
Regional Science, Regional Scientists, and State Policy

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1

Introduction

This issue of the *International Regional Science Review* revisits the connections between regional science and policy. The general topic has been even featured before in this *Journal*. While supporting the field's efforts in the direction of policy relevance in the context of a special issue of this *Journal* (vol. 18, no. 4), Haughwout (1995, p. 237) noted that criticism thrown at regional science includes that the field "is too abstract and narrowly focused and ignores the human dimension of spatial interactions." In reply, he levels the argument (p. 238) that somehow "the employment experience of regional science graduates suggests that . . . those making hiring decisions at policy research institutions, at public policy schools, and in the public sector disagree." My understanding is that the present discussion of the issue has a somewhat different twist. It is more positive and not lost in the thought of the "big question" that Isserman (1993, 1995) put before us—whether regional science had lost its seat at the policy table. As Haughwout hints, the field, in fact, had never been displaced nor was its seat even being threatened: the "crisis" was merely a misperception of the intentions and goals of regional science.¹ Indeed, if attendance at recent North American Meetings of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) is any gauge, the field's growth is outpacing inflation, let alone North America's population. Yet, the topic of regional science's intersection with public policy returns again and again, primarily via the voices of the presidents of the RSAI. With the hope of assuring that the world will not be imposed upon by yet another issue of this *Journal* on the topic of regional science and policy, in this article I probe the many ways in which a group perceived as "too abstract and narrowly focused" is, in fact, policy relevant, even when limited to a state level focus.² I provide a few personal tales regarding the manner in which I obtained entrée to policy makers who listened to what I had to contribute. I also serve up a couple of personal failures in the hope that they may be eye-opening lessons. The purpose of these stories is to help

2

Authors' Note: I dedicate this article in honor of Walter Isard, who marks his 90th birthday this year.

regional science be all it can be in this political arena.³ However, I start it all off relating the broader role of social science researchers in state policy making.

Academics in the Service of State Policy Making

Undoubtedly, social scientists more generally could play a larger role in helping to form public policy. I am aware of no debates on this. After all, while it may not have been our original intention when we entered the game, it cannot be doubted that most of us at least train future policy makers and government decision makers. Many of us train them within the classroom through coursework. Others among us train future policy makers via our managerial and intellectual leadership. And still others may be innovative enough to enable highly practical extra-classroom experiences for them.

Another mission of most, if not all, state universities is to perform service to the state, and state policy research is part of that service. Increasing inroads of academic capitalism have induced more than just social scientists at state universities to seek funding (at least for that academic holy grail—"summer money") since the state's cash is the same color as anyone else's. Naturally, schools deem it meritorious to fund students' educations with this money. So, often universities give gentle incentives that encourage us academics to assign students to research projects, and some students seek to be part of them hoping that work will lead to some government job somewhere. To our dismay, however, results of many policy projects are not publishable. Being able to publish state service work seems often more the exception than the rule at state universities where service to the state, as mentioned previously, is considered a prime mission. This reinforces our justification of the role of state-funded policy work as that of teaching students how such work ought to be done.

The state-funded work itself can take on many mantles. Sometimes a state agency is truly interested in discovering the answer to one or more research questions. Occasionally state agencies seek unbiased, well-informed evaluations of the work of others. But more often, they seek answers that support a preidentified policy agenda. In the majority of cases of all genres, state policy makers want the research performed within seemingly tight timeframes, at least relative to the lengthy periods that academics prefer when focusing their brain cells on issues.

In addition to these very direct means of affecting state policy, academics often generate work via funds provided by other organizations or even without any funding at all. In such cases, state staff members may run across the odd policy brief produced by an academic, read a pertinent op-ed piece in the local newspaper, learn of the research from a friend or colleague, or even actually run across our published work when seeking more information on a topic. The point here is that we can affect state policy in a passive manner as well, perhaps even unintentionally.

How Are Regional Scientists Different from Others?

