Crossing Boundaries – undertaking knowledge-informed public health

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Common stereotypes

The Academics in their ivory towers

The Policy Makers in Whitehall

The Practitioners at the front-line

The implications of this paradigm

Implication 1 – we face:
- Obstacles
- Barriers
- Gaps
- Hurdles
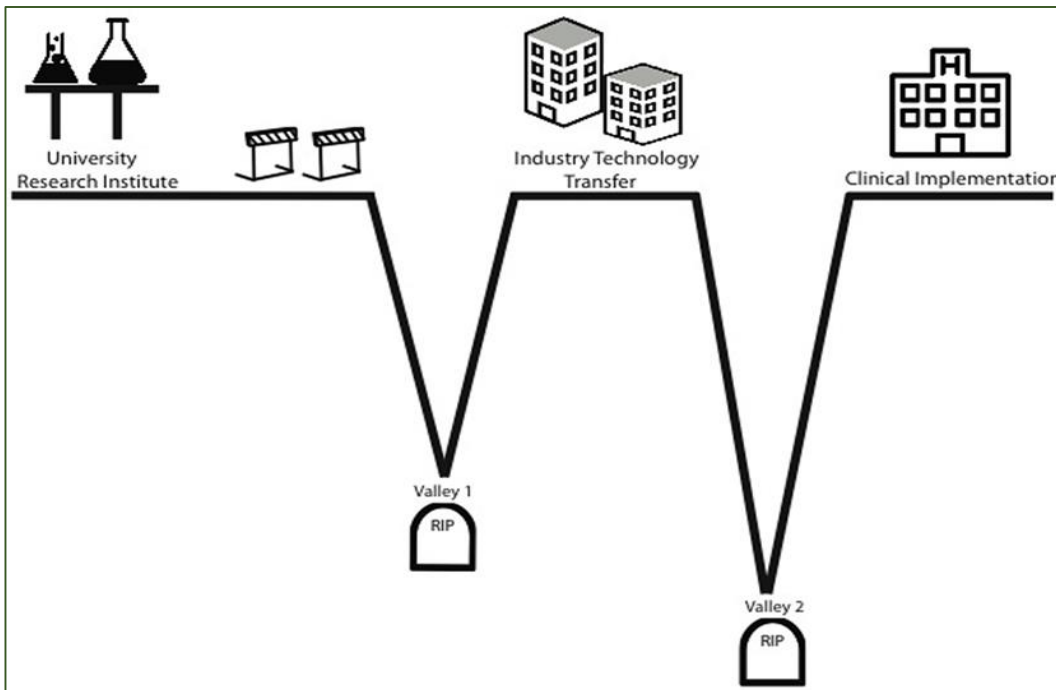- Walls

