Working paper

Mapping the literature of ‘policy transfer’ and housing

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March 2018

Key messages:

- This paper maps the intersection between the broad literature of ‘policy transfer’ – including policy diffusion, mobility and translation, lesson-drawing and fast policy – and the substantive field of housing in order to record temporal, spatial and thematic trends.

- Searches were performed in five databases and resulted in 845 references. By examining titles, keywords, abstracts and full-texts, this sample was reduced to a most relevant set of 137 references which have engaged deeply and conceptually with the six ‘policy transfer’s keywords and a set of 110 references where engagement was moderate.

- The analysis noted that ‘policy transfer’ and ‘policy diffusion’ precede the other concepts, the former being UK-dominant and the latter US-dominant. ‘Policy mobility’ brings the most recent and fastest growing body of literature, reflecting the ‘mobility turn’ in social sciences.

- The paper also reflects on some methodological challenges and their implications to the mapping output, such as linking aims to keywords and Boolean strings, database selection, broad versus narrow searches, inclusive versus selective reference types and coding for thematic subfields.
Introduction

This working paper makes a contribution to CaCHE “Housing and multi-level governance”. This theme focuses on the multi-level fragmentation of housing policy, governance and sharing of learning in a rapidly evolving devolution context in the UK. Within this theme, an evidence review entitled ‘The challenges of evidencing good practice in international and UK lesson sharing, lesson learning and policy transfer’ will be conducted. As a preliminary step to the above evidence review, this paper collects and examines the intersection between the broad literature of ‘policy transfer’ and housing scholarship in order to record broad temporal, spatial and thematic trends.

Developing a methodology for a ‘mapping’ of the literature is the second aim of this paper (Serin 2018a. Serin 2018b, Soaita 2018b). This is important given the growing size of the academic literature, which can no longer be known by looking at a limited number of preferred journals. It is important to note that our aims and thus our meaning of ‘literature mapping’ differs from the more common understanding of a ‘scoping review’ (Arksey & O’Malley 2005, Hagen-Zanker & Mallett 2013) or ‘mapping review’ (Cooke et al 2012, Erasmus et al 2014, Preece 2018) with the last two being more focused, e.g. through narrower research questions, types of policy intervention, participants’ characteristics and research methods (Gough et al 2013). It is also not a systematic or a narrative review (Gough 2013, Gough et al 2012).

Sourcing the literature

Preliminary stage: getting a feel of the literature

Given the author’s unfamiliarity with the topic – which is often the case in evidence reviews (Harkins 2016) – a preliminary stage was conducted in order to get a feel of the literature. The approach was exploratory and purposefully designed to gather a broader perspective beyond the housing literature. Using two preliminary keywords – ‘policy diffusion’ and ‘policy transfer’ – two parallel searches were conducted in arguably the largest two databases, i.e. JSTOR and Google (see Table 1). Limited to the first 50 returns for each keyword in each database and by drawing exclusively on title, keywords and abstracts, the following subfields were coded in a bottom-up approach:

- Key concepts
• Policy subfields of the case study/research setting

Overall, 166 references were coded (see Table 1). The exercise was useful in several ways. Given the unmanageably high number of returns and numerous policy fields (Annex 1, second column), it signalled the need to focus future searches on (a) certain databases and (b) thematic fields. Future searches were therefore restricted to the housing field by using ‘housing’ as a keyword connected by Boolean “AND” with a choice of ‘policy transfer’ keywords. This more focused approach matches the aim of mapping the intersection of two different bodies of literature. The rich conceptual vocabulary picked up by screening titles, abstracts and keywords (Annex 1, right panel) was a rapid way of familiarising the author with concepts in the field and alerted the team to carefully consider the set of policy keywords for mapping the literature. The exercise flagged the ‘longevity’ of the ‘diffusion’ and ‘transfer’ literatures and gave a sense of the time required for reference examination (four days to complete reference extraction and inspection, with Google reference extraction being particularly time consuming).

**Table 1. Preliminary searches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Number of returns</th>
<th>Original references within the first 50</th>
<th>Publishing timeline of the coded references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JSTOR</td>
<td>Policy diffusion</td>
<td>65,187</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1980-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy transfer</td>
<td>232,427</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1968-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Policy diffusion</td>
<td>3.0 million</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1985-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy transfer</td>
<td>3.2 million</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1998-2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Searches were performed on 5th October 2017.*
Database selection

In order to understand the nature and best use of several databases for literature searching, CaCHE’s research team consulted a librarian team at the University of Glasgow. This was useful for understanding the socio-construction of several databases (e.g. the uniqueness of JSTOR as being the largest, particularly good in capturing old literature; the competitive complementarity between SCOPUS and Web of Science; the impact of librarian indexing on results), use of Boolean strings, exploration through in-built visualisation tools. The recommended databases were, in alphabetical order:

- **ASSIA** (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)
- **IBSS** (The International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, being best source for international literature)
- **SCOPUS** (the largest database after JSTOR, benefiting from excellent analysis and visualisation tools)
- **SocINDEX**
- **Sociological Abstracts**
- **Web of Science** (previously known as Web of Knowledge)
- **Google Scholar** was also recommended as common practice in literature reviews (Harkins 2016), now being integrated with OnlineEndNote reference exporting.

