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## Abstracts

### **Beyond engineering and enlightenment – Giddens and Beck on the theory vs. practice problem within sociology**

**F.G. Snel**

This article presents some relatively new views on the theory versus practice problem within sociology. These new views go beyond the dichotomy of engineering versus enlightenment in which the discussion about this topic – at least in the Netherlands – seems to be caught. Sociologists discuss the practical role of their discipline in terms of an instrumental versus a conceptual model. However, both views are ‘science-centrist’ in a sense that science is seen as the source of social rationality. The obvious point of departure of both views is also that science and society – theory and practice – are two separate entities. This point of departure is said to be outdated in our modern, science-dominated society. Typical for modern society is the interwovenness of theory and practice. Giddens’ analysis of this development remains rather restricted. He sketches the continual ‘slippage’ of scientific thought in practice, but in his view this process is a one-way street. He sees a ‘constant absorption’ of science in practice. Beck en Bonß outline a more dynamic picture of the practical role of science in current society. Not absorption, but transformation of knowledge is typical for science-utilization nowadays. Because of the scientification of practice the relationship between scientists and users of science have changed dramatically. Beck speaks of the demonopolization of science. Users of science, often specialized experts themselves, do not just apply knowledge, but are able to transform and even produce scientific notions themselves.

### **Game theory and environmental policy**

**H. Pellikaan**

Studies of advice councils on environmental politics and policy (for example WRR, RMB and RMNO) use game-theoretical models to explain free ridership as noncooperative environmental behavior. The most popular model to illustrate the free rider behavior is the Prisoner’s Dilemma game. Furthermore, these studies assume that every individual is a homo economicus who seeks to maximize his self-regarding interest. The argument in this article is that game theory can be used to study social dilemmas, but only in combination with the empirical measurement of individual preference orderings. Recent empirical studies on environment-relevant behavior show that most citizens in the Netherlands are willing to make voluntary contributions for a clean environment.

### **Information technology – democratization or technocratization?**

**A. Zuurmond**

With the introduction of information technology in Dutch public administration, political and administrative questions are more important than technical issues. But political and administrative questions are often overseen. The process of informatization tilts the delicate balances of power that currently exist in the Dutch democratic institutions. Although informatization holds the promise of democratization and ‘empowerment’, we find mainly processes of technocratization. The citizen (as a ‘citoyen’) and the political debate are losing ground to technocratic discussions. Bureaucracies are transformed to infocracies, which are even less accessible. We may have left the iron cage of bureaucracy to find ourselves imprisoned in a ‘virtual fortress’.