In many ways, when it comes to informing state policy, we regional scientists are fairly unique among those on the academic scene. Nearly all of us intend public organizations to be the ultimate consumers of our work. Our focus, according to Walter Isard, is on theories and methods that undergird public policy and planning. That is, he suggests that by our very nature we are not policy and planning activists. Again, instead, according to Isard (1974, p. 2) “a typical regional scientist wants to surround himself with research assistants and a computer for a long time in order to collect all of the relevant information about the problem, analyze it carefully, try out some hypotheses, and finally reach some conclusions.” So, not only because of our preferred interests but also because of our preparedness and careful thought, we as a group should be better equipped than most other academics to diagnose nonfederal public ills and to prescribe possible appropriate cures.⁴ Of course, when it comes to working with state agencies, in particular, all of the intensive calculus, algebra, and statistical knowhow must melt away into the background. Alas, our public clients tend not to be as mathematically savvy as we might like them to be. In any case, when they are,⁵ they prefer that we help them communicate our work to the public as well as to our fellow academicians.

In this article, I shrug off my professorial regalia, throw on my tie and three-piece business suit, and focus on normative pragmatics where I can. I start off by extending a discussion of experiences to show how regional scientists can alter state policy in fairly direct ways—largely through media access and direct access to top government officials. I branch out from that to discuss the trials and tribulations of performing research and consulting work for the state. I move from that topic to discuss the key role that regional scientists play in educating the public and, in particular, agency workers. I believe this is a crucial element in the long-run since it will enable a more sophisticated consumer of our work, one who can recognize a properly done analysis when she or he sees it, as well as one who can ask research questions that will lead to innovative solutions. I conclude the article with some parting thoughts and ideas for future research that could help bridge the divide between regional scientists and policy makers.

Regional Scientists: Changing the Policy Agenda

Although we might not be activists (of course, some of us undoubtedly are), regional scientists affect public policy intentionally while comporting with Walter Isard’s definition of the regional scientist. Within academic institutions many of us within the United States conduct work on a regular basis for the socioeconomic development of our states via extension activities of the land grant universities, via state and local policy makers, or even via nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

that seek to influence state and local policy. Some of us work for federal and state governments directly performing analyses that could influence economic development decisions at the state and local level. Let me simply say that it is easy to underestimate the great number of us who regularly work on policy-relevant projects with the hope of sharing it with a broad constituency.

Some of our colleagues influence policy more prominently than the rest of us. Indeed, Michael Porter's *competitive advantage* and Richard Florida's *creative class*, for example, are now apparently so popular that each has a vital ongoing consulting concern advising economic policy makers for regions around the United States and elsewhere. Both are undoubtedly interesting concepts that deserve some thought and attention. However, it is a rare individual who has the ingenuity, charisma, and chutzpa to capitalize on a single notion to bring them fame, fortune, and influence. A very few colleagues, like R.D. "Pat" Norton (formerly of Bryant College), have enjoyed the thrill of anchoring regularly scheduled radio and television appearances to discuss the economic state of the nation or at least of their local region.⁶ And others of our colleagues have become media spokespersons for presidential candidates and Presidents on selected policy topics.⁷ Again, in addition to being academically astute, such positions require special charisma and, certainly, key political connections. Some regional scientists may even be or have been state policy makers (Reid Ewing of the University of Utah and Myron Orfield at the University of Minnesota come to mind).⁸ These are extreme examples of how regional science types have been able to get their work accessed by policy makers. I make this point because it is clear that getting your research interests known by policy makers goes a long way toward placing your research on their desk. It is ~~far harder~~ to get your work on the policy maker's desk ~~than~~ it is to get it action-oriented once it is there.

There is no doubt that the main way we researchers affect policy decisions is through our research. If we do not publicize our work effectively, the only way that assistants to policy makers or even policy makers themselves can run across our work is by using the likes of Google, by contacting news reporters, or by calling their wide range of social contacts. The work of regional scientists is important to state policy makers, especially our state-based work, where ours may be the only geographically relevant work pertinent to their current interests. As a result, some of us are called upon to give testimony at special legislative committee hearings or to send off quick memoranda summarizing our research perspectives.

