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Leiden, The Netherlands

International
conference
**Towards
Knowledge
Democracy**



The Leiden Agenda Recommendations to the Scientific Community, Politicians, the Media and Society in a growing Knowledge Democracy

During the international conference on 'Towards Knowledge Democracy' held in Leiden from 25-27 August 2009 with some 500 participants from more than 26 countries, representatives from the scientific community, politicians, the media, businesses and the general public discussed the challenges and opportunities to be found at the interface between science, politics, society and the media.

The ability to apply cross border knowledge at these interfaces is essential in our present-day world where knowledge is becoming increasingly democratised. During the conference, different plenary meetings and separate sessions took place, in more than 40 meetings, where more than 200 speakers debated issues with one another and with other participants. This Leiden Agenda comprises the main conclusions and recommendations arising from the conference.

What is the challenge?

Democracy has without doubt been the most successful governance concept for many societies over the past two centuries. Democracy is a strong brand that is also applied by rulers who meet no institutional democratic criteria. The debate on the future of democracy has, nonetheless, not yet resulted in any significant institutional innovations. Established political parties try to combat populism with familiar means: a combination of anti-populist rhetoric and adopting the populist agenda. The response from some areas of the media is that they are 'becoming more populist than the populists themselves.' This is almost always at the cost of analytical depth.

Considerable cognitive and emotional investments have been made in the present democratic institutions, which has enhanced the stability of these institutions. Exogenous as well as endogenous developments, however, threaten the continued success of representative parliamentary democracy.

In the meantime, the worldwide web provides the opportunity for drastic changes in the rules of play. There has been an explosion of information and knowledge, which goes hand in hand with a lack of both critical filtering and external review. Personal attacks via weblogs have become political facts; virtual allegations develop into uncontrolled urban myths and it is becoming increasingly easy for pressure groups to find support via the internet. The Obama campaign set a new trend in terms of its use of internet.

Over the past decade, an influential debate has been conducted on the "knowledge-based economy". This concept has even become the main policy objective of the European Union and has been translated into the Lisbon Strategy. There are, however, signs that indicate that the strength of the argumentation is rapidly waning.

The present worldwide economic crisis is leading to new, highly challenging questions. These questions are primarily related to the institutional frameworks of present-day societies. How can we,

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being part of the society, make it livable or maintain its livability? What knowledge is needed for that purpose? How can we by our personal behaviour contribute to this end?

In short, it is time for a transition to a new concept that concentrates on institutional and functional innovation. Given that the industrial economy has combined with mass democracy originally as a result of universal suffrage, and later as a result of the growth of the mass media, it can be suggested that the logical successor to the 'knowledge economy' is a new governance concept, that we will call the 'knowledge democracy.'

All this leads to the following questions: What challenges and threats will we have to face? How can we deal with them and what knowledge is needed? How can the respectable parliamentary and newer direct forms of democracy blend together, and what roles will knowledge play in the transition to a knowledge democracy?

Tensions between science, policy, the media, businesses and citizens

The observations and considerations mentioned give rise to the question of what are the links between science, policy, media and society where knowledge is at issue, and what tensions this gives rise to. There are, for example, tensions relating to the application of knowledge (should particular knowledge be used or not, is it welcome or not), about the access to knowledge (is the necessary knowledge available, is it protected or not) and about the selection of knowledge sources.

From a democratic perspective, the development, dissemination and use of knowledge has to meet certain conditions. These are conditions related to legitimacy, pluralism, credibility and independence, relevance and participation and accessibility and accountability. From a democratic viewpoint, this serves to normalise the way the existing tensions are regarded.

Knowledge for policy, for example, should be developed independently, i.e. it should not be one-sidedly focused on particular concerns and should not simply say what the principal wants to hear. The knowledge should, however, be useable and relevant for the policy-maker. Knowledge must, of course, also be credible. This means that demands have to be made with regard to the scientific foundation of the knowledge. Knowledge also has to be legitimate; in other words, there has to be accountability to the society that provides the public resources or that wants to know how knowledge is used in decision-making and implementation.