Implication 2 – we undertake:
- Translation
- Transfer
- Exchange
- Use
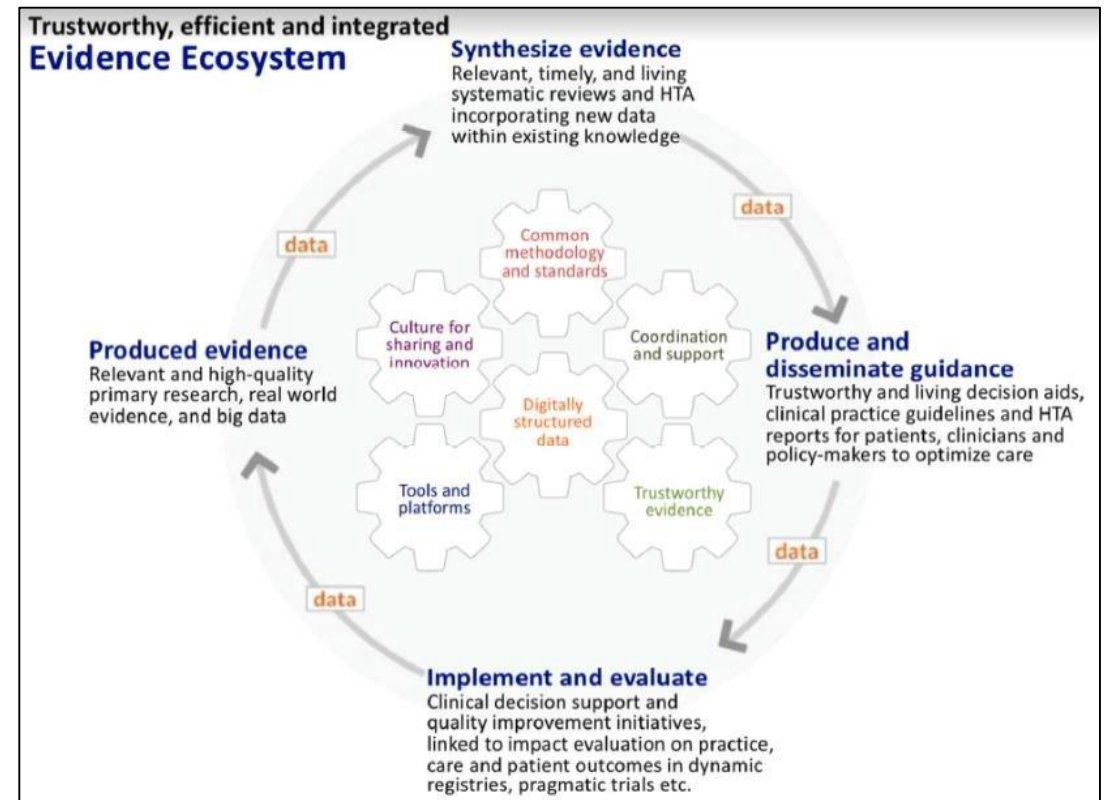- Brokerage

Implication 3 – we should focus on:
- Finding ways of shaping demand for evidence
- Finding ways of designing supply of evidence
- Investing in intermediaries who are expert evidence-handlers

The dominant model

The Valleys of Death

The Evidence Ecosystem

Alternative paradigms for evidence about protecting and improving the public's health

A "neutral" version

- We need two-way "knowledge interaction and intermediation" (Davies)
- We need "know what" (evidence) and "know how" (practice)
- We need implementation and adoption of new knowledge

A "critical" version

- Knowing-what and knowing-how are bound together (Ryle 1945)
- There are different ways of producing knowledge – Mode 2 (Gibbons et al 1995)
- Power/knowledge (Foucault 1975)
- Argument and rhetoric (Aristotle)

Three implications for public health

Complexity
Harry Rutter argues for a complex systems model of evidence because interventions happen in a complex system (Rutter et al 2017)

"Scientification"
John Ashton argues that we tend to adopt an overly positive approach to evidence playing down lived experience

Politics
Paul Cairney argues that evidence about political processes and concerns is integral to policymaking
- From "evidence-based public health policy"
- To "politics of evidence-informed public health policymaking and practice"

A more realistic model

A field (Bourdieu and Scott)

Evidence-reviewing, advice-giving organisations compete and form coalitions about their evidence and advice following written and hidden rules

A drama (Goffman and Burke)