As it will be revealed later, for this particular thematic focus, SCOPUS brought the highest number of returns, followed far behind by ASSIA and Web of Science. Given the fields in which searches can be performed (e.g. title, keywords, abstract, subject, librarian indexes), results returned by academic databases do not compare to those returned by Google Scholar (which limits searches either in the title or in full text, being so only comparable with JSTOR).

Keywords

In consultation with Prof Alex Marsh, University of Bristol and Prof Kenneth Gibb, University of Glasgow, six keywords were agreed:

- Policy diffusion
- Policy transfer
- Policy mobility
- Lesson drawing

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Policy translation
Fast policy

We decided not to use ‘policy learning’ as a keyword for it was observed during the preliminary stage that this phrase tended to refer to processes of learning of any not necessarily ‘transferred’ policy; this was further confirmed through team consultation.

Rather than being a one-stage decision, keywords selection was a learning process with new keywords being added at a later stage. For accuracy, searches and preliminary analysis (SCOPUS-enabled) were performed each time from scratch. While some research time was obviously lost, this allowed the author to develop an understanding of the aims and output of this exercise of mapping a vast body of literature. Balancing principles of pragmatism and academic interest, it was found particularly useful to map publishing timelines, geographies of authors’ affiliation and those of the research settings, key journals and key papers and in particular, the relationship between these keyword-related literatures.

Boolean strings

The advantage of using librarian databases is the availability of sophisticated Boolean strings, various searching fields and categories of inclusion/exclusions (e.g. time range, geography, subject, language, reference type), ranking options (e.g. relevance or citations), export of references and the possibility to save or update performed searches. These sophisticated tools have both facilitated and set the parameters and aims of our mapping exercise, as mentioned in the previous subsection. The Boolean string used to source the literature was:

- (“policy diffusion” OR “policy transfer” OR “policy mobility” OR “lesson drawing” OR “policy translation” AND “fast policy”) AND housing

In order to understand the relationship between the six keywords, particularly their overlap, additional Boolean strings were used, mainly variations of:

- (“policy diffusion” AND “policy transfer”) AND housing

Google Scholar searches are broader but give less precise Boolean options. Therefore, overlapping between these terms cannot be mapped, as in SCOPUS. Searches are also less accurate in that the total number of results returned by a search is smaller than the sum of yearly results for the same search. For instance, a search for “policy transfer” AND “housing”
Mapping the literature of ‘policy transfer’ and housing gives a total number of 5,990 results; however, when these results are disaggregated yearly the total number become 6,135. This difference ranged from 2% in the case of ‘policy transfer’ and 15% in the case of ‘policy mobility’ and it is most likely related to multiple records for the same source.

Sample composition by database

Depending on the aim and thematic field of the mapping exercise, the corresponding keywords and their academic and librarian recognition and, more pragmatically, on the number of returns, searches can be restricted to the fields of title, abstract and keywords, which I will thereafter refer to as **focused** search. Alternatively, **broad** searches can be performed by expanding the searching fields, which will depend on the options offered by each database.

Tables 2 and 3 show the construction of a large sample (following a **broad** search) and a small sample (following a **focused** search) across databases. Although we assumed that the housing literature engaging ideas of ‘policy transfer’ was relatively small, the broad search resulted in a surprisingly large number of references (n=845) and the focused search in a relatively surprisingly small number (n=90). As our aim was exploratory in terms of both, a methodological approach to literature mapping and sourcing a sample of relevant references to be used in a future evidence review, we decided to further investigate the large sample (Table 2).

As Google Scholar is an increasingly common platform to source academic and grey literature in systematic or evidence reviews (Gough et al 2013), Table 3 shows returns by each separate policy keyword, with and without ‘housing’, with searches performed in the two available options, i.e. title and full text. Given the large number of returns and available ranking by ‘relevance’ – a black-box algorithm in Google – scholars argued to limit the sample to the first 100, 200 or 300 or until ‘saturation’ is reached (Harkins 2016). Other studies ignore Google Scholar in favour of sourcing a sample of high-quality literature traced from key, highly ranked journals (Wang et al 2016). Obviously the decision on what, how and where searches are to be performed should be justified relative to the topic, research questions, and aims of the review and pragmatic considerations, such as time and resource constraints.
Table 2. Large sample (all fields; databases; 23.10.2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searches</th>
<th>Where searched</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Exclusive</th>
<th>After duplicate removal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing AND (&quot;policy diffusion&quot; OR &quot;policy transfer&quot; OR &quot;policy mobility&quot; OR &quot;lesson drawing&quot; OR &quot;policy translation&quot; OR &quot;fast policy&quot;)</td>
<td>SCOPUS title, key, abstract, librarian index</td>
<td>1981-2017</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASSIA 'anywhere' i.e. abstract, title, subject</td>
<td>1996-0217</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WoS all databases for: topic, title</td>
<td>1999-2015</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>845 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SocINDEX title, key, abstract, librarian index</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google Not performed (see Table 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Small sample (title, keywords, abstract; databases; 31.10.2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searches</th>
<th>Where searched</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Exclusive</th>
<th>After duplicate removal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing AND (&quot;policy diffusion&quot; OR &quot;policy transfer&quot; OR &quot;policy mobility&quot; OR &quot;lesson drawing&quot; OR &quot;policy translation&quot; OR &quot;fast policy&quot;)</td>
<td>SCOPUS title, key, abstract</td>
<td>1990-2017</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>69 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASSIA abstract, title, subject</td>
<td>1996-2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WoS all databases for: topic, title</td>
<td>1999-2017</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>89 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soc Abstract title, abstract, subject</td>
<td>2005-2014</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SocINDEX Title, abstract, key</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google Not performed (see Table 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Google Scholar returns (title or full text; 21.11.2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On each policy keyword</th>
<th>On each policy keyword and “housing”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;policy diffusion&quot;</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;policy transfer&quot;</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;policy mobility&quot;</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;lesson drawing&quot;</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;policy translation&quot;</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;fast policy&quot;</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Excluding ‘patents’ and ‘citations’

