

A Manifesto For a Responsible Scientific Research

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As a result of a collective work, here is our Manifesto for a Responsible Scientific Research. Fondation Sciences Citoyennes purpose is to encourage debates concerning the scientific research aims and the means to implement individual and collective accountability in this field.

MANIFESTO FOR A RESPONSIBLE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Preamble

>> The scale and the irreversibility of the interdependences created between humans, between societies, and between humanity and the biosphere, constitute a radically new situation in the history of humanity, which requires a global and urgent response.

>> Facing health and ecological risks, our societies are becoming totally irresponsible:

> Non-accountability of states, which are locked into an out-dated vision of their sovereignty and are more preoccupied with economic, police and military competition than with the common good of the populations;

> Non-accountability of businesses, whose preoccupations are almost exclusively about profits, and who avoid responsibility in the face of insufficient or overlooked knowledge of risks, and who operate outside of control by citizens or states;

> Non-accountability of institutional decision-makers and politicians, and all those who make decisions that are unethical, going against the health of populations and the protection of the environment. They deny risks hiding behind rarely independent expert advice while ignoring the wealth and diversity of knowledge;

> Non-accountability of researchers, who consider that their ethical responsibility is not invested as scientists or as experts.

Further, we note that

>> On a global scale, the current economic rush is generating an irrational race for research contracts – with an instrumentalised science at the heart – and an exaggerated claim for technologies, in the name of innovation, which will bring more competition and growth, without questioning the relevance or consequences.

>> In the intensified competitive system that the world of research has become, researchers and teacher-researchers are caught up in an ever present battle to obtain jobs, students, financing and publication of their work.

>> The researcher finds him/herself dispossessed of the means to practice his/her profession losing the power of personal responsibility: s/he becomes a cog in the vast machine which is technoscience*.

>> Civil society, on the other hand, finds itself dispossessed of choices about its future and that of the biosphere.

We are aware that:

>> Historically, research was in part developed in a framework of « knowledge for knowledge's sake » and of « freedom of the researcher » who claimed non-accountability for the uses and consequences of the developed knowledge.

>> This reflects back to the assumed existence of a neutral science and independent researchers and the belief that science and researchers, whatever they do, contribute essentially to the progress of humanity.

>> This demand for non-accountability, with implicit reference to former times perceived as more favourable, is today taken up by certain researchers in an attempt to get out of contemporary ethical dilemmas in which they are caught.

And finally:

>> This conception of science has historically permitted, and permits today more than ever, dominant actors, dominant classes and nations, to control the orientation and the utilisation of science. In return, researchers obtain social recognition from their profession, and the granting of a certain degree of self-organisation and protection from conflict of interest and from responsibility for damages attributed as coming from their work.

>> This Faustian pact leads to irresponsible research towards society because, not having the common good as a primary objective, research encourages the rushing ahead of technoscience and pulls us into a global social and ecological impasse, which carries considerable threats for the survival of humanity.

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We refuse this conception of science with its claimed non-accountability as well as the current organisational system for research, which adds to the non-accountability of researchers.

We challenge the affirmation according to which damages created by technoscience are said to be automatically corrected by later developments of the same technoscience.

We denounce the impunity which benefits those who, to obtain research financing, systematically stress only the promises of innovation, without worrying about risks or negative consequences. We regret the absence of established measures which would take away this impunity and place the blame of responsibility on the promoters of innovation when they neglect or minimise what would only be « collateral damage », whether these promoters come from the military industrial sphere, research or politics. We consider that responsibility is incontrovertible when damage caused is irreversible.

We affirm that the responsibility of each person is in proportion to their assets, power and knowledge and that nothing can exonerate that responsibility if, in the name of powerlessness, there has been no effort to unite with others, or if, in the name of ignorance, no effort has been made to learn. In this capacity, the researcher is a responsible actor and not a powerless cog.

Consequently, **we demand** that researchers and scientific institutions admit their co-responsibility in techno-industrial development, which we today know endangers the common future, and that they make themselves capable of effectively joining together those who are concerned with the future of the questions of research orientations and their implications.

We call on all researchers and their institutions:

>> To claim their part in the ecological and social transition to sustainable societies and well-being - through the development of a new contract between society and science for which the key words are methodological rigour, democratisation and transparency of choices and of practices, participation and collective building of knowledge, leading to the orientation of scientific priorities destined to allow for this systemic transition.

>> To develop responsible scientific research, characterised by:

> Democratic elaboration of general goals and budgets for the politics of research and innovation, for the setting of thematic priorities and the allocation of resources for researchers. This calls for the creation of new or reformed science authorities which can challenge established authority and which are equipped with the tools, such as the Citizen Convention*, which make them competent for this task.

> The support and implementation of the further development of participatory research* - meaning the collective construction of knowledge in the framework of groups bearing a wide variety of knowledge and competence, including researchers and other professionals and actors of civil society. That would imply a profound reorientation of the financing of the varieties of research and a redoing of the mechanism of evaluation of the activities of researchers and teacher-researchers.

> The support of research activity that is not finalized.

> The opening of collective scientific expertise to specialists of different fields (such as social sciences) and positions, with demands for the rigour of procedures and of non-capture by dominant actors. This expertise must not be confused with the preliminary question - submitted to democratic deliberation beforehand - of the social usefulness of an innovation and its possible alternatives;

> The autonomy and the critical reflexivity of the researchers, their capacity to discern the political meaning of technoscientific innovations and the mechanisms of dominance at work, the recognition of their role or even their duty as whistle-blowers*, by loyalty towards society.

>> To be oriented towards research-development for which the principal priority should today be the setting up of sustainable production and distribution networks.

We are aware that this type of research, geared towards the common good and in which citizens have a central role, calls for profound changes in the training as well as the missions of researchers and teacher-researchers, and in the role and functions of research institutions and in the aims of the politics of research.

To resume, we call for responsible scientific research - which we consider as the only kind able to rebuild confidence between science and society and able to ensure that science is committed to a

sustainable society of well-being.

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P.S.

* <http://sciencescitoyennes.org/a-manifesto-for-responsible-scientific-research/>