

# Minding the gap between policymakers and researchers

## The TIPC transformative learning history

This briefing is a snapshot of insights for policymakers and practitioners engaged in Transformative Innovation Policy (TIP) action and experimentation. These are the main takeaways compiled from the 2023 learning history report.

[www.tipconsortium.net/publication/tipc-learning-history/](http://www.tipconsortium.net/publication/tipc-learning-history/)

### The report's aims are to:

- Give insights on the first stage of the TIPC co-creation journey between policymakers (PM), practitioners (PR) and researchers (R)
- Narrate the lived experience of TIPC based on the distinct storylines of actors
- Distil learnings from the TIP researcher and policymaker teams to highlight diverse perspectives from the Global North and South, specifically, Europe, Africa and Latin America
- Identify opportunities for ongoing expansion in understanding TIP capabilities and TIP practice around the methodology
- Inform future collaboration in the evolution and scaling of TIP across global policy programmes and the TIP Knowledge Community using the culmination of learnings as embodied in the [TIP Resource Lab](#) tools and activities

### The Learning History's central questions:

- How did world views, assumptions and understanding change for policymakers and researchers following engagement with the TIP methodology?
- What are the implications from the learnings for setting up and running policy programmes which use a Transformative Innovation Policy approach?

## Timeline of TIPC events analysed for the Learning History

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

TIPC Country-level case studies (South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal)

**Policy Experiment** – Formative evaluation for transformative outcomes with the Swedish Agency of Innovation, Vinnova

**Policy Experiment** – Building a Methodology and Community of Practice for Catalysing Transformative Change through System, led by the EIT Climate-KIC

**Learning Event** – Policy experimentation for transformative change in the Nordic region

**Policy Experiment** – Roadmap for the integration of the TIP principles to the Programme A Ciencia Cierta (Social Appreciation), led by the Colombian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Minciencias

**TIP Conference** – Building a sustainable knowledge infrastructure on transformative innovation policy

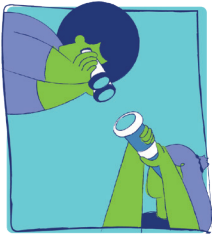
**Nordic Learning Event** – Futures literacy in TIP

**South African Colloquium** – Transformative Innovation Policy: Perspectives from South Africa

**Policy Experiment** – Living Catchments (LC) project financed by the South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and led by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)

The Learning History is formed from views, discussions and expectations of those who participated in the policy engagements and learning events across this period. All the quotes have been anonymised. The viewpoint they illustrate is indicated: policymaker – PM, practitioner – PR, researcher – R

# Key insights, recommendations and guidelines for a TIP Policy Experiment:



## 1. The programme beginning: understand all the project team's perspectives, assumptions and expectations.

The interactions between TIP researchers and practitioners and policymakers may be demanding initially as the programme collaboration forms. Trust and rapport must be established – the TIP approach is NOT consultancy, it is co-creation. Knowledge and expertise resides across all team members in differing ways and this needs to be drawn out to enrich the collaboration. To form a conducive social dynamic in the team, give equal value to each perspective through active listening and reflection to establish a shared understanding. This needs sufficient time and space to develop. Some policymakers stressed the importance of 'unlearning', or putting aside assumptions concerning 'academic frameworks' and 'external experts' dictating methods that are not conducive to 'real-life'. TIP centres on collaboration and co-creation with continual evaluation to monitor and adapt to the on-the-ground realities. Constructive conflict is an opportunity for learning and navigating complexity to create new ways of communication.



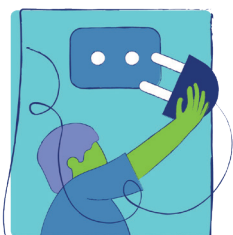
**Collaborations happen between human beings; not artificial constructs such as "organisations" or "researchers" and "practitioners". All this led to a much better social dynamic. (PM)**

## 2. What policymakers require: a researcher with multiple capabilities

TIP researchers on the policy engagement project need to be skilled in understanding, adapting and facilitating the TIP theory to the policymakers' context. Applying interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods is essential yet it is difficult in practice. Qualities such as adaptability, humility, flexibility and empathy are necessary to communicate and adapt the theory into practice and to adjust to the needs of policy teams to help create real cases of transformation. Reflexivity and critical thinking is key.



**Re-interpret and adjust initial assumptions and the types of interventions required, whilst gaining a strong understanding of the system in which one is working. (R)**



## 3. What researchers need: a policymaker practitioner open to broad change with good leadership and facilitation skills

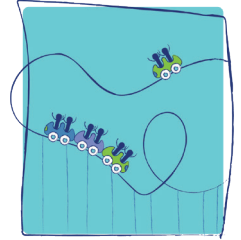
Policymakers are positioned as change agents in the TIP approach. There is active participation in evaluation of the project to enable practitioners to be 'agents of transformation'. An open mindset for new ways of working is helpful to gain shifts and results. For the TIP methods to be applied in the context, practitioner facilitation and leadership skills are characteristics beneficial to the process.