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Preliminary analysis: publishing timeline

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the timelines captured by SCOPUS (Figure 1) and Google Scholar (Figure 2) differ significantly with a lag time for the former ranging from 6 years (‘policy diffusion’) to 19 years (‘policy transfer’ and ‘policy translation’). Without privileging one over the other in terms of ‘accuracy’ since error entries are equally possible\(^1\) and cannot be controlled before reference examination, some observations can be flagged.

First, ‘policy mobility’ brings the most recent and fastest growing body of literature of the six policy keywords. This is particularly evident since 2010 in librarian databases, which seems connected with the ‘mobility’ turn in social sciences, hence the promotion of mobility as a concept (Sheller & Urry 2006, Urry 2000). ‘Policy translation’ and ‘fast policy’ are also relatively recent (more so in SCOPUS than Google Scholar).

Second, the timeline of precedence between the sets of references returned by ‘policy transfer’ and ‘policy diffusion’ varies across databases. SCOPUS depicts ‘policy diffusion’ as being a decade older than ‘policy transfer’ is. Google Scholar indicates a parallel development, which nonetheless dates to an earlier decade (the 1970s) than SCOPUS timeline. Thus, arguing for one’s precedence over the other seems misleading. More accurately, they can be seen as parallel terms and/or concepts (one US-based, one UK-based as we will present further).

Third, ‘policy transfer’ is the most common/popular in both databases and ‘policy translation’ the least popular. If SCOPUS shows a deep fall in the usage of ‘policy transfer’ since 2013 (which is highly significant considering the increase in the number of journals, issues, conferences and the like), this trend is clearly not supported by Google Scholar returns.

Fourth, recently (since 2012/13 in SCOPUS and 2015 in Google Scholar), there is a trend in favour of a less dominant use of just one or two policy keywords towards more mixed returns. Given that these publishing timelines include a degree of duplicated literature across

\(^1\) For instance, further analysis showed that e.g., the phrase “… transport policy, transfer of passengers…” or “…government policy, transfer of the housing stock…” is discovered as “policy transfer”.
keywords, this may draw attention to a scholarly acknowledgment and engagement with several keywords seen as concepts – a point to which I return later. Further analysis will be conducted on the large sample (n=845, see Table 1). The coding methodology required for this analysis is presented next.

**Figure 1.** Publishing timeline in SCOPUS

![SCOPUS sample graph](image)

*Note: sourced on 23.10.2017*

**Figure 2.** Publishing timeline in Google Scholar

![Google Scholar sample graph](image)

*Note: sourced on 21.11.2017*
Coding methodology

Coding framework

In accordance with the aims of this literature-mapping, a 5-field coding system was developed within the EndNote database. The first coding field aimed at hand-mapping the six policy keywords (EndNote field 'label'). Multiple coding was allowed since we aimed to map the relationship between keyword-based literatures or, in other words, authors’ engagement across keywords or keywords’ overlap. The second coding field aimed at measuring ‘engagement’. This was facilitated by one of the most versatile EndNote field, that of ‘rating’. This provides a 5-star notation, requiring no further text input in coding or retrieving, saving therefore precious time in the lengthy process of coding and sorting. Obviously, this system can be used for coding any theme consisting of up to five subthemes or categories or as a measuring scale. In this case, I used the EndNote facility of ‘rating’ simply as a way of measuring ‘deep’ and ‘moderate’ engagement with our thematic focus, thus it should be read as a categorical measure for references meeting our selection criteria and not as a measuring system of quality:

- 5 stars represent ‘deep engagement’. This was marked on those references whose authors explicitly mentioned one of our policy keywords in title, keywords, abstract and/or (sub)-section’s title and include ‘housing’ in the text of the article (not just in the reference list). During examination, the author observed a few references where the word ‘housing’ was mentioned just once in the full text. These cases are thus situated at a fuzzy borderline between rejected papers and those considered of deep engagement.

