



## **Timely injection of knowledge when interacting with stakeholders and policy makers.**

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During the last decade, the spectacular development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has strongly increased the accessible amount of data and information for stakeholders and policy makers and the science community is struggling to adjust to these developments. In the Netherlands not only industry has now a major impact on the research agenda but this is now to be extended to citizens at large. Rather than complain about an apparent “gap” between science and society and wrestle with the challenge to bridge it in a rather reactive manner, the science community would be well advised to initiate a proactive approach, showing that knowledge implies a deep understanding of issues and processes that does not necessarily follow from having data and information. The “gap” certainly applies to soil research in the context of sustainable development where many often well informed stakeholders are involved with widely different opinions, norms and values. Changes are suggested in the manner in which we frame our work: (i) longer involvement with projects from initiation to implementation in practice; (ii) active role of “knowledge brokers” who inject the right type of knowledge during the entire project run in a joint-learning mode, and (iii) not proposing new research from a science perspective but demonstrating a clear need because existing knowledge is inadequate. Yet more conceptual discussions about e.g. inter- and transdisciplinarity, worrisome soil degradation and lack of professional recognition are less meaningful than specific case studies demonstrating the crucial role of soil science when analysing land-based environmental problems. New narratives are needed instead of statistics, openness to learn from best practices and pilot projects as a necessary next step beyond awareness raising. Soil scientists have a rich history of working with stakeholders. They should re-discover their roots and publications should not only focus on the science alone but also on the societal context in which the studies were made. Much has already been done. It needs to be framed more effectively.