

Keynote Societal Impact



**SOCIETAL IMPACT OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

PROGRAM

- Welcome (*Joris Rijbroek*)
- Introduction (*Jacqueline van Stekelenburg*)
- Keynote Nataliia Sokolovska
- Questions
- Panel discussion with Tara Fiorito and Lianne Cremers
- Closing words

Societal impact of SSH research

Challenges and ways to address them

Nataliia Sokolovska

AGENDA

- UNDERSTANDING SOCIETAL IMPACT OF SCIENCE
- THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESEARCHERS
- SOCIETAL FUNCTIONS OF SSH
- CHALLENGES AND QUALITY EXPECTATIONS
- ASSESSING IMPACT OF THE SSH

Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society

- Research programme “Knowledge and Society”
- Project IMPaQT
 - Quality conceptions, criteria and conditions under which impact of the social sciences and humanities happen
 - 3,5 years (2018-2022)
 - Funded by the German Ministry of Research and Education

Key reference studies

- Fecher B, Kuper F, Sokolovska N, Fenton A, Hornbostel S and Wagner GG (2021) **Understanding the Societal Impact of the Social Sciences and Humanities: Remarks on Roles, Challenges, and Expectations**. Front. Res. Metr. Anal. 6:696804. doi: 10.3389/frma.2021.696804
- Fecher B, Hebing M (2021) **How do researchers approach societal impact?** PLoS ONE 16(7): e0254006.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254006>
- Fecher, B., Sokolovska, N., Kuper, F. & Fenton, A. (2021). **Impact of social sciences - (How) Can it be measured?** Elephant in the Lab.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704639>
- Submitted: **Rarely institutionalized or dialogic: Exploring the relationship between academic science and German local politics** Minerva

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETAL IMPACT OF SCIENCE

Understanding societal impact of science

- Science is increasingly expected to help in solving complex societal problems in collaboration with society touching upon areas e.g. migration, sustainability health issues
- Impact assessments are becoming more and more relevant
 - Research Excellence Framework (UK)
 - Standard Evaluation protocol in the Netherlands
 - Excellence in research Framework in Australia
- Often unclear under what conditions this can happen: which challenges and quality expectations prevail



What's special about the SSH?

- **On the epistemic level:** Boundaries between subjects, investigators and audiences have a tendency to become blurred in SSH research
- **Socio-organizational level:** Centrally organized structures focusing on broad public communication
- **Communication level:** Overly specialized and obscure terms vs everyday observations of individuals they engage with
- **Assessment level:** Economic and purely quantitative measurements discriminate SSH knowledge outputs

Researchers' perspective on impact

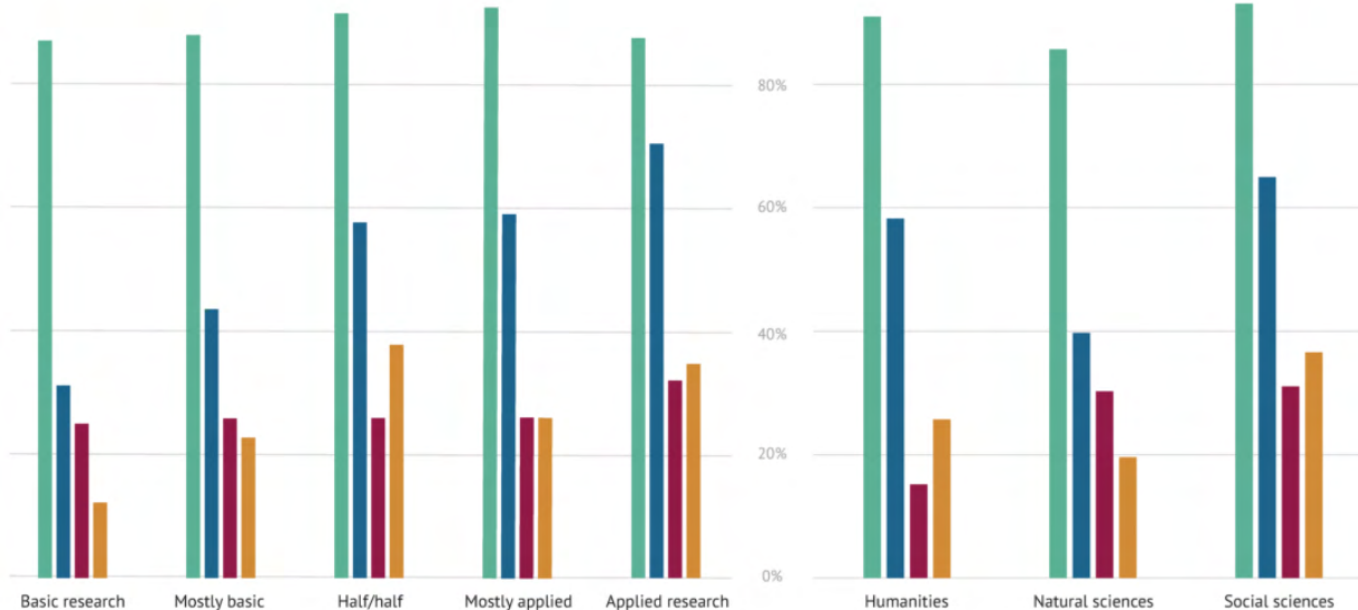
Public engagement is part of scientific activity