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3 While star ‘rating’ is a versatile EndNote tool, opting for any set of two choices is circumstantial. I opted for 5-star/3-star notation simply for the EndNote visual effect being more distinctive than, e.g. a 1-star/2-star choice.
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- 3 stars represent ‘moderate engagement’. This was marked on those references whose authors mentioned our policy keywords in the text (NOT in: title, keywords, abstract, sub-/section’s titles). During review, two papers were rated 5 rather than 3 stars because of a very through engagement with policy keywords without them being used as required by the 5-star marking.

Engagement was checked in a comprehensive manner, being highly dependent on the availability of full text. For entries whose full text was available, the ‘find’ tool was used to check for the word “housing” (when this was not stated in the title, abstract and/or keywords); and for “policy” (which captures five of the six policy keywords) and “lesson” (for “lesson drawing”). When the word “policy” was too frequent, alternative words were input instead (diffusion; mobility; transfer; fast, translation). In the case of books, Table of Contents was sourced and checked for almost every book but it often proved inconclusive; introductory chapters were also checked when available.

The third coding field (EndNote field ‘notes’) aimed at clearly marking a reference as ‘rejected’, ‘unclear’ and, for those 3- and 5-star maintained references, recorded the number of citations (if any). More precisely:

- A reference was rejected when policy keywords (any of the six) and/or ‘housing’ were found only in the article’s reference list. This was seen as ‘weak engagement’ with the thematic focus of this mapping exercise.

- A reference was classified as ‘unclear’ when checking for engagement could not be performed due to missing full text. This affected mostly books, book chapters and a few articles to which we could not secure access.

- Citations were recorded as per database on 23.10.2017. Note that references were exported ranked by citation number rather than relevance. While searching for missing full texts, we unsurprisingly noted that the number of citations recognised in the sourcing database was generally much smaller than that shown by Google.

The fourth coding field aimed at mapping policy subfields (EndNote field ‘research notes’). Policy subfields were coded only for the 3- and 5-star papers by reading title, abstract and keywords and rarely by looking at full texts. The author started with a tentative, open framework of 18 sub-fields related to the six CaCHE themes (see Annex 2) but allowed for a
grounded approach. In order to avoid too much fragmentation, single coding was privileged while multiple codes were used sparingly.

The sixth coding field refers to country of case study (EndNote field ‘keywords’). This code included ‘multi-country’ for cross-country comparisons (including continents or geopolitical regions); the name of the country for intra-country comparisons; and ‘theory’ when there was no empirical case study. Note this is different from the authors’ geographies of affiliation mapped in SCOPUS (reported in Figure 4).

Preparing the database for coding

Given the presence of a few error entries, the valid sample size was 833 references and consisted of 583 journal articles; 189 books; 51 book sections; 3 conference proceedings; 3 conference papers; 1 report; 1 PhD thesis. Given our relatively comprehensive checking for scholarly engagement with the six policy keywords within housing, it was important to source the full texts. By using EndNote’s tool ‘find full text’, 423 full texts were sourced automatically at the beginning of the coding process and a further 159 were hand-found during the process of coding using Google search engines. Overall, full texts were found for 69 percent of our database entries (of 583 articles, 45 full-texts could not be sourced; of 189 books, only 7 introductory book chapters were sourced in full text).

The uniformity of the database preparation by Google searching, particularly the yearly mapping of the six policy keywords and hand-searching for references appeared suspect to Google’s inbuilt processes. Hence the author had to demonstrate not being a ‘robot’ at least daily. The speed of reviewing and coding was around 50-70 references a day (about 14 full working days for 845 references).

Sample reduction

Following the coding process, of the valid 833 entries (see Figure 3):

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4 Two citations, three articles in other languages than English and six duplicates which were unrecognized by the inbuilt EndNote’s tool ‘find duplicates’.
• 212 were classified ‘unclear’ (144 books; 34 book sections; 31 journal articles; 2 conference proceedings; 1 PhD thesis)
• 374 were 'rejected' for week thematic engagement (329 journal articles; 35 books; 6 book sections; 2 conference papers' 1 conference proceeding; 1 report). Of these, 48 references engaged seriously with policy keywords but not with housing (rated 1star for easy future retrieval).
• 247 were maintained (223 journal articles; 11 books; 12 book sections; 1 conference paper).

Of the 247 maintained entries:

• 137 references were coded 5 stars for deep thematic engagement. This sample is still significantly larger than the 90 entries in the small sample shown in Table 2 (resulted from a focused rather than a broad search). The 137 references consist of six books, nine book sections, one conference paper and 121 journal articles. Please see full list in Annex 5.
• 110 references were coded 3 stars for moderate thematic engagement (5 books, 3 book sections and 102 journal articles)

Figure 3. Sample reduction

5 Of these, 228 were sourced through SCOPUS (92.3%).
The following subsections will discuss the nature of and the relationship between these keywords comparatively across the large and reduced samples (i.e. n= 833 versus n=247 references, respectively) with further reporting on the reduced sample. Time constraints impeded a further analysis, including detailed coding of the subset of 137 references in order to report research design, empirical sample characteristics, key findings aspects or and highlight research gaps. However, this more detailed analysis will be performed by the author as part of the future evidence review.