Actors prepare the evidence back-stage for a performance that happens front-stage by the decision-makers to the audience(s)
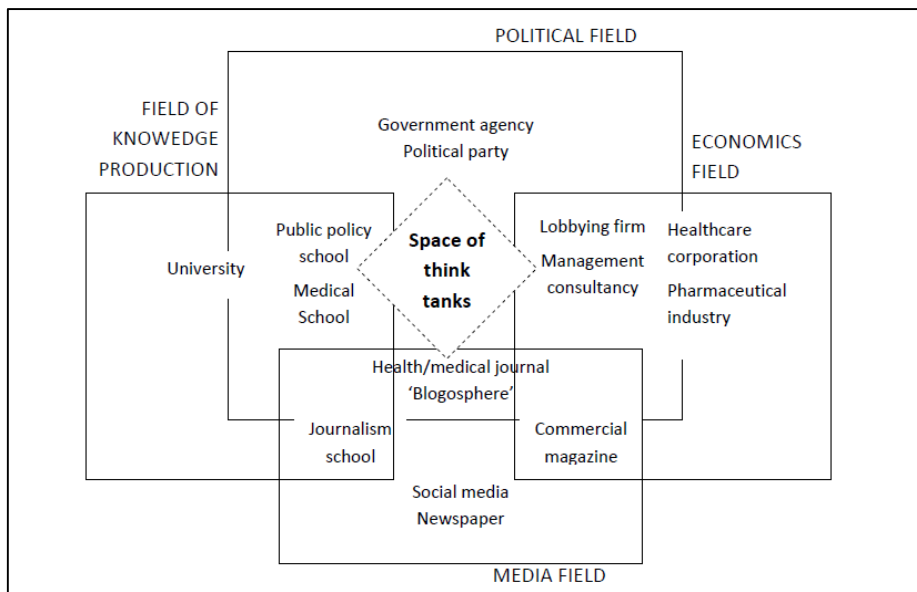
Conclusion – crossing boundaries

The boundary organisation (Guston) needs to have salience, credibility and legitimacy in these different worlds as they hold the organisation to account

Academia

Policy

Practice
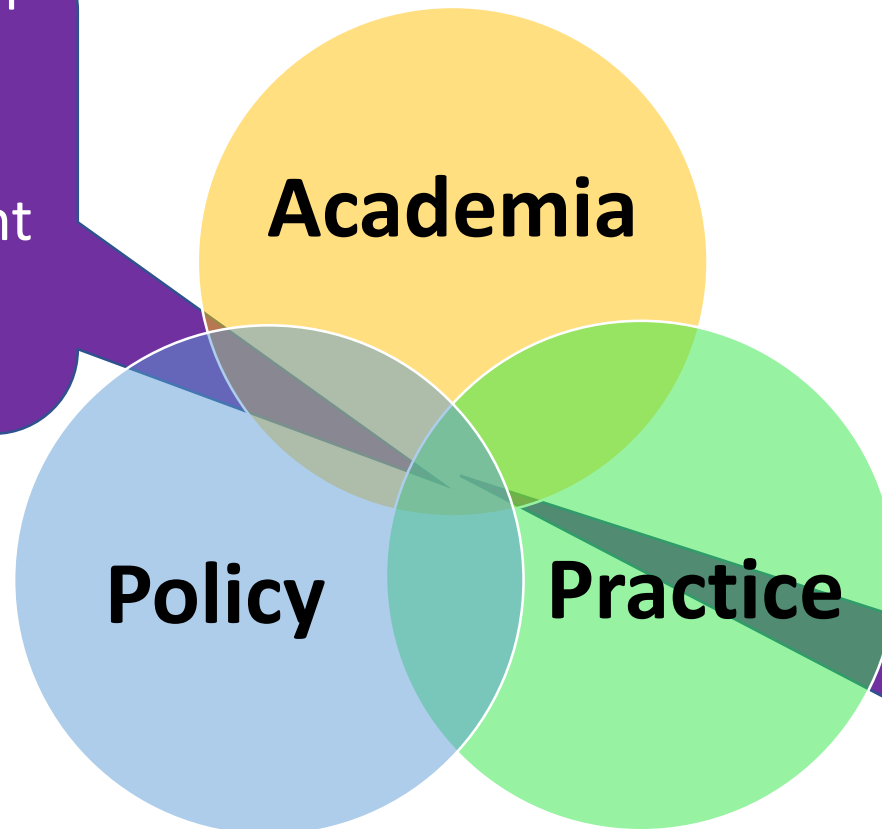
And it needs actors and ideas that can cross the boundaries