In the News

A key way that some of the most successful regional scientists grab the attention of policy makers and their staffs is through the media. This is done in various ways. Heads of university economic and business research groups do so by holding special conferences where they proclaim possible future contortions and variations of the

state economy on a quarterly or semiannual basis. Interestingly, some of these same sorts of individuals also run a sort of dog-and-pony show that they take on the road to the ends of their states. Sometimes these conferences/shows include departmental staff members, legislators, or even staffers of the governor's office. Inevitably these events obtain significant airtime and ample press space as media scramble to report the latest prognostications on the local economy. The number of academic institutions that take on this role varies by state in the United States; but most states have individuals who perform these functions and a preponderance of them belongs to the Association of University Business and Economic Research (AUBER).

Special information-gathering or information-providing events sometimes get similar or even more attention from the media. Such proceedings are typically organized by institutions of higher learning, state and federal government offices, and NGOs. While these events certainly can secure a broader policy-oriented audience, they also require that your name is already out there and available for some staffer to run across in association with the theme of the special event. I have been part of several such events, and I am not particularly well connected politically.

Let me demonstrate what I mean by throwing out some examples of the types of events and who sponsored them.⁹ In one case, I gave a brief talk on the topic on the disaster relief and mitigation that featured and was sponsored by the office of U.S. Senator Robert Menendez. At another, I was the primary topical speaker at a special proceeding on the impacts on the state economy of military base closures that was organized by the Governor's Office. Former Governor Jim McGreevy and several U.S. representatives were in attendance, and I received some local PBS airtime. In yet another, I was a guest to a special event where, based on my research and that of my colleagues, Governor John Corzine extolled the virtues of a privately funded waterfront developer who had contracted with our research center to estimate the economic importance of their project to the state. In each case, much fanfare followed in the news media the following day with the help of our university's public relations department. But not all events always wind up as planned. Late one windy day early in September the New York Shipping Association held a news conference to announce the findings of some work I did on the economic contributions of the Ports of New York and New Jersey to the New York Metropolitan area. The event was well attended by the press and also by some important state legislators and mayors. Nonetheless, it never received media attention. The next day, two Manhattan towers, which were visible just the day before from where I was standing in Port Newark, were no longer.

Of course, as I alluded to earlier, rather than waiting for contact from state government entities, universities can take control of their futures by undertaking an internal inventory of faculty interests and synthesizing them into a conference that displays their research wares. We have held forums that explored the potential role of hydrogen energy within New Jersey's energy supply portfolio. We have conducted others on green building, the potential catastrophic effects of global warming,

and transit-oriented development. In all cases, public news releases and key invitations assured attendance by pertinent political officials.

Note in the above the predilection in the course of the events to lean on news releases. In fact, it is easy to understate the importance of engaging your institution's public or media relations group. In my experience, they are always looking for research to publicize and the more interesting and catchy it is the better. Moreover, understand that one can never preidentify the angle that the press will take or what may catch their fancy. Not long ago a colleague in the Netherlands translated some long-lost work by François Quesney, an eighteenth century French physiocrat. According to Steenge (2008), his university publicists likened it to cracking his "own little Da Vinci code," and hence his rather arcane research venture suddenly became widely known by his fellow Dutch countrymen through the news media. So keeping your institutions publicists informed of your research can help quite a bit. In fact, our small school of about forty faculty has employed as many as three publicists at a given time, and they coordinate with the university's larger staff.

In my university, one of the more effective ways some colleagues control the attention they get from policy makers is by writing op-ed pieces for local newspapers. Of course, here in New Jersey, two of the "local" papers are the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, so some of the pieces effectively hit the national scene as well. Through op-ed pieces and their touring forums on the state economy, my colleagues Jim Hughes and Joe Seneca were added to list of the fifty most influential people in our state. I, myself, have coauthored a pair of pieces with fellow regional scientist Hiroshi Ohta in a couple of English-language newspapers in Japan on issues pertaining to hazards and freedoms associated with smoking tobacco. No funding has come of them yet, but we spoke our hearts and put our thoughts out there to be seen and absorbed.

