

# Sovereignties

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# Valorisation

## Introduction

This annex will cover the valorisation of the doctoral thesis to which it is attached. A number of questions will guide this addendum on valorisation. These questions are concerned with, respectively, the social and/or economic relevance of the present research, the target group of the present research beyond academia, what activities or products can be created from the present research, and how innovative this research is. The last question asks for a plan to implement valorisation.<sup>440</sup> In the following, each of these questions will be answered and conclusions regarding the valorisation of the present research be drawn. Lastly, the addendum will be utilized to evaluate the value of valorisation in itself.

### **1. What is the social (and/or economic) relevance of your research results (i.e. in addition to the scientific relevance)?**

Conversations about power never lose their relevance. Questions of who has power, who should have power and what kind of power, in what ways power can or should be used and what constraints exist are far from new, but they have not lost their relevance merely because they have been asked before. These questions point at choices—political, legal, societal and philosophical—that groups of people have to make whenever they come in contact with one another. That these questions have not been answered once and for all becomes clear in discussions surrounding humanitarian intervention, independence and secession, the openness of borders, who gets to decide on which state has to offer asylum to how many people—all these are questions that relate to power, whether in broad or very detailed strokes.

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<sup>440</sup> Cf. Article 23 of the Regulations governing the attainment of doctoral degrees of Maastricht University.

Sovereignty has been used for a long time as a term to capture different ideas of power or power constraints, as well as to evade discussion of the above-mentioned questions. As such, the concept of sovereignty is of incredible relevance in a world in which globalisation, civil and economic instability in some regions, technological advances and the ensuing power for corporations, as well the increasing significance of organisations such as the European Union or the World Trade Organization all mean that existing power structures are changing. The societal relevance of a study of the meaning of the term “sovereignty” lies in the relevance of the term for political and societal debates. This book provides analytical tools not only for academics and researchers, but for politicians, reporters and people. Whether they use these tools depends on dissemination and I will talk about this in section 5 of this addendum.

## **2. (Target groups) To whom, in addition to the academic community, are your research results of interest and why?**

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the discussions in which sovereignty plays a role are not discussions of purely academic interest. Instead, these are discussions led by politicians and policy makers, they are picked up on by reporters and involve individuals in both small and quite fundamental ways. Regarding the latter in particular, it seems fair to assume that if people recognise what power they have and how they do or do not shape the legal system, how vast and far reaching their indifference can be and what it can mean, this might have an impact on the people, too. This PhD is analytical and deliberately non-polemic but the results of this PhD are, or at least should be, of interest to every single individual in a state, *especially* those unhappy with their state. Realise how much power you have if coordinating with others, search for means to reform the system from within, or revolt if you cannot do so. Equally, it is, or it should be, of interest to the international community, to help

realise where the states that the international community is protecting with the notion of external sovereignty find their basis. As such, this work also gives state representatives speaking in front of the General Assembly of the United Nations or even the Security Council analytical tools to shape their arguments in new and precise ways.

**3. (Activities/Products) Into which concrete products, services, processes, activities or commercial activities will your results be translated and shaped?**

There are a great number of possible examples of products, services, processes, and (commercial) activities into which academic work in general can be translated. Many of the more concrete examples such as patents, licenses, or software are not applicable for the present work. However, other examples of activities or products are non-academic publications, possibly in newspapers or journals. The present work can be translated into such products. In how far this will be done is a matter for section 5 of this annex.

**4. (Innovation) To what degree can your results be called innovative with respect to the existing range of products, services, processes, activities, and commercial activities?**

My PhD has no relationship whatsoever to existing products, services, processes, activities, or commercial activities. Its innovation lies in the thought behind it. The value or innovative character of philosophy cannot and *should not* be measured in economic terms (see also section 6 of this annex).

With regard to activities such as newspaper articles or non-academic publications, as well as with regard to academic publications, however, the innovativeness of this work lies in its analytical character. Much of the work on sovereignty seeks to answer political and philosophical

questions on the basis of a legal concept; this work, instead, seeks to prescribe not political or philosophical viewpoints, but rather a number of logically consistent definitions of sovereignty. In other words, this thesis does not give immediate answers to questions of politics or policy, but it gives the tools to have analytically clear discussions on this matter. It is the hope that these tools will allow all those involved in the discussions to avoid misunderstandings or misdirection. It is this approach of offering tools to develop answers, instead of providing possible answers, that shapes the innovativeness of this work.

**5. (Schedule & Implementation) How will this/these plan(s) for valorisation be shaped? What is the schedule, are there risks involved, what market opportunities are there and what are the costs involved? If the dissertation addresses valorisation itself, this can be referred to in the addendum.**

The nature of this thesis limits the kinds of products into which this work can be translated. This has advantages and disadvantages.

