

CALL FOR PAPERS

Knowledge Politics and Converging Technologies

6-7 May 2008, Brussels, Belgium

Knowledge politics delineates the field of activities designed and implemented for the purpose of monitoring, regulating or even controlling the production and application of new knowledge gained through science and technology. Such activities are not new but have gained importance in the course of the 1990s with the rise of biotechnology and life sciences more generally. In view of its promise to enhance human performance through even greater interventions in the body, mind, and environment, converging technologies promises to become another virulent field of knowledge politics.

Knowledge politics with respect to converging technologies is evidently one of those fields that is difficult to engage in – even as a researcher – without becoming enthralled in normative argumentation. The argument in favour of knowledge politics is that contemporary (and future) knowledge is intrinsically different from knowledge of earlier times because it will enable us to manipulate not only the human and built environment but also ourselves and fellow human beings. Therefore, new knowledge entails a potential for physical and social engineering that can be neither dismissed nor relayed to ad-hoc regulatory procedures, but rather calls for the development of new processes and tools. Those arguing against knowledge politics point to the latter's inextricable tendency towards the policing of science and research, thus threatening to arrest progress, discovery and learning. At the symbolic level, knowledge politics represents the modern version of an existentialist quest for the meaning of life. As a social fact, it represents the contemporary edition of the conflict about the role, extent and scope of social regulation.

The aim of this workshop is twofold: to reflect on the meaning and implications of knowledge politics in general; and to draw out theoretical conclusions about how knowledge politics in the field of life sciences and converging technologies can be expected to impact on science and research, on the one hand, and on democratic deliberative institutional practices, on the other hand. Some of the thematic areas to be explored are:

- **Forms of governance and regulation for converging technologies** (principles of governance; regulatory frameworks; deliberative processes)
- **Social and political contexts of knowledge politics** (social, economic and political conditions; anticipatory governance; scope of influence; ethical considerations)
- **Science, industry and political interfaces** (knowledge transfer; public-private ventures; economic infrastructure)
- **Practicing knowledge politics** (risk assessment of converging technologies; the role of expert committees; engaging civil society; democratizing science)

Theoretical papers and papers based on empirical research are welcome from academics working in the field and practitioners from civil society, industry and public policy. Comparisons of knowledge policies and politics across scientific fields or countries are encouraged.

Submission Details: Abstracts should be at least 500 words in length and be submitted by the **25th January, 2008** electronically at info@converging-technologies.org. Authors should indicate their name(s) and the title of their paper and include a short biographical note (75 words) with coordinates (institutional affiliation, telephone, fax, and e-mail). Full papers (at least 6,000 words in length) of selected participants will be due by the **15th April, 2008**. Publication of the conference proceedings is foreseen.

Financial assistance for travel expenditures will be available in select cases.