

The Hague Conclusions from the Workshop on Strategic Design in Public Policy

A joint statement by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Conflict Research Unit at Clingendael, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands from the workshop “Strategic Design in Public Policy: Revisiting the Knowledge-to-Action Nexus”, 23 November 2009.

A SHARED OBSERVATION

On 23 November 2009, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Conflict Research Unit at Clingendael, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands co-hosted a workshop on Strategic Design in Public Policy: Revisiting the Knowledge-to-Action Nexus.

The background paper to this event stated that, “[f]or the knowledge-to-action nexus to function well, and in the service of better projects and programmes, new attention needs to be directed towards fundamental challenges, in both the generation and application of knowledge in public policy, that have heretofore been ignored or unrecognized.”

Participants to the workshop confirm that attention is needed in the Netherlands on a key set of challenges, as detailed below, in order to advance better solutions for peace, security, and development initiatives in public policy. It is widely agreed that this recommended agenda for attention has implications for the academic, research, and practitioner communities beyond the Netherlands, as well as for the thematic concerns explicitly addressed at the workshop.

Consequently, the participants to the workshop jointly agree that:

1. There is a general state of dissatisfaction on the part of researchers and public policy practitioners about the way knowledge is used for action in public policy.
2. Attention needs to be directed to the means by which knowledge is generated, and the ways in which it is used. In particular:
 - There needs to be discussion about the kinds and sources of knowledge needed in order to take different forms of responsible action in the public domain;
 - There needs to be greater clarity on the roles, responsibilities and vested interests of parties that are involved in bringing knowledge to action in public policy; and
 - There needs to be creative attention directed towards, and the improvement of, the design processes that bring knowledge to action.
3. There are currently factors inhibiting the responsible generation, and successful use of, knowledge for public policy that warrant attention. In particular:
 - There are procedural factors, such as the differences in the work cycles of the research and policy domains, which cause difficulties for both the generation and use of applicable knowledge; and
 - There are professional factors, such as the differences in the agendas, expectations, standards and responsibilities of researchers working in different research domains (e.g. NGO, university, think tank, etc.), which result in the uneven or inadequate production of information used for the public good.
4. There is widespread interest and a recognized urgency on the part of both the research and policy communities to address these challenges.
5. This agenda should be raised to a higher level of priority among relevant stakeholders.