In developing knowledge it is important, particularly with complex problems, to strive for pluralism, both in the sense that different sources of knowledge are consulted, as well as in the sense that the starting point should not be a single problem definition by a single interest group.

Where necessary and desirable, stakeholders should be involved in developing knowledge, in the expectation that in this way their needs for knowledge can better be addressed, and there is more likelihood that the results will be accepted. From a democratic point of view, it is after all desirable for knowledge to be universally accessible. Any lack of symmetry in how knowledge is distributed must be reversed. Intellectual ownership of knowledge should not create any dependencies, new or otherwise.

A well-known known example of tension at the interface between policy and science is unwelcome knowledge. This tension is sometimes generated through the multi-level game of politicians who try to fight out their differences via the scientific community and the media. This evokes the question of whether the opposition should have the right to have certain issues investigated out of the general resources. How far should one go in this? Parliament has its own research institute and the question is how this agency handles the different parties' need for knowledge. Other conflicts within departments in terms of knowledge arise from the contextual expertise of departments and the dominance of the particular notions of the day, which results in insufficient knowledge, including strategic knowledge, being developed for the future. The extension of the chain in departments (horizontalisation) will eventually lead to a situation where the financial affairs department has the final say on knowledge and research. Democratic accountability becomes problematic.

Hypes are not restricted to media land, but are also a feature in the policy world. At times there is a lack of critical reflection on the usefulness of and need for new research programmes that are recommended to departments. The existing assessment mechanisms focus primarily on expected

scientific and social benefits. In scientific research hypes are visible in the relabelling of research, modifying the formulation of research proposals. For many researchers policy only seems interesting if it is possible to get funds for research.

A lack of critical reflection can be noted among representatives of diverse media as to the information and knowledge they present to the consumer. Some newspapers take a responsible attitude, while others do not. Uncritical reproduction of information or knowledge on the one hand, and on the other hand manipulative expansion of information or knowledge, particularly with regard to 'hot items'. At times, scientific knowledge is made public in an overly simplistic way ('toxic CO₂').

In some areas of the media (internet), there is no quality control at all on the 'knowledge' and 'information' that can be found on certain websites. Traditional filters for the reliability of knowledge are lacking in the new media. The problem of the credibility of information and knowledge is becoming increasingly acute, given the current explosion of opportunities for knowledge transfer resulting from new technologies.

There seems to be a too easy trust that the 'fair hearing' principle will allow critical voices to be heard via the media. Politicians and scientists have learned that they have to communicate in 'sound bites'; nuance is not popular. There is a denaturing of the political debate in parliament because the discussion is transferred to chat programmes on TV. The 'melding' of politicians and the media' (hypes around particular politicians) is an unhealthy phenomenon from a democratic viewpoint.

In the present knowledge society citizens can be competent observers of the reality of a situation, as well as competent information gatherers, producers and assessors. As competent information gatherers and assessors, citizens can also be competent supervisors and in a number of cases also competent decision-makers. Little use is made of these possibilities in traditional politics by way of an experiment.

Some politicians take up what is presented as "citizen science", which may work out positively, but may equally, due to the absence of checks on the robustness of the knowledge, turn out negatively. Examples at European scale include the discussion on neuroscience (initiated by the EU "Meeting of Minds" debate on what is possible, how people regard the issue, where the boundaries lie) and discussions on the effects of climate change in the world (initiated by the Danish Board of Technology).

Open source constructions allow citizens to play a role in broadening knowledge. These open source constructions are based on the knowledge contributions made by a great many people, and are aimed at achieving a perfect product, such as Linux software, for example, through free access and equal access. Wikipedia is an initiative that has broad appeal. The conflict here lies in the area of free access to all kinds of knowledge and the credibility of that knowledge.

Knowledge can be the cause of conflicts within companies due to the limited availability of knowledge. Ownership of particular knowledge is crucial for companies (patents). Property rights on knowledge give rise to tensions where particular monopolies threaten to develop. Farmers in developing countries become completely dependent on particular seed products, which increases their vulnerability. Innovation at system level demands at the outset an open process, and pre-competitive research that is accessible for diverse parties. Later, when the products are further developed, the issue of ownership surfaces. It is essential that adequate arrangements for property rights are in place.