**Thematic mapping**

**Keywords or concepts?**

Reference examination allowed noting that the use of the six policy keywords could be positioned along a continuum of engagement. At the one end of this continuum, scholars have simply referenced a keyword-related literature within their own alternative theoretical frameworks (e.g. policy analysis, convergence, effectiveness, networks, best practice). At the other end, scholars have acknowledged and critically engaged with these keywords as concepts in their own right (most of the 5-star papers). In between, keywords signified processes and practices, without being theorised (most of the 3-star papers). These different types of engagement occur relatively simultaneous in the timeline of the large sample (n=833). For instance, the publication timeline of the first approach (alternative conceptual framework) was 1981-2017; that of keywords used as processes and practices (the middle echelon) ranged from 1998 to 2017; and that of keywords used as concepts ranged from 1990 to 2017 (see also Figure 4). Arguably, this simultaneity would be even stronger if references were sourced more broadly via Google Scholar.

The fact that these policy keywords are not widely recognised as concepts by librarians and many scholars resulted in an apparently higher degree of divergence across the respective literatures in the larger sample than in the reduced sample (due to librarian index and authors’ keywords). Figure 4 illustrates an 18 percent overlap in the SCOPUS sub-sample (146 out of

6 Please note that it was not our aim to map these alternative conceptual terms in rejected references.
795 references) versus 36 percent in the reduced sample (89 out of 247 references) where keywords were entered following full-text hand-searches.

An important observation for future evidence/systematic reviews on this topic, supplementary keywords may be used (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett 2013). The author wishes to flag the following in particular:

- Policy circulation / tourism / contagion / adoption / copying / borrowing; travelling policy. These tended to be associated with ‘policy mobility’ and ‘policy transfer’. It was clearly noted that these terms are however rarely if ever treated as concepts.

- The hybrid keyword/concept ‘fast-policy transfer’ (which was coded under ‘policy transfer’ rather than ‘fast policy’ in this exercise).

- The frequent use of plural for policy ‘mobilities’ (which was not imputed in our searches) rather than the singular ‘mobility’. The author is unable to speculate whether searching for both singular and plural would return un-captured results but it was observed a tendency of interchangeable use (though this may have been a constructed searching effect). Note that as exact phrases were used (“policy mobility”) in Boolean formulae, truncation is not allowed. The Boolean OR should be used instead (“policy mobility” OR “policy mobilities”).

Keywords relationship

Figure 4 helps us understand the relationship between these policy keywords as well as to flag some differences and similarities between the large sample7 (left panel) and the reduced sample (right panel). First, the right panel evidences some significant differences in authors’ geographies of affiliation, with ‘policy diffusion’ being more US-based and ‘lesson drawing’, ‘policy transfer’ and ‘policy mobility’ being more UK-based.

In the same right panel (Figure 4), we see that ‘policy transfer’/lesson drawing’ (472 and 122 references, respectively) overlap to a larger extend, with (69 references belong to both sets.

7 To be more exact, this actually refers to the SCOPUS sub-sample of 795 references rather than the 833 sample.
This observation is also true for ‘policy transfer’/’policy mobility’. Another way of looking at this is by observing that 57 percent of references on ‘lesson-drawing’ and 33 percent of those on ‘policy mobility’ are nested in the sub-sample of ‘policy transfer’-related literature. Conversely, ‘policy diffusion’-/’policy transfer’-related literatures have the least overlap.

However, in the reduced sample, which is also more relevant to our exercise, the split between literatures is less pronounced. This may be partially explained by deeper authors’ engagements with these keywords as concepts in the 5-star papers. In particular, we note dense conversational overlapping between ‘policy transfer’/’policy mobility’ and ‘policy diffusion’/’policy transfer’ related literatures.

Another way of mapping authors’ conceptual engagement across keywords is by looking at ‘exclusivity rates’ as percentages of references that are exclusive to each keyword. Table 5 shows exclusivity rates of between 64 and 77 percent in the large sample (excluding the outlier ‘lesson drawing’); of 20-57 percent in the reduced sample; and of 23-40 in the 5-star sample (excluding the outlier ‘fast policy’). We also note in Table 5 that, without discounting overlapping, the relative size of the related literatures is quite similar across the large and reduced samples with the exception of ‘policy mobility’, which is significantly larger in the reduced sample and even more so in the 5-star sample (‘policy translation’ shows similar trends).
Figure 4. Keywords relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCOPUS (795 references)</th>
<th>Reduced sample (247 references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Reference overlap:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Policy diffusion (137)</th>
<th>Policy transfer (472)</th>
<th>Policy mobility (159)</th>
<th>Lesson drawing (122)</th>
<th>Fast policy (81)</th>
<th>Policy translation (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diffusion (137)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer (472)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility (159)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson (122)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast policy (81)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation (10)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Policy diffusion (44)</th>
<th>Policy transfer (154)</th>
<th>Policy mobility (83)</th>
<th>Lesson drawing (44)</th>
<th>Fast policy (20)</th>
<th>Policy translation (14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Diffusion (44)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer (154)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility (83)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson (44)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast policy (20)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation (14)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 5. Relative subsample size and exclusivity rates (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative subsample size</th>
<th>Exclusivity rates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large sample (n=833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy diffusion</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy transfer</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>Policy mobility</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Lesson drawing</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fast policy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy translation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Given groups overlapping, the sum of the relative sizes is always larger than 100 percent. The larger the overlap, the higher is the sum of relative sizes and the smaller are the exclusivity rates (which should not be added up as they measure within group effects).

