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COMMENTS ON GRACE FROM A RRI PERSPECTIVE

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Background

- Coordination of and involvement in a number of projects focusing on RRI (Res-AGorA, MoRRI, Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag)
- Presentation is strongly rooted in and inspired by the research conducted in the Res-AGorA project (FP7)
- Main objective of Res-AGorA: Governance framework for RRI
→ Responsibility Navigator 



Governance framework
for Responsible Research
and Innovation

www.res-agera.eu

RRI – A Brief Introduction

Why Responsible Research and Innovation?

RRI aims to be a comprehensive approach ...

- Addressing questions which direction research and innovation should take
 - addressing societal challenges (e.g., sustainability, security, well-being)
 - anticipation of risks and taking ethical concerns into consideration
 - aligning technology and innovation with societal demands and values
- Suggestions how to perform and govern research and innovation *responsibly* include
 - involvement of stakeholders
 - encouragement of actors' responsiveness and forward-looking attitude

RRI – A Brief Introduction

Main objective: improving the alignment of impacts of technology and innovation with societal demands and values → ethical considerations, reflexivity and participation throughout the whole innovation cycle

Definitions (selection)

Responsible Research and Innovation is a transparent, interactive process by which societal actors and innovators become mutually responsive to each other with a view to the (ethical) acceptability, sustainability and societal desirability of the innovation process and its marketable products (in order to allow a proper embedding of scientific and technological advances in our society). René von Schomberg (2012)

Responsible research and innovation means taking collective care for the future, through stewardship of innovation in the present Stilgoe et al. (2012)

RRI is supported by governance that is facilitating research and innovation processes and achievements following particular normative principles, objectives and outcomes. Res-AgorA-Project (2013)

RRI – A Brief Introduction

4 interdependent areas need to be addressed in order to realize RRI

1. Identification of normative principles which are based on a broad societal consensus in order to give guidance to achieve the “right” innovations
2. Participation of citizens as co-innovators and involvement in relevant decision-making
3. Systematic integration of comprehensive (ex-ante) impact assessments, TA, foresight etc. to improve anticipation of risks
4. Development of flexible governance arrangements contributing to the objectives of RRI and facilitating responsiveness

→ Opening science & innovation to a broader range of inputs

RRI – A Brief Introduction

RRI is becoming a central feature of R&I in Europe

- SWAFS unit in DG Research promoting RRI
- Cross-cutting issue in Horizon 2020
- Rome Declaration on RRI in Europe (2014)

“ [...] the conditions are now right for responsible research and innovation to underpin European research and innovation endeavour and therefore call on all stakeholders to work together for inclusive and sustainable solutions to our societal challenges.”

- Responsible innovation initiatives in the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, ...
 - EIRMA (European Industrial Research Management Association) task force on Responsible Innovation
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Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Preliminary remarks and disclaimer

- GRACE was not designed to specifically incorporate RRI
- Comments are based on my understanding of RRI
- My intention is to support reflection about the broader implications of GRACE and similar projects
- My knowledge about the GRACE project is limited

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Asking GRACE some questions ...

Ex ante

- What role did societal considerations, values and ethics play in the development of the research questions and the approach?
- What was the purpose of stakeholder engagement?
- What role did the stakeholder engagement processes play in the overall architecture of the project? What was the relationship to the project's scientific core?
- To what extent was the project open for and prepared to take different directions, in response to the input provided by stakeholders and other societal considerations?
- How were the stakeholders defined?
- What was the aim of increased transparency and data accessibility?
- To what extent was the project willing and ready to acknowledge and take into account other types of knowledge and expertise (e.g., non-scientific knowledge, lay perspectives)?
- What was done to enhance the capabilities of the project team to participate in stakeholder engagement and be more responsive to societal perspectives?

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Asking GRACE some questions ...

Ex post

- What effects did the engagement exercise have?
- How does the GRACE team assess the stakeholder process and the transparency efforts?
- Who participated in the stakeholder engagement process, and who didn't? Why?
- How were the project's efforts to increase transparency assessed by the stakeholders?
- Did the engagement processes, enhanced transparency and other project elements contribute to the „societal robustness“ of GRACE?

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Some - very tentative – responses to the questions ...

Ex ante

- What role did societal considerations, values and ethics play in the development of the research questions and the approach?
→ *Significant resources devoted to engagement and transparent communication, research ethics for feeding trial; but unclear how broader societal considerations were integrated*
- What was the purpose of stakeholder engagement?
→ *“fine-tune research process”; “enhance relevance from a broader societal perspective”*
- What role did the stakeholder engagement processes play in the overall architecture of the project? What was the relationship to the project’s scientific core?
→ *Impressive effort to genuinely respond to inputs and comments; important but unusual stakeholder involvement also in phase of research planning*
- To what extent was the project open for and prepared to take different directions, in response to the input provided by stakeholders and other societal considerations?
→ ?

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Some - very tentative – responses to the questions ...

Ex ante

- How were the stakeholders defined?
→ *Openness for participants, no active exclusion; unclear how much efforts were invested to ensure a balanced mix of perspectives*
- What was the aim of increased transparency and data accessibility?
→ *Improved legitimacy? Contribution to a more rational discourse?*
- To what extent was the project willing and ready to acknowledge and take into account other types of knowledge and expertise (e.g., non-scientific knowledge, lay perspectives)?
→ *Probably not applicable to GRACE*
- What was done to enhance the capabilities of the project team to participate in stakeholder engagement and be more responsive to societal perspectives?
→ ?

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Some - very tentative – responses to the questions ...

Ex post

- What effects did the engagement exercise have?
→ *Comments were desalt with in an exemplary way and partially included in research process; other effects (e.g., learning processes, increased mutual trust?)*
- How does the GRACE team assess the stakeholder process and the transparency efforts?
→ ?
- Who participated in the stakeholder engagement process, and who didn't? Why?
→ *Lack of resources, trust, assumption of a hidden agenda?*
- How were the project's efforts to increase transparency assessed by the stakeholders?
→ ?
- Did the engagement processes, enhanced transparency and other project elements contribute to the „societal robustness“ of GRACE?
→ ?

Putting GRACE in the context of RRI

Concluding comments

- Remarkable efforts to take stakeholder engagement and transparency seriously; high degree of responsiveness
- Notable integration of engagement process in early research planning
- Indications of learning processes, building of mutual trust, constructive exchange and deliberations
- New / different approaches needed to ensure balanced and sustained stakeholder engagement
- Capacities and capabilities to better integrate societal perspectives in research should be developed further
- Opening of up-stream research agenda-setting for broader perspectives

Thank you for your attention.

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Save the date:
Joint Final Conference of 4 RRI-Projects

January 14-15, 2016, Brussels

More information: www.res-agera.eu