Societal relevance should be taken into account more,
when research is evaluated

The communications department in my institution manages to communicate
my research to relevant stakeholders in society

In my institution, knowledge transfer to society
plays an important role.

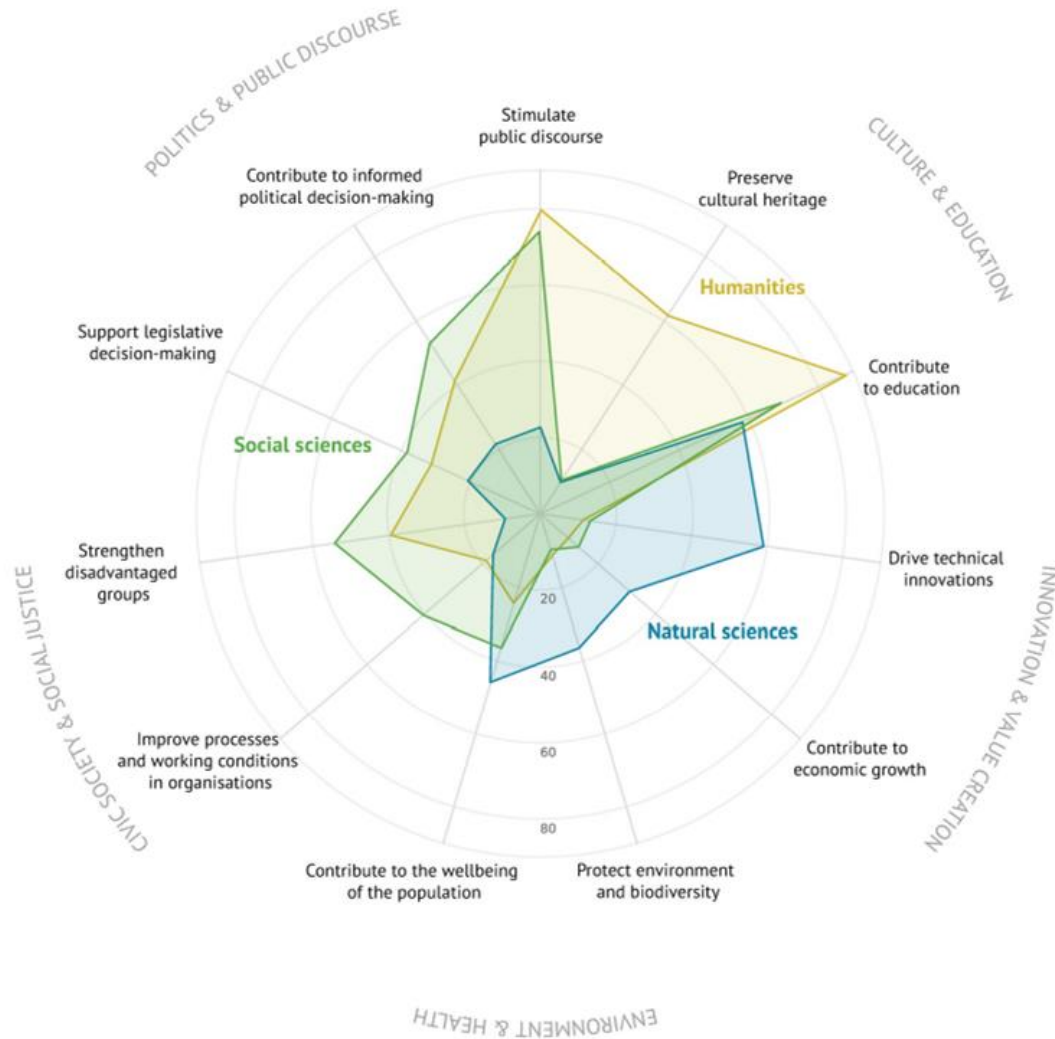
Researchers' opinion on four core statements regarding societal impact



doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254006.g002>

Source: Fecher B, Hebing M (2021) How do researchers approach societal impact?. PLOS ONE 16(7): e0254006. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254006>

Research goals by disciplinary groups



Source: Fecher B, Hebing M (2021) How do researchers approach societal impact?. PLOS ONE 16(7): e0254006. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254006>

Which transfer formats have you already used to communicate your results?

- Education offerings (e.g. for schools, civil society groups)
- Advisory formats (e.g.. reports for politicians/public administration/companies/NGOs)
- Events (e.g. public lectures, exhibitions, expert panel discussions)
- Public relations (e.g. through comments in newspapers, interviews, appearances in TV programs)
- Social media communication (e.g. podcasts, Twitter)
- Collaboration with nonscientific partners (e.g. citizen science, industry partnerships)

Societal functions of the SSH

Societal functions of SSH knowledge

Explain To describe and contextualize an issue

Reflect To discuss and interpret an issue

Educate To build competence in a specific area

Signal To point to an issue

Foresee To predict the development of an issue

Inform To support decision-making

Source: Fecher B, Kuper F, Sokolovska N, Fenton A, Hornbostel S and Wagner GG (2021) Understanding the Societal Impact of the Social Sciences and Humanities: Remarks on Roles, Challenges, and Expectations. *Front. Res. Metr. Anal.* 6:696804. doi: 10.3389/frma.2021.696804

Societal functions of SSH knowledge

Explain To describe and contextualize an issue

Reflect To discuss and interpret an issue

Educate To build competence in a specific area

Signal To point to an issue

Foresee To predict the development of an issue

Inform To support decision-making

“Impulses for necessary discourses can and should also come from SSH research”

Source: Fecher B, Kuper F, Sokolovska N, Fenton A, Hornbostel S and Wagner GG (2021) Understanding the Societal Impact of the Social Sciences and Humanities: Remarks on Roles, Challenges, and Expectations. *Front. Res. Metr. Anal.* 6:696804. doi: 10.3389/frma.2021.696804

Societal functions of SSH knowledge

Explain To describe and contextualize an issue

Reflect To discuss and interpret an issue

Educate To build competence in a specific area

Signal To point to an issue

Foresee To predict the development of an issue

Inform To support decision-making

“Impulses for necessary discourses can and should also come from SSH research”

“Solid analyses of socio-political developments, numerical data, and impact assessments are needed in politics and administration”

Source: Fecher B, Kuper F, Sokolovska N, Fenton A, Hornbostel S and Wagner GG (2021) Understanding the Societal Impact of the Social Sciences and Humanities: Remarks on Roles, Challenges, and Expectations. *Front. Res. Metr. Anal.* 6:696804. doi: 10.3389/frma.2021.696804

Quality challenges and expectations

Quality expectations

Process	Comprehensibility Form Inclusivity Pertinence
Outcome	Transparency Relevance
Person	Empathy Disinterestedness

