, they are still likely to face disagreements as policy stakeholders surface with different interests or values. For example, citizens may not understand why a policy from another setting should be adopted and what they stand to benefit. Similarly, government agencies, as stakeholders in policy implementation may show reluctance to adopt a policy if they think it does not fit with the specific environment of their community. These disagreements may eventually lead to policy failure. Discretionary policy translation is likely to increase the chances of programmatic success, as it increases awareness of the context of the lender, and leads to increased knowledge of whether the policy is suitable for the borrower. Still, democratic policy translation is most capable of mitigating feasibility problems because the goal of symmetric two-way communication is mutual learning about the desirability of the translated policy on the basis of local contexts, between policy leaders in the borrower government and their policy stakeholders. In the next section, we review congestion charge policy translation examples in order to present the practicality of our model. The case analysis follows the theoretical factors discussed earlier.

## **Congestion charge policy translation in Stockholm and Greater Manchester**

### ***Stockholm***

While discussion of congestion charging in Stockholm goes back to the 1970s (Isaksson and Richardson 2009), the current plan dates back to 2002 and thus predates the introduction of a charge in London. The plan emerged at this time due to the Green Party holding the balance of power in the national parliament and using the trial of a congestion charge in Stockholm as a condition for joining the ruling coalition. The plan was originally scheduled to be introduced in 2004, but as the charge is formally defined as a

tax under Swedish law, and taxes can only be introduced by the national parliament, new legislation was required before the charge could be introduced. Consequently the introduction of the scheme was pushed back to 2006. By this time preparations for the London charge were already underway, and so Stockholm was able to draw upon the London experience, which despite not being the first congestion charge scheme introduced internationally, received considerable attention.

Dealing with lender–borrower communication first, there were discussions between London and Stockholm in European projects such as the Joint Expert Group on Transport and Environment. Communication between the two cities was two-way, and some aspects of the London scheme, such as an exemption for ‘clean vehicles’ were introduced in Stockholm (Marsden et al. 2010). Similarly ‘the staff of the two cities also discussed some operational concerns, such as the length of time necessary to see the true impacts of the project’ (Marsden et al. 2010, 91). However, there were also important differences, in terms of fee charged, billing system, and size of the cordon. While London introduced a flat fee between 7:00 am and 6:00 pm, which users must pay on the day of use or a day either side, the Stockholm fee varies depending upon the time of day, and vehicle owners receive monthly bills, which are tax deductible. In addition, in London, the cordon surrounds the inner city only, while in Stockholm it bounds most of the city. As such, while Stockholm learned from the London scheme, there was a high degree of adaptation to context.

Stakeholder communication appears to have been generally asymmetrical, albeit with some two-way symmetrical aspects. While politicians remained firmly in charge, as they decided on the main approach, power over the final decision was handed over to the public in the form of a referendum. A trial was held for seven months from January to July 2006, and there was regular communication of trial evaluation updates to the media (Isaksson and Richardson 2009). Most newspaper coverage was initially against the introduction of the congestion charge; there were no positive articles at all prior to the scheme, while 89% of articles were negative and 11% were neutral. During the trial, however, 25% of the articles were positive, and the change was attributed to the city council’s communication strategy (Winslott-Hiselius et al. 2009).

When it comes to practical usefulness, there is some evidence that the scheme was able to capture the context and understand stakeholders. First, there was compromise over the cordon, with the Essinge bypass which runs close to the centre of the city being excluded, due to political opposition in the municipalities surrounding Stockholm (Eliasson et al. 2009). Also when the new liberal/conservative government, which won a national election on the same day as the referendums, decided to introduce the charge, they insisted that the revenue raised should be set aside for road investments ‘in an effort to compensate negative impacts on the municipalities surrounding the city of Stockholm’ (Eliasson et al. 2009, 247). When the scheme was introduced on a permanent basis, provisions were made to exempt the month of July each year and to make the charge tax deductible. Taken together, these changes demonstrate awareness of the local context, and that the city government was able to turn borrowed policy-relevant information into practical knowledge in the process of compromise and creating consensus.

Isaksson and Richardson (2009) have criticized the scheme, as the investment in new roads was at the expense of public transport and because difficult questions of urban mobility were left untouched in the name of consensus. Yet, Eliasson’s (2009) cost–benefit analysis shows the extent to which congestion has been reduced, as well as a significant social surplus, as investment costs (in terms of social benefit) could be

recovered in about four years. These results are supported by the positive change in public opinion after the trial, based on the belief that the charge had more positive consequences (i.e. less parking problems, congestion and pollution), than negative consequences (i.e. increased financial costs; Schuitema, Steg, and Forward 2010).

There was a broad leadership coalition involved in the introduction of the scheme in Stockholm, which may have been at least partly responsible for the consensus building that took place (Royal Institute of Technology et al. 2011). While the initiative originally came from the Green Party, this did not prevent Annika Billström, the then Social Democrat mayor of Stockholm from taking on the role of project champion before and during the trial, a role shared by others (Royal Institute of Technology et al. 2011, 23). City leadership thus helped to ensure that the local population could see the project in context.