Case-study geographies

Of 247 references, 85 were coded as ‘multi-country’ which, given the high topical potential for cross-country comparisons may seem relatively low. A further 24 were coded as ‘theory’, one was unclear, and the remaining 137 were country-specific. Some of the ‘multi-country’ references focused on global geographies (n=26), others on continental geographies\(^8\) and the remaining compared two to several countries. Summing up country cases in country-specific and cross-country comparisons, it becomes clear that the UK and US dominance in geographies of affiliations is mirrored within the case-study geographies (Figure 5). This

\(^8\) Europe (n=11), Asia (n=3), Latin America (n=2), Africa (2) and Middle East (1).
should not surprise the reader since an English bias was introduced from the outset through the use of English keywords, with the implication that results were partial in their geographical coverage. Moreover, academic knowledge, like any other knowledge, is situated (Haraway 1991), including geographically.

Policy subfields

As expected, the initially top-down framework (Annex 2) based on CaCHE themes was too rigid for the richness of policy domains found in the literature. A bottom-up approach seemed to navigate this literature better. However there is a sensitive balance to be struck between fragmentation (preliminary bottom-up coding) and aggregation (higher-level coding) in order to ‘make sense’ of this information. Overall, 35 policy-subfields were recorded within the reduced sample (n=247); of these 28 were recorded within the 5-star sample (n=137). These policy subfields were often strongly interlinked, such as the provision of new ‘affordable housing’ and ‘planning’, in which case multiple coding was used. Sometimes authors compared aspects of ‘policy transfer’ across a multitude of unconnected policy subfields, in which case papers’ focus was recorded as ‘eclectic’.

Figure 5. Geographies of case-studies (reduced sample, n=247)

Note: The author acknowledges a small degree of error since case study geography was coded mainly based on title, abstract and keywords (rarely by examining the introduction) and not by coding the method section.
Note: Some policy subfields were quite diverse thematically. For instance, ‘urban sustainability’ included energy and green-building research, cycling and transport connectivity; ‘global cities’ included research on creative cities, city branding and quite a significant number of mega events.

As the process of coding was carried out exclusively by one researcher and without team consultation, results should be read with some caution. The aim of using multiple-coding sparingly resulted in subjective decisions regarding the judgment of a paper’s key policy focus. In future, it is recommended that teams will develop clearer aims and protocols for mapping policy subfields. Under these reservations, the most common policy-subfields were planning, followed at some distance by the domain of multilevel governance, affordable housing, global cities, social housing and homelessness. Figure 6 illustrates subfield density within the 5-star sample. Likewise, Annex 3 presents subfield density comparatively in the reduced and 5-star samples (n=247 and n=137, respectively).

Quality ranking

One of the key differences between systematic versus mapping/scoping/fast reviews is that the latter do not include quality thresholds while still reviewing the research methods used. This literature mapping did not aim to set methodological quality parameters nor to review the method sections. Instead, we considered paying attention to database in-built quality measures that rank by algorithmic relevance or by the number of citations. We recognise the limitations and merits of both. For instance, the two ranking systems seem uncorrelated...
though we were unable – and it was beyond our purpose – to quantify this. Furthermore, as with any black-box algorithm, it is difficult to judge the relevance and accuracy of automatically generated relevance ranking. Finally, the number of citations in librarian databases was restricted to their own base, hence they were much lower than those recorded in Google Scholar; moreover, effects of self-citing academic/editorial groups were also recognised (Nutley et al 2003). Nonetheless, for the purpose of this exercise, they both constitute a fast and pragmatic way of proxying academic impact if not quality.

With these perils in mind, we opted for ranking references by number of citations just because we could understand the likely limitations of this method better than relevance ranking by black-box algorithms. Suffice to say that nine references had over 100 citations and six references had between 51-95 citations (of which seven and four were 5-star coded, respectively); 178 references had between 1-49 citations (of which 98 were 5-star coded). Annex 4 lists the 15 references having more than 50 citations.

Broad against focused searches

Two different searching methods were considered at the outset of this exercise in literature mapping, as we have already discussed. One was a broad search resulting in a large sample of 845 references (Table 2) while the other was a focused search resulting in a small sample of 90 references (Table 3). The reporting so far has focused on the coding, sample reduction and discussion of results based on the large sample only. However, was it worth the effort at searching broadly in terms of discovering relevant references?