Public access to environmental information stored in government databases has been regulated for a number of years under the Treaty of Århus. The integration, or lack of integration, between companies and research institutions is a source of conflict. In the first case, the scientists are, as it were, encapsulated within the system and science itself is subservient to the objectives of the company, which can have a negative effect on the independence/impartiality of the knowledge generated. In the other case, lack of interaction is the very reason why insufficient knowledge is developed that is useful (relevant) from the perspective of the company. Knowledge about sustainability is a separate issue, because this requires knowledge from different sources and disciplines to be integrated. The value to society, the relevance of the knowledge, is the key factor.

It is not enough to identify these conflicts, we also have to look at structural characteristics to explain the tensions and point to possible underlying processes and driving forces. Once we have a better understanding of the tensions, it is easier to search for possible bridges that can eliminate or accommodate these tensions and develop a process to deal with this. Conflicts related to structural characteristics include differences in culture, language, conceptual frameworks, institutional integration (including political sensitivity) and time (dynamics, urgency). Policy officials are used to a different culture and speak a different language from scientists (individuals who are accomplished in both environments are the exception). The timeframe for the policy-maker is often the next election, the time limit for the scientist is less strict. The journalist has to fill his column for the next day. Society has problems, departments have management boards, universities have faculties and the media have editors. The stimuli often work in completely different directions.

In the next paragraph we make recommendations aimed at the different focus groups at the conference: scientists, policy-makers, media representatives, companies and citizens. During the conference the participants could have a vote on these recommendations and could add recommendations which they thought urgent. Supplementary recommendations that got enough votes (in support or rejecting), have been taken up in the text below. Furthermore, at the end the five recommendations that got most support have been listed and the five recommendations that were most controversial.

General recommendation

Knowledge democracy and re-learning how to handle knowledge in complex societies

The awareness that there is a gap between the worlds of scientists, policy-makers, politicians, media and citizens is nothing new. To some extent, the differences between these worlds are both necessary and useful, because relative independence is regarded as desirable. Moreover, nobody can claim to be *homo universalis*, an expert at everything. Science should not be determined by the world of politics, and politics has to take into account not only science, but also the values expressed by society.

The responsibilities in developing and applying knowledge are not clearly defined. Knowledge can sometimes be a joint product, a collective good. In our present society of information technology and networks, knowledge is increasingly produced collaboratively and not only by scientists. Boundaries that used to be self-evident are transgressed. Transgression¹ is the phenomenon by which knowledge from particular fields that was previously restricted to certain professional groups, is now available to others outside these groups, who use the knowledge for their own ends. This has been made possible as a result of ICT developments and the raised educational level of society as a whole. Transgression of knowledge as a phenomenon has both positive and negative aspects. One particular website that claims vaccination against cervical cancer is harmful has aroused a host of widely differing opinions. Who guarantees the quality of the information provided? Moreover, communication by the government seems not to have been aimed towards the focus group (young girls using MSN and SMS). The whole incident has been exaggerated by the media.

A further example of transgression is where a member of parliament believes he can carry out research and then put forward the findings as a new policy line. No provision is made for external peer review. But a citizen who is involved in a regional project can contribute his experience and knowledge of the area through an open research study, which can have a beneficial effect on the final outcome. Citizens, opinion pollsters and journalists can also play judge via internet or TV.

Not only politicians and policy-makers but also scientists and media professionals live in a society that is largely based on marketing. This external pressure can mean that the internal rules, including rules of conduct, of the particular professional group are ignored, for example, in the case of the scientist who believes he can claim a success in genomics based on false data. Journalists, too, have their own professional code. But to what extent are these self-governing mechanisms still active in the present day?

¹ See Nowotny, H. et al. (2000): Rethinking Science

Recommendation 1:

We have to realise that transgression (the application of knowledge in a context that is different from the one in which it was generated) may lead to conflicts, and that the aim should be to make these tensions productive. Representatives of particular sectors (politics, science, media, industry, civil society) should reconsider the balance between external and internal driving forces for their conduct/activities, and should be aware that transgression of knowledge can also have negative consequences for society as a whole.

