5 July 2022

Guide to writing translational articles

Data & Policy (cambridge.org/dap) is an open-access journal at the interface of data science and governance, which emerged out of the community built by the Data for Policy Conference (dataforpolicy.org): a forum that has successfully networked researchers, policymakers, commercial and non-commercial stakeholders.

In 2021, we launched a new category called **translational articles**, focused on the transfer of knowledge from research to practice and from practice to research. There are longstanding debates about the possibility of translating between domains, integrating knowledge and data from different methods and concepts (for recent discussions, see for instance Uprichard and Dawney 2016, Neff et al. 2017, Ribes 2018, Beuving 2019). In *Data & Policy* we are interested in both domain-specific translational articles that are relevant to the journal's scope, and we also call for generic domain-agnostic translational articles.

We welcome translational articles from practitioners, researchers in academia and those in positions specifically tasked with translating key ideas from one side to the other (e.g. data scientists within official statistical agencies).

What defines a translational article is the challenge of knowledge transfer, rather than the affiliation of the author. We expect these **translational articles** to be **short** (approx. 6,000 words) with a focus on the **setting** in which **data innovation programs**, **practices** and **tools,** as well as **data science principles or techniques** have been used to address policy problems. Discussion about methods to enable knowledge transfer is also encouraged. Importantly, translational articles should present **translational lessons learnt** in a way that is useful for both researchers and practitioners.

Note that in addition to translational articles, *Data & Policy* also publishes research articles that use rigorous methods to investigate how data science can inform or impact policy (up to 10,000 words) and shorter commentaries (approx 5,000 words) that discuss or problematize issues relevant to the *Data & Policy* scope. We also have the *Data & Policy* blog for short, informed posts on ongoing issues in the wider sphere of data science and governance. Authors should consider which is the most appropriate category for their paper before they submit.

Topics that may inform a translational article

- **Data innovation programs, practices, tools, theories**
- **Data science principles or techniques** used to address policy problem
- **The setting in which the research took place:** How was the policy problem defined, by whom, according to what interests? How did the policy problem and the research focus shape each other throughout the study? What actors and resources were assembled throughout the study and how did they shape the study?
- **The performativity of concepts and methods:** How did the setting shape the application of concepts and methods and vice versa? How did concepts, methods, and research roll-out enable or constrain cooperation with research subjects, co-researchers, or study

beneficiaries? Were different concepts and methods being tested and how did they shape the perspectives that the study yielded?

- **Making data fit for purpose:** What data sources were used for the study and what was the rationale behind their selection? How was the data qualified to fit a specific purpose? Who articulated the purpose? What enabled or constrained making data fit for purpose?
- **Lessons for practitioners and other research fields**: What lessons could others draw from this study? Who could or should replicate the study and for what purpose (e.g. for validation or the triangulation of findings with different data and methods)? What lessons can be drawn for inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary collaborations?

Template

Authors can use the *Data & Policy* LaTeX and Word templates to help structure their articles.

Audience

Authors should bear in mind that the *Data & Policy* audience contains both researchers and practitioners and articles should be written accordingly.

Length

We suggest 6,000 words in length, not including references. This keeps the article succinct for the audience and also contrasts with longer research articles.

Title

This should be succinct and refer to the setting and the problem.

Abstract

As with other *Data & Policy* articles, an abstract should be included, stating that this is a translational article and summarising the aim, approach and any findings (250 words)

Policy significance statement

As with *Data & Policy* articles, provide a 120-word statement beneath the abstract about the paper's significance for policymakers. This could act as a precis of the recommendations

Structure

An introductory section should set out the context: the setting, the people involved, the central policy problem being addressed and other solutions that have been attempted in the past.

A section of the article should focus on the data being used, outlining any challenges to do with its access and use.

An account of the approach taken to the problem should include a good description of the environment, the methods and the analysis tools, justifications for decisions and any limitations.

Any findings should be presented with evidence describing how they were validated.

Conclude with a '**Lessons learnt'** section. For ease of readers in both practitioner and academic community, it may be useful to present these as bullet points.

Citations

We expect authors to refer to the relevant academic literature and grey literature.

Review process

Translational articles will undergo peer review, typically by two reviewers. Reviewers are asked to consider that these are articles specifically addressing the challenge of knowledge transfer.

Contact

If you have questions about this guidance, please contact us on dataandpolicy@cambridge.org

Examples

Ricciato, F., Wirthmann, A., & Hahn, M. (2020). Trusted Smart Statistics: How new data will change official statistics. *Data & Policy, 2*, E7. doi:10.1017/dap.2020.7

Telco Big Data Analytics for Covid-19: a series of articles showcasing telco-government collaborations with the aim of learning lessons for future pandemics.