As a result of the trial, the population of Stockholm was able to test the feasibility of the scheme. It has been suggested that this first-hand experience may have helped the public to understand the full implications of the charges in a way that dissemination of information regarding the scheme could not (Winslott-Hiselius et al. 2009).

The modifications to the scheme and the attempt to communicate the benefits to the public represent an attempt to build legitimacy through consent. As such it is important to consider the results of the referendums. The original plan, as agreed between the national coalition partners, had been for a non-binding referendum to be held in Stockholm. Yet, other municipalities in the surrounding areas also decided to hold referendums on the basis that their populations would be affected by the charge. As the referendums used two different questions, it is not possible to aggregate the votes. Upon initial inspection, the results of 53% in favour of Stockholm and 40% support for the scheme in surrounding areas (Eliasson et al. 2009) appear to be mixed. However, the municipalities that held referendums had political leaderships that were opposed to the charge, including all municipalities governed by liberal/conservative majorities. The majority of municipalities governed by social democratic/green majorities did not arrange referendums, instead announcing that the decision was the City of Stockholm's to make (Eliasson et al. 2009, 240). As such the efforts of the city government should be seen as helping to achieve a level of legitimacy of consent for the scheme.

### ***Greater Manchester***

The proposal for the Greater Manchester congestion charge, initially made in 2005, was also at least partly due to national government. The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) stood to receive considerable investment in public transport infrastructure (3 billion pounds sterling, 1.2 billion of which would take the form of loans to be paid back over 30 years), if a congestion charge were to be introduced as part of the Manchester Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) bid (Royal Institute of Technology et al. 2011). The TIF was supported by the Department of Transport and had road congestion as one of its primary areas of focus.

There is some evidence that lender–borrower communication may have been two-way among the top level of political leaders, with Manchester City Council Leader Sir Richard Leese personally visiting Stockholm (Marsden et al. 2010). However the proposed scheme was similar to Edinburgh, which had planned to introduce a congestion charge, until it was rejected by city residents in a referendum in February 2005 (Marsden et al. 2010). While there were some differences in the billing system and operating hours, the

main structure was the same in that they both proposed a dual cordon system; one around the city centre, with another around the outer areas. Regarding the details of the Manchester scheme, the plan was to introduce separate charges for each cordon using a pre-pay system, and for the charges to be applicable in rush hours only (7:30 am to 9:30 am and 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm). Manchester and Edinburgh both held referendums by postal ballot; however, the plan was that the Manchester congestion charge would only be introduced in 2013, to allow time for investment in public transport infrastructure, and all 10 councils in Greater Manchester were included in the referendum in December 2008. In Edinburgh, the plan had been to introduce the charge approximately one year after the ballot, and only residents in the city itself were given a vote.

While Manchester appeared to have emulated the main structure of the Edinburgh scheme, communication between the two cities was one-way, and ‘Officials from Manchester had not visited Edinburgh to discuss the reasons for the failure of its scheme or to discuss how this might affect the development of a proposal to the public’ (Marsden et al. 2010, 91). Moreover, it seems that Manchester did not learn from Stockholm’s introduction of a trial period before the referendum. The apparent failure to modify the information in Stockholm to first-hand policy-relevant knowledge could be a consequence of a more superficial kind of learning, as identified by Wolman (1992), where the borrower is exposed to a carefully controlled environment. Alternatively, the objective of the communication could have been to draw links to the scheme in Stockholm in order to persuade the public of the feasibility of congestion charging.

It has been argued that Manchester had a ‘Weak communication strategy’ in terms of encouraging public and stakeholder acceptance (Royal Institute of Technology et al. 2011, 26), and the evidence does point towards asymmetrical communication in relation to the referendum. Following the consultation process, which received 81,000 responses, 25,813 were deemed to be negative and 14,675 positive. However the ‘yes’ campaign seemed unconcerned, citing that those who oppose the scheme were more likely to respond to the consultation and that private polling showed clear majorities in 8 out of 10 boroughs (Osuh 2008). This perspective can now be seen to be misguided in light of the no vote in the actual referendum. Moreover, this came following the May 2008 local election when Roger Jones, chairman of the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive, and a Labour Councillor in Salford was beaten into third place by the Community Action Party, which based its campaign on opposition to the charge. In contrast to Stockholm there was no compromise or change in the plan in order to better represent public opinion, suggesting that there was a lack of learning from the feedback that the council did receive.

There are questions concerning the extent to which the media may have influenced public opinion. Vigar, Shaw, and Swann (2011) suggest that the media simplified the story, with the framing of the articles undermining the TIF bid through an emphasis on the charge rather than public transport investment. Despite these framing issues, the local newspaper, the *Manchester Evening News* was ‘even-handed’, while reports in the national press had ‘a lot of balance’ (Vigar, Shaw, and Swann 2011, 478). Against this background, it would not be appropriate to lay responsibility for the outcome of the referendum entirely at the feet of the media.