A clear advantage is that the products into which it can be translated are very cost efficient: the only costs involved are those of the author's time. This is because the only types of products it can be translated into involve nothing but words: newspaper articles, policy papers for the European Union, or other non-academic publications as well as academic publications with a less theoretical focus than the majority of the present book are all possible. Another advantage is that there are no risks involved in creating such products.

The above also points towards another advantage, namely a certain degree of flexibility. For newspaper articles or policy papers, no strict implementation schedule is necessary. Nevertheless, it can only be beneficial to set clear goals, which for this research are the publication of a policy paper for the European Union regarding the use of "sovereignty" in the discourse between the EU and its Member States and a summary of

the findings of this thesis in less theoretical terms which can be disseminated via websites such as that of the Montesquieu Institute. This will be done within a year of the publication of this thesis.

A clear disadvantage of the nature of this thesis, on the other hand, is the fact that there are no market opportunities for products created on the basis of it, aside from its potential use in educational materials. Equally, the effect of any product will be neither immediate nor necessarily visible. Words do not cure cancer and analytical clarity of arguments does not translate into money. The question is, however, whether all research needs to do so. In the following section, we will consider this in more detail.

## **6. Evaluating Valorisation.**

In the previous five sections of this annex, it has been shown that the value and innovativeness of the present thesis lie in the fact that it offers tools to politicians, journalists and individuals to improve the mode of discussion concerning power and power relations in current societies. That these discussions exist and have societal relevance and that it is desirable for them to be held on as high a level as possible and in as clear a manner as possible should go without saying. Misunderstandings do not help anyone when it comes to decisions regarding the power distribution between the European Union and its Member States, humanitarian intervention or similar issues. In all these discourses, the term “sovereignty” plays an important role and this thesis offers the tools to frame these discourses in clearer terms.

Every doctoral thesis has to justify its own existence and give an answer to the question what its value is. Having done so in accordance with the standards set forward by the university, I would now like to dedicate a few words to the issue of what defines the value of research and what values are – or seem to be – acceptable for the sake of *valorisation*. I would like to add as a prelude to the following section the statement that

I am aware that universities do not exist in a vacuum and are therefore touched by societal, economic, and political developments. Nothing in the following should therefore be construed as placing responsibility squarely and solely on the shoulders of universities. The matter is as much a political issue as it is an institutional one, where the institution in question is of course a university. This, however, should not stop us from addressing the issue.

Article 23 of the Regulations for obtaining a PhD at Maastricht University offers a definition of knowledge valorisation. It reads, “Knowledge valorisation refers to the **process of creating value from knowledge**, by making knowledge suitable and/or available for social (and/or economic) use and by making knowledge suitable for translation into competitive products, services, processes and new commercial activities (adapted definition based on the National Valorisation Committee 2011:8).”<sup>441</sup> This seems to imply that knowledge does not have value. The precise phrasing does not even suggest that knowledge does not have sufficient value, in which case one might use the clause “the process of creating *further* value from knowledge” but rather indicates that knowledge as such does not have value, that we need to create this value through the process of valorisation before it can be valuable.

This is in my opinion a flawed view on the importance of knowledge in our society, if perhaps one that grows more and more pervasive. Let us consider a well-known metaphor to showcase why I am of the opinion that this is flawed and somewhat short-sighted. If science means standing on the shoulders of giants, and our goal is to reach the heavens, where giants are a metaphor for research, and the heavens are a metaphor for economic and societal impact, is it really wise to value only those giants that have already reached the heavens? Should we not value also the ones

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<sup>441</sup> Art. 23 of Appendix 4 of the Regulation governing the attainment of doctoral theses, Maastricht University (2013). Emphasis added.

that have broad shoulders, but are not very tall, the ones that are perfect for standing on so that another giant can climb onto their shoulders and reach the heavens? Valorisation gives the impression that this is not the case.

It is entirely possible that this impression is not the purpose of an increasingly stronger focus on valorisation, but whether it is intentional or not, that is the effect of it.

My main point here is not that only *Grundlagenforschung* or only theoretical knowledge has value—quite the opposite. Research that can be translated into immediate societal or economic effect is necessary and valuable—but it is valuable not only because it has societal impact or an economic effect. It is valuable because it is knowledge and knowledge put into practice. The main point is and should be that knowledge has value in itself and that it has this value independently of its societal impact or potential economic value. These things, too, are valuable, but they are not the sole source of value in our society, nor should they become the sole thing we value.

Perhaps it is too ideological for the annex of a thesis that strictly disavows making ideological value judgements; certainly it is more ideological than is expected in an annex dedicated to valorisation. Nevertheless, if a university no longer values knowledge in itself or gives the impression that knowledge in itself is not valuable, this does not strike me as a societal development that should go without comment.