Introduction to parallel session 1

Prepared jointly by the rapporteur and chair of the parallel session together with the speakers and discussants. The paper is meant to give an introduction to the subject and to guide the debate in the sessions. Any recommendations given are for discussion and are therefore subject to the results of the debate at the conference.

Session 1: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND CERTIFICATION

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Preparing the Liège Conference, we identified two main issues that will be addressed in session 1:

1. “New” ways of creating “new” types of knowledge,
2. Knowledge certification

Exchanges among speakers, discussants, rapporteur and chair show that the session will be more dedicated to the first topic than to the second. Before dealing with knowledge certification it is first needed to further explore, analyze and understand the contemporary ways of knowledge production and their potential evolution. This explains why each issue does not correspond to a specific part of the session.

1. New ways of creating new types of knowledge

This issue first deals with the ways of creating knowledge and how they are (will be) affected in the coming years. It thus supposes to identify those new ways and to specify their main characteristics but also to diagnose in which institutions, communities or spaces, they are more likely (or less likely) to emerge. Furthermore it questions whether the actors involved in knowledge production will be the same as today and what the competencies that will then be needed are. This suggests exploring the following questions:

- What examples of changes do we have in today’s production of knowledge?
- Can we identify new actors in this process? Are they inside or outside the traditional knowledge communities or institutions?
- Which actors are pushing for changes in knowledge production?

Second this issue also refers to the types of knowledge produced by these new ways of production and by these institutions or communities. One can wonder how far this knowledge is (will be) different from nowadays existing ones and whether the involvement of new actors will have an influence. The following questions could be addressed:

- Can we provide examples of the production of "new" fields of knowledge developed to the margin of disciplines or crossing disciplines?
- What are the “new” links between "skilled knowledge" and "common knowledge", between "local" knowledge and "universal" knowledge in the knowledge society?
Some consequences can be expected. One can wonder which impact such an evolution could (will) have on the existing higher education and research institutions. One of the new ways of creating production which is frequently identified is the development of new knowledge producers (staff, institutions or communities) which are not the traditional academics (or academic entities). This leaves open the questions as to whether universities and research institutions will stay the main place of knowledge production and what will be the effects or the impacts of the emergence of new places of production on these "traditional" knowledge producers.

Furthermore, if new producers are to emerge and if their characteristics are different from those of the “traditional” producers, how should this affect the study programmes for students, the competences expected from teachers, the training of PhDs or future knowledge producers, etc. This suggests answering the following questions:

- What types of cooperation between already existing and new knowledge producers are currently established?
- How can we develop this cooperation to increase capacities and areas of knowledge needed for economic and social development?
- Which new organisation methods in university research would encourage better integration of the new emergent areas of knowledge?
- One further consequence of this evolution is the need for new forms of knowledge evaluation or certification.

2. Knowledge certification

The transformation of knowledge production along the two dimensions discussed above (ways and types of production as well as producers and their relative weight) could lead to transforming the existing knowledge evaluation processes (through peer reviews, academics journals, scientific committees, etc.) into knowledge certification (i.e. more standardized and formalized procedures).

One could wonder whether this shift from evaluation to certification is needed. Nevertheless if it is to happen three types of certification should be distinguished: certification of the results produced, certification of the processes mobilized in the knowledge production, certification of the knowledge producers. These three forms of certification can exist separately or not. This raises such questions as:

- How to imagine a certification system that will fit with these new forms of knowledge?
- How to measure, assess and certify the involved institutions/communities, their modes of production and the results produce?
- Should the certification of the processes be emphasized over the certification of actors and results?
- For whom the certification must take place, decision makers, politicians, industrialists, public (at the regional, national or European level)?

In a knowledge-based economy, knowledge is expected to diffuse quickly and to easily disseminate. This creates a tension between the needed knowledge certification and the needed knowledge diffusion. Thus, how to facilitate and accelerate knowledge dissemination without impairing knowledge certification?