

How does industry access and use public knowledge?

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Using Lay Environmental Knowledge in Industry

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Background

- Increasing emphasis on public participation in environmental decision making/public engagement with science
- Instrumental, normative and substantive rationales
- Much existing work focuses on public sector decision making
- Rationales apply to industry science too

What we wanted to know:

- How do companies conceive of 'the public' and 'public environmental knowledge'?
- How does this relate to the ways they access and use such knowledge?
- Does lay environmental knowledge make a difference?

What we did in the chemical sector

- 4 case studies.
34 in-depth interviews.
- Telephone survey with 261 chemical companies.

	Main Customer	
	Business	Consumers
Large	B2BL	B2CL
Small	B2BS	B2CS

Who are the public for industry?

- 'The general public', public opinion, a '*silent, strong force*'

if I heard the term public I'd think less about people going shopping than just people in the street, ... if you walk outside the supermarket there's loads of people milling around, some with placards saying Save the World, and they're the public. (B2BL)

- Consumers – for B2C companies (and large B2B).
- Neighbours/local residents.

The public I see as our neighbours so that's going to be any local residents, it's going to be any local companies that are adjacent to us, anyone in the vicinity is the public to me (B2BS)

Public environmental knowledge?

- 'General public' seen as having range of environmental concerns – but little 'knowledge'.
- Environmental concern understood as informed by self interest, immediacy of problems, media coverage and NGO campaigns.
- Consumers' concerns focus on products, neighbours' on factory nuisance
- Consumers and neighbours regarded not as groups with knowledge meriting engagement but as having concerns which should be allayed.

Shades of deficits

- Public understanding of chemical industry:

we .. open the door and let people in .. they get a tour to give them more of an insight...So we're not the scary, scary place down the road...and we're not all mad professors in labs ...that's what they expect. (B2BS)

- Public Understanding of Science behind the product

- Deficits defended:

- Complexities and uncertainties
- It's industry's job to ensure product safety
- Why would the public want this knowledge?

I don't think that people really know or want to know (B2CL)

Constructing publics and engaging with them

- Product related communication with consumers
- Various forms of local interaction with neighbours.
- Publicly initiated communication about issues beyond the product or the factory characterised as rare and largely from students or activists.
- Broader lay environmental knowledge only recognised when it comes from NGOs or other powerful stakeholders.

Barriers and motivations for public engagement

Makes business sense **BUT** expensive; time consuming; raises expectations; who is a legitimate participant?; little public interest/demand; is it our job?

Wouldn't you think intuitively that if there's a need for a dialogue and a communication that it would automatically develop of its' own accord? (Large B2B)

- public knowledge might be taken seriously, possibly necessitating action, when: many people say the same thing; it comes via NGOs or other powerful stakeholders; it gains media attention; affects market.

Key findings from survey

- larger companies present themselves as more positive than smaller companies about publics; viewing them as more influential; being more willing to engage with them and having more contact with them.
- Publics were recognised as potentially having most effect on company reputation.
- Companies who say their most relevant public are local residents are more willing to engage than those giving this significance to consumers or NGOs
- **But** - reported patterns of contact did not accord with the relevance and influence that were attributed to publics.

Some implications for industry/public engagement

If companies do not acknowledge 'public environmental knowledge', or see a public demand for engagement, exhortations for them to engage with the public are problematic.

- Current messages about public engagement are often irrelevant and unrealistic for small companies.
- Where best to aim attempts to increase public-industry engagement? Changing conceptions of publics will not necessarily lead to changing practices.
- Think about how existing points of contact with publics might be used to facilitate broader engagement
- Local contacts may provide the most productive access point for engagement initiatives.

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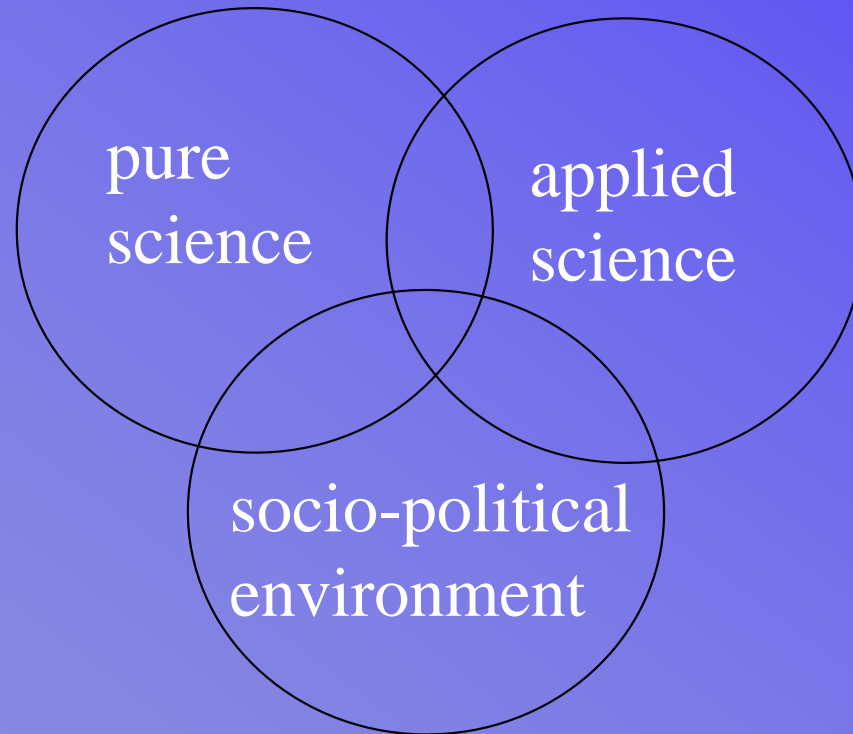
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Informed but not governed by public opinion?