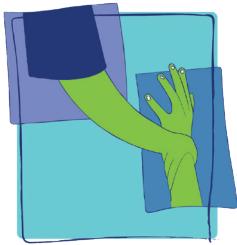
**I realised the skills needed are experiment facilitation...and influencing skills (...) the qualities of a person leading the experiment or bringing in the tools into the experiment (...) leadership skills that are required for..lobbying and influencing. (PR)**

## 4. The contextual roller coaster of policymakers and researchers

The TIP approach is new and pioneering. It takes adaptation to fit well in different work and performance environments. Institutional buy-in and commitment of staff, time and financial resources for stable policy engagements is recommended. Sometimes policymakers can find the implementation of the TIP approach challenging and difficult to operationalise, as it changes how their organisation approaches work. TIP experiments, while developing alternatives for system transformation, are also 'niches' that need protecting and nurturing. The experiment benefits from the ability to go against the norms associated with 'business-as-usual'. When experimenting for sustainability, conducive conditions are embracing the long view; holding uncertainty; and being aware of tension as part of the process of change.



**Cultural, structural and institutional conditions in every location can affect the application of the framework, for instance, a short-term mandate. There is a need for 'efficiency' in the implementation of experiments from the institutional point of view. (PM)**



## 5. Leaving no one behind: the challenge of inclusion

'Bottom-up' participation is a central principle of the TIP approach. This can be complex to integrate into the policy engagement as often important voices are still missing in the conversations about design, structural changes and transformation. Balance complexity by deciding on the 'ideal level' of inclusion., to formulate specific strategies and create channels to bring local communities into the experiments. Create spaces in which citizens freely express their opinions and suggestions. This is crucial. Intermediaries, such as universities, can play a relevant role in bringing in relevant voices.



**When you open up the conversation such as a grassroots group on a specific issue, how do you do it without falling into 'populism'? How not to invalidate the conversation with the grassroots group base, with the niches, but neither do we limit ourselves to the level of the scientific elite and listen [only] to them (...) we need to figure out mechanisms, methodologies on how the two [approaches] can work together. (PM)**

## 6. No one size fits all: the challenges of adapting the TIP methodology

The TIP concepts and tools give structure to a new formulation of innovation policy towards a long-term and sustainable transition. The approach gives perspective to system change complexity and its implications. However, the TIP framework needs adaptation to the organisational reality, resources and mandate of policymakers across differing global contexts. Attention needs to be paid to the cultural aspects, backgrounds, disciplines, visions and assumptions that inform the interactions between TIP researchers and practitioners, and thus the practice of the transformative framework. Mutual understanding of the context and the experiment's purpose must also be reached. Adaptation and flexibility of the framework are key for its application.



**"We [have] a framework and lens that gave us a structure to use innovation policy to achieve transformation, to achieve this transition to sustainability (...) if you map out the 'multi-level perspective' or the 'socio-technical system'...you've got labels, you understand exactly the grand scale change that you are orchestrating or advocating." (PR)**



## 7. To be or not TO be: the relevance (and difficulties) of using transformative outcomes and theories of change in formative evaluation

The 'Transformative Outcomes' (TOs) and the Transformative Theory of Change (TToC) used during the formative evaluation exercise in the TIP methodology bring a more systemic understanding to policy interventions and give a deep reflection on what transformation means. Nevertheless, building a vision of change during engagements is complicated, and it is not always obvious how different actors can be involved in the transition, what their roles are and what it means to be dynamic in transformative terms. Clarity and a clear understanding of transitions, systemic change, TIP and the role of each actor is key. Alternative uses for the TO and other methods may occur and can be embraced. Learning and adaptation is paramount to TIP.



**I find our efforts with this very valuable because when it comes to ToCs and different types of impact logics, we want to both think about and visualise these kinds of things in new ways; that grasp a complex reality and multi-level interventions where the aim is to actually affect the whole system rather than single innovations or value chains. (PM)**

### Conclusions

Besides these capabilities, constant reflection, values of trust gained through social interactions, evolution of (individual and group) learning and support in the creation, and sharing of new knowledge, have been essential in the formation of TIPC as a learning space and its globally expanding community of practice. Learning has required iterative processes between researchers, policymakers and practitioners in which these communities co-create together by developing new ideas and possibilities and question their assumptions based on collaborative action. Moreover, the TIP methodology used in the different engagements has been a source of this meaningful learning but it also needs to be revisited and translated more accurately for the wide array of actors that are part of the TIP sphere. These insights can be taken into the next expansion stage of TIPC using the new [TIP Resource Lab's](#) tools, actions and evidence-based learnings for policy and project engagements globally.

### Report link and reference:

Bernal-Hernández, P., Boni, A. (2023). [Minding the gap between policymakers and researchers: the TIPC transformative learning history](#). TIPC report

### Further Reading

Three frames for innovation policy – <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048733318301987>

A formative approach to the evaluation of Transformative Innovation Policies –

<https://academic.oup.com/rev/article/30/4/431/6342449>

Transformative Outcomes for guiding policy experiments – <https://www.tipconsortium.net/publication/transformative-outcomes-assessing-and-reorienting-experimentation-with-transformative-innovation-policy-2/>



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