



# Knowledge coproduction in urban knowledge labs

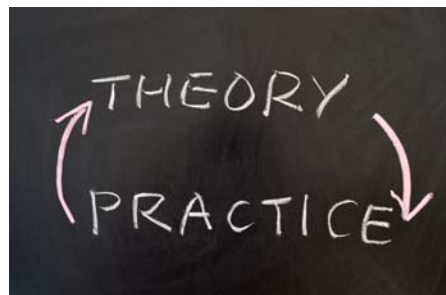
Philip Marcel Karré

Kenniswerkplaats Leefbare Wijken

[www.kenniswerkplaats-leefbarewijken.nl](http://www.kenniswerkplaats-leefbarewijken.nl)

## Urban Knowledge Labs

- Collaborative effort of the City of Rotterdam, Erasmus University Rotterdam and other knowledge partners (e.g. Universities of Applied Sciences).
- Aimed at the development of knowledge on tackling wicked urban issues.
- Applied research for better (evidence-based) policy.
- In total 7 knowledge labs in Rotterdam:
  - Urban livability
  - Urban big data
  - Urban labor market
  - Urban health
  - Urban education
  - Smart port
  - Youth care





## Knowledge Lab Urban Livability

- Deals with quality of life issues (e.g. safety, poverty, migration, participation, effects of gentrification).
- Established in 2012: livability under pressure.
- Since then quality of life increased: how to strengthen the upward trend? How to ensure that everybody has a 'right to the city'? How to deal with negative effects of increased attractiveness of Rotterdam?



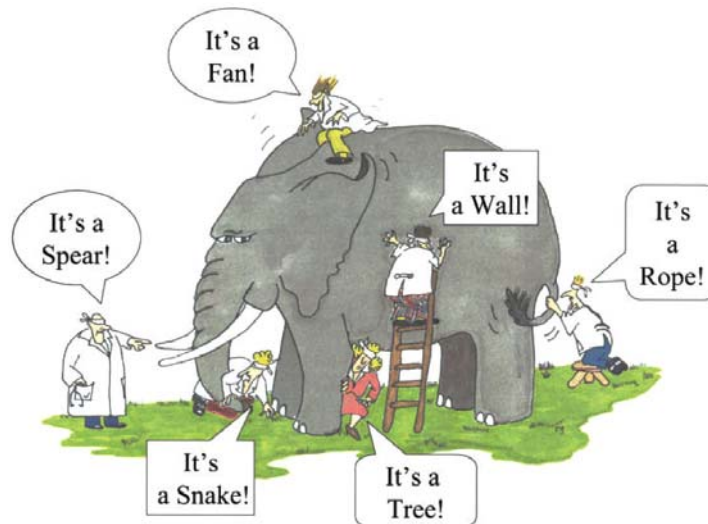


## University–municipality cooperation



- Lab as knowledge broker: facilitates, initiates and finances research but does not conduct research itself.
- Research questions formulated in interaction between researchers and civil servants.
- Research has to be applicable to current urban problems.
- Critical assessment of municipal policies and prevailing scientific theories.
- Testing of policy interventions in real-life contexts (EUR Design Lab).

## Advantages of knowledge coproduction



## Challenges of knowledge coproduction

1. Researchers and civil servants speak different languages, have different aims and ambitions.
2. Researchers have to be able to play / switch between different roles: e.g. expert witness, social engineer, storyteller.
3. Limitations of classic academic research but not every researcher is able to conduct applied / action research.
4. Citizen as a research / policy subject: how to give him / her a more prominent role?
5. Evidence-based policy versus fact-free politics.
6. Instrumentalized research versus political activism of researchers.

Practitioner Reflections: Wim van der Zanden (Municipality of Rotterdam)

## Knowledge as part of the policy proces

1. Increasing role => policymaking should be 'knowledge-driven' i.e. based on information and knowledge

Challenge: more and more data available  
more and more 'data-manipulators'

=> How to find your way?

=> How to deal with 'fact-free politics'?

Practitioner Reflections: Wim van der Zanden (Municipality of Rotterdam)

## Knowledge as part of the policy proces

2. Valorisation => making knowledge useful

Challenge: research tries to generalize results  
policymakers and fieldworkers look at their specific situation

=> How to organize discussion about knowledge in the context of policy?  
Or ... policy in the context of knowledge?

"There are no facts, only interpretations" (Nietzsche)