Source: Fecher, B., Sokolovska, N., Kuper, F. & Fenton, A. (2021). Impact of social sciences - (How) Can it be measured?. Elephant in the Lab. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704639>

Quality expectations

Process

Comprehensibility

Form -> suitable form to reach authorities and communities

Inclusivity -> mechanisms for co-creation

Pertinence

Outcome

Transparency

Relevance -> analysis will take some time, solutions are necessary now

Person

Empathy

Disinterestedness



Source: Fecher, B., Sokolovska, N., Kuper, F. & Fenton, A. (2021). Impact of social sciences - (How) Can it be measured?. Elephant in the Lab. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704639>

Interaction challenges

Translational challenges

Language barriers
Conflicting system logics

Institutional challenges

Lack of resources
Lack of organizational support
Lack of rewards

Epistemic challenges

Ambiguity of results
Conflicting paradigms

Uptake challenges

Lacking appreciation of SSH expertise
Public attention dynamics
Risk of instrumentalization

Source: Fecher, B., Sokolovska, N., Kuper, F. & Fenton, A. (2021). Impact of social sciences - (How) Can it be measured?. Elephant in the Lab. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704639>

Interaction challenges

Translational challenges

Language barriers
Conflicting system logics -> **recommendation not necessarily in favor of electorate**

Institutional challenges

Lack of resources -> **media campaign will not be enough**
Lack of organizational support
Lack of rewards -> **everything beyond publications “for free”**

Epistemic challenges

Ambiguity of results -> **no single solutions**
Conflicting paradigms

Uptake challenges

Lacking appreciation of SSH expertise
Public attention dynamics -> **difficult to go against public opinion**
Risk of instrumentalization



Source: Fecher, B., Sokolovska, N., Kuper, F. & Fenton, A. (2021). Impact of social sciences - (How) Can it be measured?. Elephant in the Lab. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704639>

Assessing impact of the SSH

Trinity of evaluation

Summative	Formative	Organizational
Ex-post assessment of outputs	Interia assessment of process	Assessing conditions for impact
Economic, purely quantitative indicators or media attention discriminate SSH content that targets particular audiences.	Difficulties in communicating with publics due to translational and systemic challenges.	Typical research institutions do not provide for SSH research impact.
Diversified, flexible portfolio of summative indicators to choose from in a particular case	Recalibration work: In-process evaluation and adjustments of research questions, objects and means.	Decentralized support structures, career profiles and target agreements, training and education

Trinity of evaluation

Summative
Ex-post assessment of outputs
Economic, purely quantitative indicators or media attention discriminate SSH content that targets particular audiences.
Diversified, flexible portfolio of summative indicators to choose from in a particular case

How should schools and universities deal with the Covid-19 pandemic?

What are good measures to integrate Ukrainian professionals into the market?

Trinity of evaluation

Summative	Formative
Ex-post assessment of outputs	Interia assessment of process
Economic, purely quantitative indicators or media attention discriminate SSH content that targets particular audiences.	Difficulties in communicating with publics due to translational and systemic challenges.
Diversified, flexible portfolio of summative indicators to choose from in a particular case	Recalibration work: In-process evaluation and adjustments of research questions, objects and means.

Formulating solutions to problems of refugees without taking into account their particular needs.

Trinity of evaluation

Summative	Formative	Organizational
Ex-post assessment of outputs	Interia assessment of process	Assessing conditions for impact
Economic, purely quantitative indicators or media attention discriminate SSH content that targets particular audiences.	Difficulties in communicating with publics due to translational and systemic challenges.	Typical research institutions do not provide for SSH research impact.
Diversified, flexible portfolio of summative indicators to choose from in a particular case	Recalibration work: In-process evaluation and adjustments of research questions, objects and means.	Decentralized support structures, career profiles and target agreements, training and education

Network bureau for creating a recurring dialogue with refugees and authorities

**Thank you
for your attention!**

QUESTIONS



Tara Fiorito



Lianne Cremers





CLOSING WORDS

Curious about our trajectory to develop the societal impact strategy?

Let us know on isr.fsw@vu.nl

Next meeting : May 24