Recommendations aimed at science, policy, the media, citizens and industry

Recommendations aimed at politicians and policy-makers

In the interests of independence, credibility and legitimacy, it is important that the independence of policy-focused research is properly organised.

There are examples enough of politicians who fail to implement particular knowledge because they have problems with the 'disposition of the researcher', or of taboos that politicians and/or policy-makers prefer not to investigate. On the other hand, there are politicians who choose a specific researcher because they know that his paradigm is closely linked to the politician's own policy theory.

There are those who hold the opinion that, from a democratic point of view, the opposition should have the right to have research carried out so that not only knowledge that closely matches the predominant ideas is developed. This right should above all be applied for futures research and for major policy projects. An independent figure (comparable with an ombudsman in terms of status) could serve a useful purpose here.

Recommendation 2:

From the viewpoint of checks and balances, the opportunity should be created for controversial research to take place, that is, to ensure, if necessary, that policy-focused research makes use of diverse sources (pluralism).

Recommendation 2a:

For the sake of democracy the opposition in parliament should have a claim on research responding to its own research questions

We observe that there is far too little critical reflection on the use of knowledge in policy-making. Reflection on the usefulness of and need for research programmes is limited, probably too limited.

Recommendation 3:

For assessing the need and usefulness of the generation of knowledge by large policy oriented research programmes, more reflection in advance is needed. Independent advice (by a system of checks and balances) can further this reflection, as well as a number of process criteria for the assessment.

Recommendation 3b:

More professionalism and less bureaucracy is needed within government in commissioning or tendering research projects.

Futures research is scarcely implemented by ministries and other authorities, and too little is learned about what has gone wrong in long-term decisions in the past. Attempts to shape strategic research policy by means of Knowledge Chambers appear to have had little success.

Recommendation 4:

The worlds of futures researchers and policy-makers are too far removed from one another. This means that futures research is for many policy-makers too much of a 'Fremdkörper' that does not affect their issues. To achieve greater alignment between the worlds of these two professions, futures researchers and policy-makers have to be brought together much earlier in the process in order to arrive at a transdisciplinary process for their activities. If this is not possible, the lack of critical reflection on long term policy could be resolved by the appointment of an independent observer outside the ministries who focuses specifically on knowledge issues and long-term decisions, including the inherent uncertainties.

Policy-makers wrestle with the reliability of knowledge from different sources and with uncertainties. Is it useful for policy-makers if the solidity of the scientific basis of knowledge is verified? If such an evaluation can be made, then it has to be the result of scientific debate. Where there is a lack of knowledge, and policy-makers have to handle this limited knowledge, and uncertainties, appropriate strategies can be developed to manage this. Adaptive management, or 'transition management' is one option.

Recommendation 5:

In the event of doubt as to the scientific integrity of knowledge for policy, it is useful to organise discussions on the subject aimed at indicating the bandwidths of the opinions and to seek a common knowledge base, for example, through a process of joint fact-finding.

Policy-makers should develop strategies for the future which specifically take into account the uncertainties and limitations of current knowledge.

Current policy problems are frequently inherently complex. The available knowledge is largely spread out among scientists and in society. This knowledge does not converge of its own accord.

Recommendation 6:

Complex policy-oriented research demands more opportunities for integral/transdisciplinary research incorporating knowledge from different disciplines and different sources.

The gap between knowledge sources and policy seems to be widening because on the receiving side (government authorities) there is insufficient critical mass, and on the other side the responsibility for developing knowledge has largely become unclear. There is a growing inability to clearly articulate research questions. The competences of government officials to pose the right questions to scientists and vice versa have not improved in recent years. Some parties also report a lack of any improvement in how effectively knowledge is translated to policy-makers.

Different institutional measures are possible to bridge the gap between scientific research and policy, varying from "outreach" activities, documentation services, knowledge centres and special commissions to Knowledge Chambers. It is unclear how effective these different institutional arrangements will be.

