

Artificial Intelligence

In order to gain a clearer picture of the opportunities and consequences of Artificial Intelligence for (Dutch) society, the Dutch government asked the WRR to produce an advisory report on this subject.

Numerous studies have been and are being carried out on the impact of Artificial Intelligence. The government has expressed a need for an overarching, multidisciplinary study to supplement these existing studies. It has asked the WRR to produce a report which will feed into the national knowledge and policy development process and at the same time offer a suggested direction of travel for the European and international discussions on this topic. The WRR started this research project at the end of 2018.

Digital disruption

Like many other countries, the Netherlands is increasingly confronted with disruptions to digital infrastructure, such as DDOS attacks on the payments system or the digital government. The consequences have in many cases been limited so far, but there is a chance that this could change.

This project investigates what digital disruption means for the Netherlands and seeks to outline a number of policy perspectives for the government. How does a digital disruption begin? How does it proceed? What are its possible effects? And when is it over? What dependencies are involved? The project also investigates whether we are sufficiently prepared for a scenario involving a digital disruption. Are there ways of increasing - in advance - the ability of Dutch society to recover from a disruption, and what is the government's responsibility here? An underlying question running through all of this is to what extent a digital disruption resembles other types of crisis and disaster, and whether lessons can be drawn from them for dealing with a digital disruption and managing its consequences.

Europe's public functions

This project aims to provide a framework for assessing the Netherlands' policy on European public tasks. A framework like this does not model the European Union (EU) on the states from which (partly) tasks are taken over ('the superstate'), nor does it fall back on old structures of intergovernmental cooperation that can become deadlocked at any time ('a pigeon coop'). Research will provide leads for productive discussion on the further development of the relationships between the EU Member States and on the extent to which the current structures of the EU are sufficient. Why and to what extent can the European level of legislation and administration contribute to governance regarding important public tasks? What implications does this have for the desired structure of the legislative process as regards these tasks, for potential differentiation in the relationship between the Member States and the European Union, and for the institutional structure of the EU? What is the significance of this for the Netherlands' policy on Europe?

Migration diversity

Increasing diversity of migration creates both economic opportunities and social problems for cities and regions. 'Permanent temporariness' is a key characteristic of contemporary labour migration and mobility (for both highly skilled and low-skilled migrants). The influx of different migrant groups (asylum seekers, family migrants, temporary or permanent labour migrants) asks for a customised approach to integration. New citizens are heavily concentrated in specific urban areas and specific neighbourhoods in those areas. Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam are among the most diverse cities in the world. The WRR wishes to contribute to the formulation of a more decentralised policy for dealing with migration diversity. Developing a more decentralised policy perspective enables public authorities to make better use of the opportunities offered by migration diversity and help them avoid arising problems. The present formulation of the central research question to be addressed in this study is: 'How can (de)centralised authorities cope with growing migration diversity in cities and regions?'

Sustainable health care

When it comes to quality of health care, the Netherlands performs very well. Our care system is one of the best, but also one of the most expensive in Europe. How can we make sure that health care will remain sustainable in the future? The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) tries to answer this question in the research project 'Sustainable Health Care'. People generally describe good health as one of the most important conditions for a good life. Health care contributes to an ever rising life expectancy, and helps us to stay active and productive. Accessible, high-quality care is thus of great societal importance. But our health care system is under increasing pressure. An ageing society, chronic disorders, stress and technological developments lead to an ever increasing demand for care, driving rapidly rising expenditure and ever increasing pressure on health care professionals and informal carers. In 2018, the ministers of Finance and of Medical Care and Sport have therefore requested the WRR to prepare a comprehensive advice on the long-term sustainability of health care, addressing both societal and financial-economic aspects.

What do we expect of our health care? How much can that cost, and how are we going to decide? What are the societal benefits? How do we keep health care sustainable in the long run? Starting January 2019, the WRR studies these questions in the project 'Sustainable health care'.

The Future of Work

The aim of the 'Future of Work' project is to identify crucial labour market trends in the area of the digital revolution and the flexibilisation of employment relationships, and to investigate their social and economic significance. What response do these trends demand in regard to policy? What exactly does this cocktail of technological developments and global task differentiation mean for our workforce? One question is just who will work in the future, what our future work will look like is another. Another trend in the labour market is the development of less rigid connections between employers and employees, i.e. the flexibilisation of employment relationships. Will the concepts of 'employee' and 'employment contract' cease to apply? Such changes raise questions regarding the rules, legislation, agreements, and certainties which form the basis of the world of work and the welfare state.

Uncertainty and social discontent

For those in and around the corridors of Dutch government in The Hague, social discontent is a continuing cause for concern. But what exactly is the reason for this discontent? In this project WRR investigates the influence of individual uncertainty ('precariousness') on social discontent.

Life appears to have become more precarious for people in many domains in recent decades. A job for life is no longer something that can be taken for granted; the future trend in people's income is less predictable than in the past; the government is also less ready to step in when things go wrong; and the nature of the sociocultural setting in which people live is changing. Some groups appear to have little difficulty dealing with this precariousness, or even seem to thrive on it, while for other groups this uncertainty translates into feelings of unease and discontent.

Why this difference in reaction? The central hypothesis in this project is that a major cause lies in differences in the degree to which people have - and feel that they have - control over their situation and their future. The project seeks to analyse the relationship between (feelings of) precariousness and control on the one hand and attitudes towards politics and society on the other. WRR will draw on the results of this analysis to formulate recommendations.

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