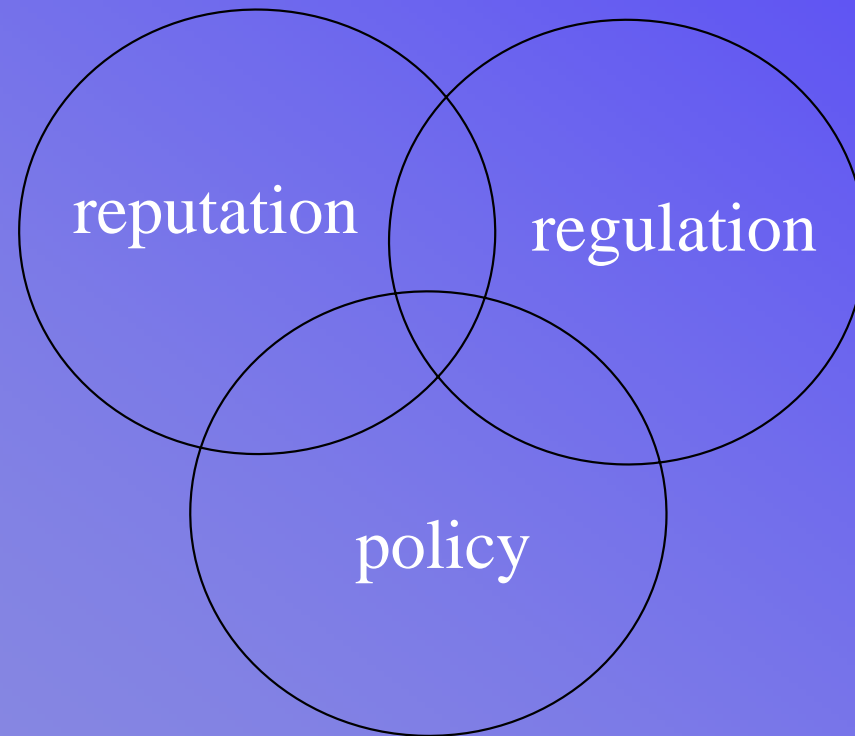
Dr Gill Samuels CBE

Chair Bioscience Futures Forum

Why engage?



The socio-political environment



The importance of perception

- Risk = hazard + likelihood
- Can manage the risk but not eliminate the hazard
- Risk = hazard + outrage
- Outrage arises from lack of early public interaction on decisions perceived to carry risk

Trust and Regulations

Trust can explain up to 50 per cent of how public perceive risks

High public trust – low public perceived risk

Low public trust - high public perceived risk

High public perceived risk – tough policy and regulations

Current Risk management is based on:

- Greater use of precaution
- Greater focus on regulatory impact analysis
- Greater public stakeholder participation
- Greater consideration for environmental and social values
- Greater transparency in regulatory strategies and decisions
- More accountability of the regulator
- More thought-out risk communication strategies
- **Science plays less of a role, as scientific results are increasingly under question**
- **Scientists seen as just another stakeholder**

Bioscience Futures Forum Remit

- Horizon scan across bioscience advances and consider the ethical, social and regulatory questions which they raise
- Adopt a proactive approach to bioscience regulation and reputation management, and aim to shape the UK and EU environments of the future

The Bioscience Futures Forum

- Dr Simon Best – Chairman of Ardana Ltd
- Dr Peter Cochrane – Co-Founder ConceptLabs C A
- Jeremy Curnock Cook – Executive Chairman, BioScience Managers Ltd
- Dr Roger Highfield – Science Editor, The Daily Telegraph
- Professor Ragnar Lofstedt – Director of the King’s European Centre for Risk Management, King’s College London
- Dr George Poste – Director of Arizona Bio design
- Professor Dominic Scott – Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Cambridge

- Dr Malcolm Skingle – Director of European Academic Liaison GSK
- Dr David Slavin – global Head of Benefit & Risk Technologies, Pfizer Inc.
- Professor Patrick Vallance – Professor of Medicine UCL, Registrar for the ACMS (Academy of Medical Science)
- Sarah Haywood (Director of Bioscience Unit, DTI) Aisling Burnand (Chief Executive of the BioIndustry Association) observers in an ex-officio capacity

Conclusions

- Innovation in healthcare will stagnate without a greater effort by stakeholders to engage and build
- Good Communication is at the core of building mutual trust
- Identification of ‘hot spots’ and early engagement is essential
- Scientists have a responsibility and key role in the communication paradigm

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