Recommendation 7:

To articulate the policy question to science and vice versa, to translate knowledge to policy, requires competences that can be found, for example, among specialists who are familiar with the differences in culture, language, policy theories and disciplines. In other words, a specific type of intermediary is needed.

Verify the effectiveness of the different institutional arrangements that exist to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and policy-making and implementation. Compare the situation in different domains.

Recommendation 7a: (supplementary)

Develop and support existing tools and methods for comparing knowledge in different domains.

Politicians and policy-makers tend to suppress unwelcome knowledge, which has adverse repercussions on the reputation of politics and the government.

Recommendation 8:

Politicians should devote more attention and time to how they handle knowledge, in order to restore their legitimacy and authority in the eyes of citizens. It may be useful here to set up parliamentary research offices or expert networks.

Recommendation 8a:

Politicians should recognise their specific responsibility in convincing the public of the relevance of information, using their rhetorical skills to forge justified beliefs.

Recommendation 9:

Policy-makers have to be fully aware of their role in serving society. This role means that they should have mechanisms available to prevent unwelcome knowledge being ignored.

Conflict is apparent between the loyalty of government officials to their minister and their preparedness to inform parliament.

Recommendation 10:

Conditions have to be created to prevent the personal loyalty of a government official to his minister resulting in incomplete information being given to parliament.

In many countries representative and participative forms of democracy exist in parallel. This results in conflicts that are seldom productive; consider, for example, the heated debates on the significance of referenda. If parliamentary democracy wants to survive, then the gap between these two basic models has to be bridged. Social dissatisfaction (with the political system) is one of the manifestations of an unproductive balance.

Recommendation 11:

Politicians should accept their responsibility to create a clear and dynamic balance between representative and participative forms of democratic decision-making. This balance may differ per issue and has consequences for how the information and knowledge needed are provided.

Citizens together make up a reflexive system generating solutions that can be more successful than those devised by politicians and policy-makers. It is therefore a matter of priority for government authorities to investigate new ways of reaching citizens, without confusing participation with representation. Better access for citizens to the procedures of representative decision-making may be needed here.

Recommendation 12 :

Better use should be made of the opportunities provided by information and communication technology to achieve better relations between government and citizens. One method is to make use of the different types of media used by groups of citizens, such as MSN and internet if young citizens are the target group.

Recommendations aimed at scientists

In many countries, including the Netherlands, transdisciplinary research is difficult to get off the ground because of the prevailing culture in research organisations. Countries such as Switzerland, Sweden and Germany have more opportunities for transdisciplinary research. This can be attributed to the practice of earmarking part of the research funds for inter- and transdisciplinary research, and making available appropriate assessment mechanisms and experiential knowledge, tools and methods. The transferability of knowledge generated by researchers through transdisciplinary methods is largely person-related. Within some research institutes (the Swiss Academy of Sciences, ETH), knowledge of transdisciplinary research is gathered and passed on to new generations of researchers.

Recommendation 13:

Create better conditions for transdisciplinary research within research institutions in the Netherlands and introduce minimum conditions in the form of a fixed percentage of transdisciplinary research in research funds. Also, create both an adequate ex ante and ex post assessment system for transdisciplinary research. Support attempts from the field to further professionalise these forms of scientific practice. Set up a Spinoza Prize for this type of research.

The institutional framework of the scientific arena is becoming increasingly dependent on project financing. Publication lists and citation scores in mainly mono-disciplinary journals are the primary quality benchmark. As a result of these phenomena, science risks becoming (too) vulnerable to manipulation and neglecting its role in society.

*Recommendation 14:
It is crucial that research institutes, in line with their mission, better define their societal role by focusing more on inter- and transdisciplinary research as a supplement to multidisciplinary research.*

In most higher education programmes, students are not stimulated to develop competences for transdisciplinary research.

*Recommendation 15:
Ensure that students are familiar with inter- and transdisciplinarity. Create the opportunity for them to gain experience with these forms of scientific research within their training programme.*

Sustainable development is an issue that calls for knowledge integration. How can knowledge needed for sustainable development be integrated in such a way that the result is relevant, credible and legitimate?

