

Value Creation in Knowledge Brokerage: An analysis of Communities of Practice dealing with Sustainable Production and Consumption of Food

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The role of research in policy and decision-making has been an issue of intensive debate over the past decade, and the concept of Knowledge Brokerage has been developing in this context (Sheate & Partidario 2010). Shortcomings have been formulated as large quantities of knowledge produced in research for the benefit of policy are never used in that policy-making (In't Veld & de Wit 2000), or research outcomes show little effect in the 'real world' of policy making and practice. On the other hand policy increasingly seeks for scientific evidence in order to legitimate its decisions and implementation in practice ('evidence based' or 'evidence-informed' or 'evidence-aware' decision making).

Knowledge Brokerage has been identified as a promising strategy to foster the utilization of research findings, and to ensure that research is addressing the most urgent questions (e.g. Slob et al. 2007, van Kammern et al. 2006, CHSRF 2003). Against this background Knowledge Brokerage is an emerging strategy, in terms of promoting the interaction between researchers, policy makers and civil society. Especially in the context of complex transition processes towards more sustainable policies and practices, which concern a variety of different actors, the basis for decision making processes need to be broadened. In this line the information basis may become more 'socially robust' by taking different forms of knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints into account through enhancing the interaction between researchers, policy makers and civil society. Knowledge Brokerage is one way to achieve this through promoting knowledge sharing, interaction and collaboration.

The presentation examines the potential of value creation in Knowledge Brokerage in the context of distributed, inter-organisational multi-stakeholder Communities of Practice (CoP). A Community of Practice is a group of people who share a concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise on the issue at stake by interacting on a recurrent basis (Wenger et al 2002). The CoPs under investigation are dealing with sustainable consumption and production of food, and have been institutionalised by means of a research project¹. In this context, policy makers, researchers, and civil society representatives work together by developing joint recommendations how to make the food system more sustainable.

Yet only few studies have analysed and evaluated the performance and impact of CoPs, while most evaluation and monitoring approaches have mainly focussed on explaining how CoPs develop and function (Gundel et al. 2013). We will contribute to this gap by introducing the value creation framework developed by Wenger et al. (2011) for evaluating the creation of new linkages between research, policymaking and civil society, how these improve practices and related learning processes. The framework we refer to distinguishes five cycles of value creation, which do not imply hierarchies:

- *Cycle 1*: immediate value; community activities and interactions have value in and of themselves

¹ *FOODLINKS - Knowledge brokerage to promote sustainable food consumption and production: linking scientists, policymakers and civil society organizations.* <http://www.foodlinkscommunity.net/>

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- *Cycle 2*: potential value; activities and interactions can produce knowledge capital whose value lies in its potential to be realised later (or not)
- *Cycle 3*: applied value; identifying the ways practice has changed in the process of leveraging knowledge capital
- *Cycle 4*: realised value; effects the application of knowledge capital is having on the achievement of what matters to stakeholders
- *Cycle 5*: reframing value; when social learning causes a reconsideration of the learning imperatives and the criteria by which success is defined. This redefinition of success can happen at individual, collective, and organisational levels.

Our analysis will show what kind of value creation have been taking places in the specific FOODLINKS project context, and that the cycles do not necessarily rely on a causal chain.

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