Figure 7 shows the relationship between the two initial samples (the small sample being obviously nested in the large one) versus the subset of 5-star references, which we singled out as being most relevant according to our coding system. Given that 102 more references were sourced through the broad rather than the focused search, and considering that a sample of 35 references seems small for a mapping/scoping review (Erasmus et al 2014), we consider that the effort of examining a large number of references was worthwhile. A stronger reference base has been thus made available for a future evidence review. However, we should note that the retention rate was much higher in the small, focused sample than in the large, broad one (more exactly 39 versus 16 percent). It follows that the searching method should be adapted according to the number of returns and available time and human resources.
Figure 7. Comparing the results of the broad and focused search

Note: The not 5-star references are those: rejected for weak engagement; coded as unclear; 3-star references (moderate engagement).

Concluding remarks

This literature mapping aimed at collecting and scanning the intersection between the broad literature of ‘policy transfer’ and housing scholarship in order to record broad temporal, spatial and thematic trends. This was seen as a key preliminary step for a future evidence review in order to source a pool of relevant literature while understanding some of its characteristics.

More generally, literature mapping is a useful device given the growing size of academic literature across interdisciplinary fields, such as housing, which can no longer be known by exploring the content of a limited number of preferred journals. Hence, developing a related methodological framework was another aim of this exercise. It is important to note that both our aims and thus our meaning of “literature-mapping” differs from the more common understanding of a ‘scoping review’ (Arksey & O’Malley 2005) or ‘mapping review’ (Erasmus et al 2014) with the last two being much more focused, e.g. through narrower research questions, types of policy intervention, participants’ characteristics and research methods (Gough et al 2013, Hagen-Zanker & Mallett 2013).

In relation to the first aim, that of understanding temporal, spatial and thematic trends in in the literature, some interesting discoveries were made even at this thin level of analysis. This exercise confirmed the team assumptions related to the longevity of scholarly engagement with some terms (i.e. policy transfer, policy diffusion and lesson drawing) and the relative
novelty of others (i.e. policy mobility, policy translation and policy translation), however the timeline was definitively longer than expected.

More importantly, the exercise evidenced dominant geographies of affiliations, which were highly correlated with the geographies of case-studies. UK universities have absolute dominance in engaging ideas of ‘policy transfer’ and ‘lesson drawing’ in housing scholarship as it has in terms of case-study geographies. US universities come (as a close or more distant) second, except in their clear lead in ideas of ‘policy diffusion’. Universities from Australia, Canada and the Netherlands were also relatively well represented, with the first two also taking the third and fourth position, respectively, regarding case-study locations.

By a system of tracing/coding engagement we were able to source a pool of literature in which the six policy keywords were treated as concepts in their own right; this was confirmed by patterns in exclusivity rates and overlapping zones across keywords/concepts. Perhaps our results were somewhat disappointing in terms of policy-subfields. With the exception of planning and multi-level governance, the policy focus of the maintained references is highly fragmented. This finding may both suggest fields in which a systematic/evidence review may be feasible as well as highlighting research gaps. Nonetheless, the author has flagged some caution in interpreting this finding.

In relation to the second aim, that of developing a methodology for literature mapping, the author wishes to succinctly reflect at some lessons learned through this exercise. With other scholars (Croucher et al 2003), we first flag the crucial importance of selecting the search keywords. As opposed to other type of reviews, the aims of literature mapping can be broad, as in this exercise, and therefore so are the searches. The merits and demerits of broad keywords (unrestricted by additional criteria such as particular methods, target groups, interventions and the like) should be only judged in accordance to the aims of the exercise. Nonetheless, keywords selection will also pragmatically depend on the actual size of related literatures (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett 2013). In this instance, the relative small size of the literature determined us to conduct broad searches with keywords unrestricted by additional inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Second, we found the use of librarian databases very useful for literature mapping because they are sufficiently broad, include the quality criterion of published output, and offer in-built tools for fast analysis and visualisation. For this particular topic, SCOPUS was by far the most relevant database: 98 percent of references in the initial large sample, 92 percent in the reduced sample and 93 percent in the 5-star sub were sourced there. Despite this peculiarity,
a mix of databases should always be considered and piloted at the outset in any similar exercises (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett 2013). Additionally, we found merits in evidencing some trends in the much larger literature returned by Google Scholar.

Third, we feel ambivalent regarding the outright inclusion or exclusion of books and book chapters; a significant time was used to source, often inconclusive information on their contents yet those included in the final sample are some of the most cited resources. Perhaps a strategy principled on convenience would suffice, such as including key books with which the team is already acquainted or making a fast search exclusive to books/book chapters and retained the first 50 most cited entries with further searches excluding these reference types.

Fourth, the EndNote database was found extremely useful for a preliminary coding. Finally, the author regrets that recourse constraints did not allowed at this stage a deeper analysis of the most relevant 137 references, by which this study would have crossed the fuzzy borderline towards a scoping or evidence review (Arksey & O'Malley 2005, Gough et al 2012).