*Recommendation 16:
Analyse how knowledge for sustainable development is integrated based on diverse cases and on the basis of this analysis make proposals for how research should be structured.*

*Recommendation 16a:
Scientists should realise that politicians use scientific uncertainties as an excuse for doing nothing*

As a consequence of the need to match research funds, the pressure on direct government funding has become greater in recent years. This is endangering the position of high-risk, independent research.

*Recommendation 17:
There has to be the opportunity within universities for high-risk, independent research funded by direct government funding.*

*Recommendation 17a:
The agenda should be set by direct democracy (transparent) in the academic, political and public domains.*

Recommendations aimed at the media

In a democratic society, the media should constitute the main information channel and bring together knowledge that is available in different locations. Representatives of the media have an important function in society.

*Recommendation 18:
The media should regard it as their prime responsibility in a knowledge democracy to report critically from different perspectives and on a regular basis, on processes of truth-finding in*

society, science and politics. The media lend significance and colour to the democratic discourse.

There is a widespread belief that the media devotes a great deal of space to the opinions of critics of 'consensus science', resulting in a biased image. Some elements of the media do have columns in which reflection takes place on their own role (an ombudsman at certain newspapers, readers' letters, viewers' columns at the BBC, etc.), and the question is whether this happens or should happen for the scientific world. The journalistic world has the Council for Journalism where everyone can raise objections to the (unjust) presentation of knowledge in particular media, and can bring complaints against the relevant journalists. This possibility is almost never used by policy-makers/politicians, probably out of fear that the cure may be worse than the complaint.

Both the old and the new media have a social responsibility to reflect on the selection of news, on the danger of perverting knowledge by simplifying or reframing it, on preserving the richness of different nuances. The problem is partly that the new media are not accountable and sometimes lack a responsible editorial team.

Recommendation 19:

From the viewpoint of checks and balances, the media should organise a certain degree of self-reflection in terms of how scientific knowledge is presented in the media. The recommendation is to use mechanisms already available and to develop these further. Media professionals should develop a code of conduct, organise reflection and reinforce their awareness that they fulfill a key role in a world where frequently too much rather than too little information is available.

The selection and interpretation of policy-relevant knowledge by the media is regarded in some quarters as less than ideal. At times it borders on - or actually amounts to - manipulation. On the other hand, ministries sponsor particular programmes, which gives the impression of information being biased.

Recommendation 20:

Verify whether the selection and interpretation of policy-relevant knowledge by different media is regarded as a real problem and, if so, determine what solutions are possible.

Hypes and reliable knowledge seem to be opposites. How can citizens, industry, policy-makers and politicians ensure the reliability of knowledge? In policy circles the reaction seems to be to create a hierarchy of public administration. Building up a new hierarchy (where the Communication Department has the leading role) simply seems to be motivated by the desire to shelter the government official concerned.

The authority of a recognised expert is currently no longer the cure for hypes (viz. vaccination against cervical cancer). Scientists sometimes respond opportunistically to hypes, which raises the question whether there is also a science of hypes.

Recommendation 21:

The transient nature of hypes makes it difficult to initiate reflection and relevant counter-information. The right to a fair hearing remains an important principle that should be observed by representatives of the media.

The position of investigative journalism seems to have become more difficult in recent years. The turnover time of information and knowledge is faster, and the pressure on the here and now (hypes) is also increasing. Investigative journalism can bring important facts to light, from a democratic viewpoint. This is an area in which the government could co-operate better, by interpreting the Freedom of Information legislation more liberally.

Recommendation 22:

Introduce an annual prize for investigative journalism to raise the prestige of this branch of journalism and to strengthen its position in the media sector. The prize for the best investigative journalist.

Also introduce an anti-prize for the journalist who has most allowed himself to be used to disseminate unverified information.

Aimed at the government: Ensure that government organisations adhere more strictly to existing rules for making information public.

The role of new media in developing and disseminating knowledge is still unclear, as is their role in new forms of decision-making.

