

# Pragmatic constructions : simulation and the vulnerability of technological cultures

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*Pragmatic Constructions: Simulation and the Vulnerability of Technological Cultures*

van Matthijs Kouw.

1. Technological cultures will always be vulnerable to some extent. However, the ability of technological cultures to cope with risks can be improved by studying vulnerability using a social constructivist framework (this dissertation).
2. Simulations and models will become more and more complex due to scientific, technological, and experimental developments. Although this makes it increasingly difficult for scientists and engineers to understand the inner workings of simulations and models, they can still be used in a critical and reflexive manner (see chapter 3).
3. Issues pertaining to the vulnerability of Dutch flood defenses cannot be the sole responsibility of either engineers or policymakers. By studying these issues in a more collaborative fashion the safety of the Netherlands can be enhanced (see chapter 4).
4. Values about the form and content of participation inform the design of technologies of participation. It follows that studies of participatory governance can become more useful by paying close attention to the design and reception of such technologies of participation (see chapter 5).
5. Researchers working in Science and Technology Studies (STS) may lack training in the disciplines they want to study (e.g. hydraulic engineering). It is nonetheless possible for STS researchers to interact fruitfully with professionals in those disciplines.
6. The ethnographic method is a powerful ally in the attempts of STS researchers to understand the ‘messy’ alignments between science, technology, and society.
7. Uncertainty can be an important driving force for innovation.
8. The objectivity attributed to science is not so much an explanation for the validity of knowledge, but something which itself needs to be explained.
9. Academic researchers can benefit greatly from regular physical exercise.
10. It is tempting to concur with Lovecraft’s assertion that “*we live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.*” (H.P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*, 1928) However, it is even more exciting to cast oneself out on open seas.
11. “*Progress lies not in moving to a visible ideal but ‘merely’ [...] in remaining open to change.*” (François Jullien, *Vital Nourishment*, 2007, 29)

Utrecht, November 8 2012