References


Erasmus E, Orgill M, Schneider H, Gilson L. 2014. Mapping the existing body of health policy implementation research in lower income settings: What is covered and what are the gaps? *Health Policy and Planning*


Hagen-Zanker J, Mallett R. 2013. How to do a rigorous, evidence-focused literature review in international development A Guidance Note


Harkins C. 2016. Public health implications of payday lending, GCPH, Glasgow


Serin B. forthcoming 2018b. Mapping the Housing Supply Literature, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence


Soaita AM. 2018b. Literature Mapping on Housing Taxation in the UK and Other OECD Countries, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence


Wang Y, Chau CK, Ng WY, Leung TM. 2016. A review on the effects of physical built environment attributes on enhancing walking and cycling activity levels within residential neighbourhoods. *Cities* 50: 1-15
## Annex 1. Getting a preliminary feel of the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key concepts</th>
<th>Case study/Setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>(title; keywords; few abstracts)</td>
<td>(title; keywords; few abstracts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic laboratories</td>
<td>Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics of (incl regional effects; when policy innovation spreads; time of rapid diffusion; multi-levels dynamics; modelling dynamics)</td>
<td>Borrowing/Lending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging issues</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key scholars: Berry and Berry; Dolowitz; Benson Jordan; Jamie Peck</td>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson drawing/learning (incl how to; models of learning; quality of policy learning)</td>
<td>Consultants (incl think-tank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling</td>
<td>Creative industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-country comparison</td>
<td>Crime policies (inc. probation; justice; death; morality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-diffusion (incl policy resistance; non-transfer)</td>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Economic reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research agenda (incl future research; research directions)</td>
<td>Education policy (incl school choice, higher education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The economics of…</td>
<td>Energy policy (incl utility regulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The state-local nexus</td>
<td>Environment policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory (inc. expected-utility; bounded rationality; differences between ‘diffusion’/‘transfer’ perspectives as structure/agency; review’ paradigm-perspective ‘the diffusion of policy diffusion research’; the politics of…; as assemblage; critical perspective/coercion; epistemic communities; historic perspectives; altruism)</td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who learns what</td>
<td>Federal Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanisms</td>
<td>Food</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gun control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Health (incl children health)</td>
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<td>Immigration (incl forced immigration)</td>
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<td>Insurance (incl health)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intergovernmental cooperation (incl across local governments)</td>
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<td>Liberalization policy</td>
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<td>Multinationals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>NHS reform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Soft: (inc. ideology; internalization; professional development; circuit of knowledge; intercultural translation; networks and norms; agents and networks; networks; geographical proximity; contagious public opinion; power and discourses; migration; cross national marriage; branding; ideas; epistemic communities)

Institutional processes (incl accreditation; power interests; multinationals; institutional legitimisation; institutional memory; norms and social hierarchies)

Policy processes (inc public policy; attraction factors; Europeanization; promotion of...; intergovernmental competition; policy attributes; models of policy learning; policy making; USAID; World Bank; state incentives)

Structural pressures (inc globalization; Europeanization; liberalization)

- Pension funds
- Post-communist transformation
- Same-sex marriage ban
- Section 1115
- Several financial policies
- Several political (women rights, political parties; politics of diffusion)
- Several unconnected (e.g. in modelling)
- Tabaco policies (incl smoking ban)
- Taxation (inc tax transfers; income tax; corporate taxation)
- Technology transfer
- Theory
- Transport policy
- Urban regeneration/planning
- Welfare and workfare state/policy (inc new welfare arrangements)

Annex 2. Initial coding frame

1. Housing and economics
   a. Housing taxation
   b. Housing finance
   c. Affordable housing
2. Housing markets
   a. Housing supply
   b. Social housing (renovation, regeneration)
3. Housing aspirations, choices and outcomes
   a. Tenure shifts
4. Housing poverty, health, education, employment
   a. Work and housing
   b. Health and housing
   c. Education and housing
   d. Environment and housing
   e. Welfare reforms and housing
5. Housing and neighbourhood
   a. Good design / participatory design
   b. Planning (inclusionary housing)
   c. Neighbourhood effects

6. Housing and multi-level governance
   a. Devolution / local diversity (City-deals; city-region deals)
   b. Cross-country comparisons
   c. Economy and housing
   d. Politics and housing

Annex 3. Policy-subfield density
## Annex 4. Most cited references

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cited</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>McFarlane, C. (2011). Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage: Wiley-Blackwell.</td>
<td>5-star</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Slater, T.</td>
<td>The Myth of 'Broken Britain': Welfare Reform and the Production of Ignorance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: List is ranked by number of citations
Annex 5. List of 5-star references

Please note that all references were exported directly from the EndNote database in the form in which they were automatically retrieved, without additional editing by the author.


Michel, B. (2013). When mobile policies drive against the wall. Limits of policy transfer using the example of Business Improvement Districts in Germany. Berichte. Geographie und Landeskunde, 87(1), 87-102.