Recommendation 23:

Investigate the possibilities generated by new media for participation by citizens in the development and dissemination of knowledge, and how the quality of the knowledge developed can be guaranteed. Experiment with new forms of decision-making and explore what is done with the knowledge in these processes.

The political debate has largely been transferred to the media, which denatures the debate in parliament. Politicians have become political marketers, and spin doctors their protection. What does this mean for the role of the media? What role does knowledge play here?

Recommendation 24:

Verify what role is played by knowledge, or can be played by knowledge, in the political debate via the media. It is also important for the media to reflect on their role in escalating events (and thereby making them disproportional).

Recommendations for industry, citizens and civil society

There is an issue of under-utilisation of the possibilities for co-operation between science and business in knowledge development. This is a consequence of these two worlds being too distant from one another and hardly ever actively seeking opportunities to co-operate with one another. In particular where society relevant issues are concerned that are also important for industry, such as socially responsible entrepreneurship, there is an urgent need for greater co-operation between companies, knowledge institutions and social groups. Making aspects and consequences of socially responsible entrepreneurship measurable, in particular making economic benefits explicitly measurable, is an important task. Knowledge institutions can play an important role in developing instruments to determine the added value to society.

Recommendation 25:

Socially responsible entrepreneurship is a field that is eminently suitable to promote interaction between industry, knowledge institutions and social groups. Knowledge about socially responsible entrepreneurship should be strengthened.

Companies want to obtain knowledge about sustainability from such sources as the universities. The way universities are organised in many instances prevents integral, practice-oriented knowledge being made available.

Recommendation 26:

Ensure the availability of hybrid meeting fora between science and industry and social groups to promote the development and integration of knowledge focused on industry applications in order to further knowledge for sustainable development.

There is an area of conflict between open innovation and property rights. Open innovation assumes that in a pre-competitive process co-operation between different companies, researchers and other stakeholders is possible conflicts within companies to promote innovation.

Recommendation 27:

Open innovation calls for well-structured agreements on intellectual property. In the Dutch situation the possibilities for open innovation should be considered further, since they seem to be important particularly for system innovation.

Implementing innovations is sometimes hampered by owners of such innovations not wanting to patent or market them. In a societal sense this can have harmful consequences. Some owners refuse to authorise the technology for general use, even though it can have important applications for society. Is expropriation of property rights permissible in the interests of the general good?

Recommendation 28:

If innovations are considered to be of major social importance, but the inventor does not want to market it on the usual terms, the question is whether the government should not revoke the property rights in the interests of the common good.

Intellectual property rights are necessary to stimulate investments in the development of new knowledge, but on the other hand intellectual property rights can help making particular social groups more dependent. In the Third World in particular, there are examples of greater dependence of African and Indian farmers on genetically modified seed products. Because a social-economic infrastructure and good governance are absent, such dependence can at times lead to crop failures and ruined farmers (example in India relating to BT cotton). In the case of the African farmers, the Coca Cola distribution system has been used in these developing countries to provide the farmers with the choice of other seed products, as a result of a private initiative by a later winner of a Green Award.

Recommendation 29:

If the market suffers a serious failure because particular products without property rights are no longer available, (organised) private individuals or government authorities can ensure that sufficient diversity of product offering continues to be available and that no monopoly situations arise that are based on patented knowledge.

Innovation is at times also in conflict with property rights. Innovation in the case of eco-farmers is promoted by setting up a ground fund whereby the problems of ownership of the (expensive) agricultural land and the limited profit margins of the farmers can be remedied. In this case, the solution was also effected by private individuals involved.

New technological possibilities and methods create new opportunities for the development of “open spaces”, participation by stakeholders in knowledge production and social learning. What is the quality of this knowledge and web 2.0 research? How can conflict between scientific knowledge and citizen’s knowledge be made productive?

Recommendation 30:

Make it known in scientific circles that citizen knowledge exists, separate from professional scientific practice, and that this is typically plausible and robust. Experiment with new forms of knowledge dissemination and development by making use of new technological possibilities. Investigate what quality criteria can be developed for this. Determine how tensions between scientific knowledge and citizen knowledge can be made productive and what role the media can play in this.