The Role of Regional Science Research and Consulting

Setting the Standard

One of the reasons that university-generated research is sought by policy makers, state, and otherwise is that it is perceived as unbiased in perspective. But a careful, unbiased perspective brings with it some baggage that is not always appealing to the fast-paced policy-making culture (Jefferys et al. 2007). Nonetheless, even if we do not perform the research ourselves, the basic model for the research performed for policy makers—be it performed by their staff or by consultants who can reply much more speedily—typically employs an approach that was developed in academia.

Indeed, Stevens (1995, p. 214) acknowledges that a major responsibility of researchers is to educate our clients regarding the state of the art of the data, approach, and methods that should be applied in a given research situation, and

above all, that we need to teach them how to interpret the results of our models and theories to the point that they can ask intelligent questions of us and can comprehend the implications of the answers we give. This educational process must include discussions of accuracy and standards so that our clients can understand at least what shoddy research looks like when they see it.

The role of the whistle blower. In this vein, one role we can take on, then, is that of a whistle blower. This is not always a comfortable role, but in selected instances it can be a rather compelling one to take on. For one, we can respond to misguided op-ed points. I once saw a newspaper account in which a developer pronounced employment multipliers of 5.0 for a shopping mall. I subsequently sent a letter to the editor pointing out that a multiplier of 5.0 for most anything was highly improbable and in this case clearly erroneous since a new mall was unlikely to create a higher propensity of households to spend in the medium to long run. While it was never published, I did receive calls from the publisher to confirm the validity of similar future reports.

Martin Shields of Colorado State vocalized a similar frustration to some of us when he ran across a report by an agency that claimed U.S.\$1 of its funding leveraged something like U.S.\$1,000 statewide. Martin replied that in that case as someone whose institution could claim some role in the economic development of his state, then Pennsylvania, he should be able to claim leverage to all of the jobs that had been added to the state since he had acted in that role. This would have been an employment multiplier of something like 100,000 or more!!! Of course, those were the boom years of the last decade.

Similarly, I recently ran across a study undertaken by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) in which state-level RIMS II multipliers were reported. Somehow, the author reported housing construction multipliers that that were, across the board, about 50 percent larger than those for the nation. This is impossible, of course, given how the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis's RIMS II group uses earnings location quotients to discount the national direct matrix. Due to mathematics that the RIMS II group applies, state multipliers must necessarily be less than those for the nation for the same industry. In this case, I called the NAHB consultant involved so she or he was aware of the problem. Based on that conversation I also talked to a colleague of mine at RIMS II, in case it was a problem on their part.

As an aside I should add that I do not make it a practice to be a whistle blower. In fact, it is likely that performing this function too often could hurt a researcher more than it could help. However, it is important for ~~us~~ regional scientists to monitor the work of others in our respective states to make sure that some modicum of integrity is maintained, especially by people who should know better.

That thing we do. We regional scientists have a primary and preferred *modus operandus* of developing new theories and models and hammering away at new

solutions to a problem. In fact this too plays a role in improving public policy. If performed well, conveyed in a readily understood manner, and easily accessed, our state-of-the-art work can serve as the industry standard . . . at least locally. Of course, to get people to realize the work exists may take some effort in addition to publishing in high-level journals and presenting at academic conferences.¹⁰

Working for the State

Justifying decisions made. It probably seems quite a contrast—perhaps even improper—to have a subsection subtitled “Justifying Decisions Made” placed under the broader rubric of “Changing the Policy Agenda.” I chose to place it here because I have generally undertaken research for our state’s Governor’s Office or other executive department with the initial understanding that I would be informing public policy. The plain fact is that my work for state policy makers rarely has served such a purpose. I may be wrong, but I suspect this is the case of my fellow colleagues elsewhere. I do not mean to say that our work never helps set or reset the policy agenda. In fact, I know my work has been and is being used in this fashion as well. The reasons for my less-than-perfect batting average are manifold. I explain below.

