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## Engaging scientists : organising valorisation in the Netherlands

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# Epilogue

The origin of this thesis can be traced back to the question I asked as a student: *'What can we use this knowledge for?'* Clearly, this question contains a normative element. It implies that the results of academic research should be useful. It is only now that I realise I have not asked this particular question in recent years when I was studying valorisation. In these years, I've had the opportunity to talk to many academics about what they love best: conducting research. Over time, it became increasingly easy to comprehend the importance and potential societal benefits of their knowledge, sometimes even before the academics realised it themselves. So, the need to ask them the question became obsolete.

Through this study, I learned that societal benefits are inherent to scientific research, regardless of its discipline or whether it is basic or applied science. However, these societal benefits are not necessarily generated spontaneously. It may require some thought, time and action to release their potential. I believe that every academic has an obligation to develop and implement a strategy of contributing towards societal benefits. This is where valorisation comes in, as it is about the process of generating these benefits. My study shows that valorisation may take multiple forms, applicable to different personalities, types of research and academic disciplines. For some academics, contributing to societal benefits may mean deliberately sharing their knowledge with that one colleague who is known for being well embedded in, for example, policy circles or industrial networks, whereas for others it may mean being involved with these circles and networks themselves. In the end, it is all about creating a knowledge development chain.

Interacting with policy makers, university staff members and academics outside my peer community also made me realise the potential benefits of the academic discipline of science studies. Many of the people that I spoke with regarding valorisation had never previously heard of this discipline, even though they have the potential to benefit greatly from its achievements. Concerning valorisation, policy makers, university staff members and academics have voiced a clear need for: 1) methodologies to assess valorisation, specifically on the individual level, 2) approaches to include valorisation in academic work and academic careers, and 3) the organisation of a cultural and managerial transformation in academia that results in more equality between the three tasks of universities (education, research and valorisation) on the one hand and less red tape on the other. As I often heard at conferences, there is a danger of such practical questions leading to pleas for *'a better conceptualisation'* or *'a clear definition.'* Although a better understanding of the subject may be required to answer the above-mentioned and other questions, we should not forget the potential of the knowledge already available. Yet, the question of how the results of a study could be used to support other academics is asked only rarely at conferences. Sometimes, the question *'What can we use this knowledge for?'* may not be as negative as it sounds. It is not a normative question per se; it can also be a sincere question aiming to reveal the inherent value of academic research as a collaborative start to generate societal benefits.