Recommendation 30a:

Recognise that there are many different types of knowledge – not just scientific knowledge. Individual and community knowledge and knowledge generated in practice are equally important to the development of knowledge democracy.

When and in what cases is it desirable and/or necessary from the viewpoint of democracy for citizens to participate in knowledge production? What hindrances are there, when and how is participation in knowledge production most effective?

Recommendation 31:

Investigate to what extent the ideas on participation by citizens in knowledge development that have been formulated internationally (viz. European Citizen Action Service, Danish Board of Technology) can be applied in the national situation. This should include an investigation of why policy-makers and politicians favour certain methods (for example, future panels, citizen juries) and reject others.

The gap between what political parties regard as a problem and what citizens regard as a problem is a source of conflict. What role does knowledge play in the formation of the political agendas of political parties and to what extent is the gap a knowledge gap?

Recommendation 32:

Analyse what role knowledge plays in political agenda-setting and to what extent the so-called gap between politics and citizens is also a knowledge gap.

Recommendation 32a:

As the knowledge gap is not the only and most important gap, analyse and take action to educate people into responsible citizens. Start with the children.

According to Sadofsky (1990) and many others in our society, the open exchange of ideas is “the best mechanism for allowing solutions to emerge”. There is a huge knowledge supply and society can deal with more knowledge because the average citizen is better educated. The role of gate keepers as journalists, peer reviewers and so on, is diminishing and there is more competition from knowledge that is in a natural way linked with certain interests and views. We assume that the best knowledge will surface from the “battle of ideas”. “Best” and “true” need not be synonymous. Sometimes the media or politics decide what knowledge is true and not scientists. Therefore, a general recommendation in conclusion:

Recommendation 33:

The future is in the hands of politicians, scientists, citizens, companies and the media to create new forms of interaction and to experiment with new combinations. In the interests of promoting democracy, there has to be scope to try out these new configurations.

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The recommendations that got most support:

Recommendation 3:

For assessing the need and usefulness of the generation of knowledge by large policy oriented research programmes, more reflection in advance is needed. Independent advice (by a system of checks and balances) can further this reflection, as well as a number of process criteria for the assessment.

Recommendation 6:

Complex policy-oriented research demands more opportunities for integral/transdisciplinary research incorporating knowledge from different disciplines and different sources

Recommendation 9:

Policy-makers have to be fully aware of their role in serving society. This role means that they should have mechanisms available to prevent unwelcome knowledge being ignored.

Recommendation 15:

Ensure that students are familiar with inter- and transdisciplinarity. Create the opportunity for them to gain experience with these forms of scientific research within their training programme.

Recommendation 19:

From the viewpoint of checks and balances, the media should organise a certain degree of self-reflection in terms of how scientific knowledge is presented in the media. The recommendation is to use mechanisms already available and to develop these further. Media professionals should develop a code of conduct, organise reflection and reinforce their awareness that they fulfill a key role in a world where frequently too much rather than too little information is available.

RMNO

Advisory council for research on
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P.O. Box 93051, NL 2509 AB Den Haag, The Netherlands

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International
conference
**Towards
Knowledge
Democracy**



The Leiden Agenda Recommendations to the Scientific Community, Politicians, the Media and Society in a growing Knowledge Democracy

The most controversial recommendations:

Recommendation 8:

Politicians should devote more attention and time to how they handle knowledge, in order to restore their legitimacy and authority in the eyes of citizens. It may be useful here to set up parliamentary research offices or expert networks.

Recommendation 10:

Conditions have to be created to prevent the personal loyalty of a government official to his minister resulting in incomplete information being given to parliament.

Recommendation 12 :

Better use should be made of the opportunities provided by information and communication technology to achieve better relations between government and citizens. One method is to make use of the different types of media used by groups of citizens, such as MSN and internet if young citizens are the target group.

Recommendation 17a:

The agenda should be set by direct democracy (transparent) in academic, political and public domains

Recommendation 28:

If innovations are considered to be of major social importance, but the inventor does not want to market it on the usual terms, the question is whether the government should not revoke the property rights in the interests of the common good.

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