To be honest, a couple of times the span of the work period hampered the ability of my work to be as important as it might have been. As I previously and as other have noted elsewhere (Macke et al., 2003; Jefferys et al. 2007), the fast-paced culture of policy-making works against the ability of the slower, careful work of regional scientists to inform it. In one case, I was simultaneously thrown two projects that had policy-making implications: one, to estimate the potential economic implications of offshore wind generation on tourism and, the other, estimating the net fiscal impact of the Breeders’ Cup horse race on the state. The former was to be used to inform a stance by the Governor on the immediate installation of offshore wind generation capacity. The latter was to be used to inform the state treasurer on the fiscal viability of the state’s investment in gussying up Monmouth Park Racetrack for the prospective race: would tax revenues generated by state and local governments by the presence of the three-day affair justify costs to the state incurred through the track’s renovations and expansion plus operation-based expenses like a police presence. Both needed to be completed a week prior to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of that year—voting day. Needless to say, to me the racetrack job, which was well underway, was more important and also more interesting. But the Governor’s request won the day. This despite the fact that the research performed for his office was not well grounded. Indeed, beach tourism’s connection to offshore wind facilities remains unknown today. In any case, by the time the racetrack study was completed, the treasurer had already made his decision without the detailed fiscal figures I had been commissioned to derive.

Making a difference. In my case at least, doing any work—research or consulting—requires funding. The difficulties in getting research funding for work that clearly affects policy making are detailed elsewhere in this article, as well as in Macke et al. (2003) and Jefferys et al. (2007). All else being equal, being at a State University, as opposed to a private one, undoubtedly improves one's chances of securing state research funds: but I suspect that having colleagues who are well connected to various state offices accentuates those chances. Funding aside, there are many obstacles to making a difference in state policy. In this section, I discuss how a couple of projects came across my desk and what fell into place to help make a difference.

Of course, the treasurer's loss by not being able to complete the Breeders' Cup study, as discussed above, was the Governor's gain. My quick analysis for his office was used to help the Governor come to the bold decision to announce a three-year moratorium on installing offshore wind-based electric-generation capacity in New Jersey. Of course, the fact that prior analysis in which I was also engaged showed that wind-generation technology would not be viable price wise in New Jersey for at least the next five years also may well have affected the content of the Governor's announcement.

I have also been part of a study team that helped to set the standards for New Jersey's Business Employment and Incentive Program (NJ BEIP). The program gives payroll income tax rebates to firms that come to the state from elsewhere or that can prove they would leave the state in the absence of the incentive or that they would expand facilities outside of the state instead. Here in addition to identifying the likely overall contribution to the state's economy of the firms' seeking the rebate, we also laid out very strict criteria that firms must meet to qualify for the rebates. These criteria essentially eliminate the possibility that the new entrants swoop into the state strictly to take advantage of the tax rebate.

Unlike the study for the Governor's Office, we were solicited to perform the NJ BEIP study due to the high-state profile of a close colleague, Joseph Seneca, who was Chairman of the New Jersey Council of Economic Advisors. Naturally, having a close colleague who chairs a visible council like this can go a long way toward obtaining policy-making research. Joe undoubtedly chaired this council because of the longevity of his service to the state, his former high-level position in our university, and the circuit Joe runs with our colleague Jim Hughes, pronouncing our state's persistent dismal economic outlook, especially after signs of life arise.

Indeed, with Joe Seneca and Jim Hughes, I have sat at a table with the state treasurer to discuss what might be done to assuage another tax revenue deficit for the state. It seems our state set spending to rise at a rate that outpaced inflation by assuming that incomes would rise at the rates mutual funds were reeling in during the mid-1990s. This meeting was an interesting back and forth of ideas that might be applied to help the state increase revenues without raising taxes. To me, the most junior member at the table, the meeting was a real eye-opener. I was impressed by the

energy exuded by the treasurer. In addition, his rapid responses to the various concepts tossed out upon the table by some of my colleagues made it clear to me that he was also well-informed, practical, and politically prudent. Hence, he was not for expending political chips to add a mere penny or two to the state's tax coffers.

My point in this subsection is that, despite concerns of our many colleagues, it is to me undoubtedly possible not only for regional science to be policy-relevant but for regional scientists to have some real direct voice in policy making. However, I really doubt we will ever do much *directly* via our research. It seems to me that affecting policy *directly* requires that we literally sit across the desk or table from the policy makers to be able to juxtapose our policy thoughts with their political realities, many of which we are unaware. Thus, our research (and that of colleagues) is important because it informs positions that we will recall if we are ever in a situation to directly affect state policy.