Questions remain over the practical usefulness of the Manchester scheme, especially as there was no adaptation after the initial proposals. A particular problem seems to have been the outer cordon in Manchester. At approximately 80-square miles, the congestion charge on the outer ring road would have been much larger than that in London or

Stockholm. Some council leaders in the areas of Oldham and Tameside opposed the outer boundary as they claimed it would punish those making short journeys such as residents taking children to school (Marsden 2008; Tameside Advertiser 2008). The lack of a feasibility test, in the form of a trial, means that the public and other policy stakeholders were unable to resolve these issues.

In terms of leadership, the yes campaign was co-ordinated by Clean Air Now, a network of environmental organizations and campaigners. Despite the leader of Manchester City Council being seen to support the plans, 'the extent of clear public/official support for the scheme was substantially less than could be observed in the London and Stockholm examples' (Royal Institute of Technology et al. 2011, 24). Viewed in this light, it could be that the AGMA went along with the changes in order to receive the funding from central government, but without ever taking full ownership of the scheme and hence not making the necessary adaptation to the local scheme.

It seems the Manchester scheme relied initially on authority as a source of legitimacy and that there was an attempt to justify the scheme to the public in order to obtain consent. However the public voted against the proposal (21.2% for and 78.8% against) in referendums across Greater Manchester councils in December 2008, meaning that the plan was never implemented (Ottewell 2008).

### ***Case summary***

It would seem that the Stockholm scheme, while mainly based upon discretionary translation, also had elements of democratic translation. The scheme can be seen as following discretionary policy translation, as the city government remained firmly in charge, and did not open up the policy to deliberation. However, as adaptations were made to make the scheme more acceptable to the public, such as investment in roads, there were aspects of the case that reflected democratic policy translation. In contrast, the Manchester scheme is best characterized as rational translation. While there was some two-way communication with Stockholm, there is no evidence of policy learning from this relationship, and communication with Edinburgh was only one-way. Though feedback was obtained from the public it seems that this was overlooked and no adaptation of the scheme took place.

The type of translation undertaken in the two cases appears to have contributed to the respective success and failure of the schemes. Stockholm achieved programmatic and political success; however, Manchester's failure at the political level meant that the scheme was never realized. The cases highlight how these results were facilitated by the degree of two-way communication with policy leaders and stakeholders, and the subsequent reconstruction (or lack thereof) of policy ideas in the new context. In the Stockholm case, political leaders helped to ensure the practical usefulness and legitimacy of the charge by capturing the context of the London scheme, attempting to apprehend the values of the local population, and conducting a feasibility test. In contrast, in Manchester, a general lack of two-way communication with both other policy leaders and stakeholders, and the absence of clear leadership in the form of a project champion meant that key aspects of the leaders' contexts could not be captured (i.e. the reasons for the failure of the Edinburgh scheme, and the impact of the trial in Stockholm), and ultimately, that the scheme was rejected by the public.

## Conclusion

This study tried to combine some strengths of the translation framework with policy transfer and PR theories in order to contribute to furthering understanding of the ways in which policies move, and how they can do so more successfully. In doing so, we identified four modes of policy translation in the process of policy transfer, including distorted, rational, discretionary, and democratic translation, and demonstrated how these modes can be applied through case studies of congestion charge policy translation in Stockholm and Manchester. These examples illustrate how greater modification of policy to context occurs under two-way communication, and support the suggestion that translation and adaptation of policy are likely to increase policy 'success'. While policy success is difficult to define and measure, it is not unattainable. Democratic translation gives the greatest chance of policy success, as the communication processes involved help to ensure practical usefulness of policy, increase legitimacy, help leaders to understand contexts, and test the feasibility of policy.

Critics may argue that an approach based upon consensus building may be difficult to use in situations where difficult choices have to be made. In response, we would point to how consensus building can make policies successful for a wider range of stakeholders and lead to less political upheaval. Also, compromise can result in going beyond the status quo, as demonstrated by the case study of Stockholm.

In practical terms, this study suggests that to increase the chances of successful policy translation, both borrowers and lenders should be willing to engage in two-way communication. This is particularly important for borrowers, who should also be sensitive to their local context and be willing to engage in two-way communication with local stakeholders. In terms of a research agenda, further empirical studies should be undertaken in order to test the modes of communication, and similar studies could be conducted for more coercive forms of translation. Further research in this area would help to overcome gaps in the literature on the success or failure in the movement of policies, and hopefully contribute to more successful real-world policy translation.

## Note

1. While there are similarities with policy diffusion, in that both are concerned with how policies come to be adopted in multiple contexts, this study will focus on policy transfer. In common with this literature, our emphasis is more on understanding mechanisms and agency in the movement of policies, rather than the structural or pattern finding, large-N approach, which receives greater emphasis in diffusion (Marsh and Sharman 2009).

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