Missing the boat. It is undoubtedly expected that academics will from time to time, request a no-cost extension for their work. However, this does not give us license to be late even a minority of the time. Simply put, lateness can hurt your reputation as a policy informer and thereby make state-based clients reluctant to call on you again. Let me provide an example. During one of my contracts, data collection undertaken by the client agency was exceedingly slow and forced extraordinary delays. This was compounded by my discovery upon receipt of the data that they were of poor quality, which forced some magic-like contortions to essentially breathe life into them. This also took some time. The upshot of all this is that the work, which was meant for lobbying by the agency for extra water usage during droughts, was completed a good two years after it was initially due. The fact that no intervening droughts had been experienced meant that the issue was no longer on the minds of legislators. While most of the delays were not of my doing and the client paid the contract, it is clear to me why I have not heard a word from the agency since the report was delivered; and why no legislation founded upon lobbying efforts predicated on the report have been discussed in the local papers. The use of the agency's scarce research dollars yielded little value during the tenure of its administrator. Such information is somehow retained by agency staff.

Regional Scientists: Building a Better Tomorrow

Earlier in this article, I noted that we regional scientists often set the industry standard for how policy research should be performed. As regional scientists, we advance the state of the art in policy and planning analysis. Moreover, unless pressed for time, simple research integrity is ingrained indelibly in us all. As a result, we do our best when performing our research. Of course, some of us also manage and teach. Hence, people who drift in and out of our classrooms and who work with us on

research projects are also influenced by us, as are those very few who read our research publications. This section focuses on this role that we play.

Policy Makers

Policy makers and researchers generally seem to agree that policy making and research could be improved if the two groups made greater effort to synchronize their work efforts and perhaps even collaborate more frequently (Jefferys et al. 2007). This is even though they may not always respect one another. Newman (1995, p. 230) sums up well why policy makers need research

- “Prior advice from what constituents may deem ‘the best minds’ can protect the policy maker should the outcome not be as beneficent as anticipated.”
- “Though near-term oriented, decisions are known to have longer-term consequences . . .” so “researchers’ long-term views can be considerations in policy decisions.”
- “Added insight and intelligence, following study and reflection, is better than none.”
- “It is researchers who set the bounds on what is thinkable.”

Note that the reasons do not appear to have much to do with the different incentives and time constraints under which the two groups operate.

A prime means by which researchers and state policy maker connect, of course, is through courses taken by a policy maker or her or his staff members. In this vein, unbeknownst to ourselves at the time, we engage ourselves in policy making through the making of policy makers. While I have not yet had the privilege of watching one of my students step into such a position, I have, over the years, vicariously gotten peeks at the experiences of several colleagues. Sometime after graduation and from my perspective, of course, such contact has initially been made by the policy maker to pick my colleague’s brain regarding his or her specific research interests. The contact inasmuch as I could tell, was typically somewhat intense, more than just a casual. I cannot recall a case where the contact was made by a colleague, but that does not mean it did not happen. In certain cases, moreover, the relationship has blossomed into new, long-standing research centers and institutes. From administration’s perspective, such institutions can in the middle- to long-run support new university-wide initiatives and enable functions in short-term financial hiatus.

There are of course other ways to legitimately engage policy makers. Some policy schools purposely add policy makers to their faculty. Mine added former Governor Jim Florio. In addition, of course, there is nothing stopping us from inviting policy makers and industry representatives into our classrooms to talk with our students about their perspectives.¹¹ Policy makers, in particular, enjoy engaging young constituents in dialogue so that they remain in touch. Reaching out to members of the community in this manner can undoubtedly go a long way toward breaking the ice plus it gives students a different perspective.

The Consumer–Voter

The other way we can affect policy is by improving the regional science literacy of householders, that is, Tiebout’s consumer voter . . . Joe and Mary six pack. Our research is unlikely to have much immediate affect in this case. This leaves us with the other places where people can come in contact with our work—in the classroom and the media. Since regional science courses have not yet been acknowledged as having the life importance attributed to microeconomics and English composition, it is unlikely any time soon that we will be able to adjust the weltanschauung of many consumer–voters by that means. This underlines the importance to regional science’s policy relevance of our continuing to get our views out to the public by other means. The media seems to be the best recourse. Op-ed pieces, radio and TV appearances, and publicly recognized blogs seem to be most promising. So keep those cards and letters coming!

Concluding Remarks

In this piece, I both refute that regional science was ever policy irrelevant and point to how we can get ourselves more engaged in policy issues, especially at the state level. I now conclude with a summary of my wandering thoughts.

Like a Spring Training coach, I want to start with a pep talk about making sure we have our regional science fundamentals down pat. It is most important to me that we do well whatever it is we do: So, let us do solid, interesting regional science research and keep it coming! Shoddy research hurts not only your reputation but that of your colleagues. In the policy realm, one bad apple can, indeed, spoil the whole bunch. Second, if we want to be engaged in policy research, we have to be willing and able to let others see us and our work. After all, “If Mohammed won’t come to the mountain, the mountain must come to Mohammed.” Some of the best and most effective approaches may not take much effort: crafting op-ed pieces for newspapers read in the state capital, shooting off pertinent research summaries to staff members of legislative committees, doing research with policy relevance, and teaching policy-relevant classes. Oh, and of course, if you are up to it, formally meet with your legislator or team up with a colleague who has a tight connection with policy makers. Third, understand that the rewards of policy-relevant research do not always comport well with those of promotion within your institution.¹² For one, it requires extraordinary commitment: meeting with officials, testifying before legislative bodies, and collecting data from diverse and abstruse sources. Moreover, the effort does not typically facilitate publication in top-notch journals, if any at all. Fourth, understand a priori that policy wonks have very short timelines for their research needs: most work needs to be completed for them a few weeks before voting day or some other day not usually marked well on an academic calendar. Complete all research work that you

may do for a policy client in a timely manner. Finally, be kind to your students, someday one may be a policy maker . . . or your boss/dean!

Notes

1. Indeed, Isard (1974, p. 2) explicitly makes the point that regional science is about *science*. And that while regional science is “concerned with social problems . . . it typically does not extend into the area of policy formation and determination. A regional scientist is not an *activist* planner . . .” He goes on to underline that his point in making this distinction is that “regional science as a discipline concerns the careful and patient study of social problems with regard to regional or spatial dimensions, employing diverse combinations of analytical and empirical research.” Of course, keep in mind that this statement was written by Walter after he had released a publication through the Regional Science Research Institute that revealed the locations U.S. federal government’s defense contractors in a publication (Isard, 1961) that could be accessed by officials in the Kremlin at the height of the Cold War.

2. I am even more hopeful of this transition with the RSAI’s latest journal offering entitled *Policy and Practice in Regional Science*.

3. My apologies to the U.S. Army.

4. Of course, we should be pretty handy with the federal-level stuff too.

5. Norman Glickman tells me his U.S. representative is a rocket scientist (Rush Holt).

6. A referee notes that Bennett Harrison also was at least a semiregular on Boston public broadcasts. She or he further suggests that it had deleterious effects upon his career.

7. A current colleague of mine, Bill Rodgers, has been speaking for President Barack Obama on topics as diverse as international trade and racial discrimination.

8. Interestingly, both of these individuals became regional scientists after having served in their state legislatures.

9. I acknowledge a referee’s suggestions that elaborate what I mean by information-gathering and -providing events via examples.

10. In certain states and certain topics, there may specific venues via which researchers can make their work more visible to policy makers, albeit working strictly with an editor and without referees. There are national newsletters on such topics as historic preservation, natural hazards, and planning for which state officials receive free subscriptions. I am certain there are a wide array others of this ilk. Most states have a business journal that is also made available to legislative staff at little or no cost. Each of these possible venues affords another point of contact with policy makers.

11. Thanks to a referee for suggesting this point, upon which I have elaborated.

12. Thank again to a referee for urging that I emphasize this point.

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