



Elisabeth Bik ✓ @elisabethbik.bsky.social · 15d

It's 5 pm in Vancouver, and we are getting ready for the Steneck-Mayer lecture, given by Prof. Robbert Dijkgraaf

President-Elect, International Science Council.

[He gave a very good talk at the @einsteinberlin.bsky.social ceremony last year, so looking forward!]

#WCRI2026



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Lex Bouter opens the session, honoring the founders of the @wcrifoundation.bsky.social conference, Nick Steneck, and Tony Mayer.

He also applauds Robbert Dijkgraaf, who did wonderful things for science integrity in the Netherlands.

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Robert Dijkgraaf takes the stage, with 'Science under pressure in a fractured world', and opens with a story of Leonid Brezhnev, answering a question about the state of the state with 'good' - but if he could say two words: 'not good'.

Is that the state of science?

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RD: This is an exciting time for scientists - so much computational power, so many large data sets, so much global talent, so many collaborations.

But science is also under external pressure. We see censorship, decrease in academic freedom, intimidation, and move into private sector.

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RD: The Global South is losing faith that industrialized nations will deliver on promises of science.

Why is this happening right now? It may be the result from the growing impact of research: Newton's third law: action --> reaction.

Science is both far away as well as very close (phone!)

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RD: Science and politics are also much more entangled. Covid was an accelerant of distrust.

Scientists are seen as most trustworthy, while politicians, least trustworthy. I experienced that tension when I left Princeton and became Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

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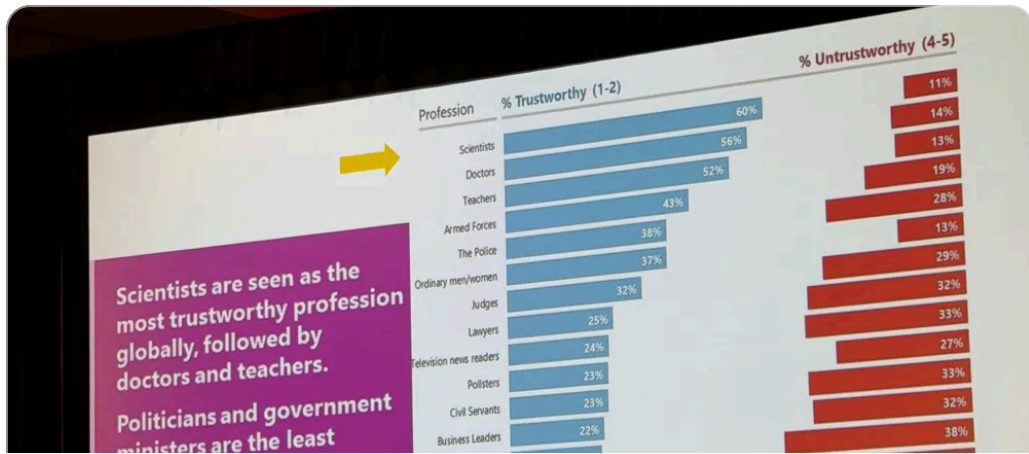
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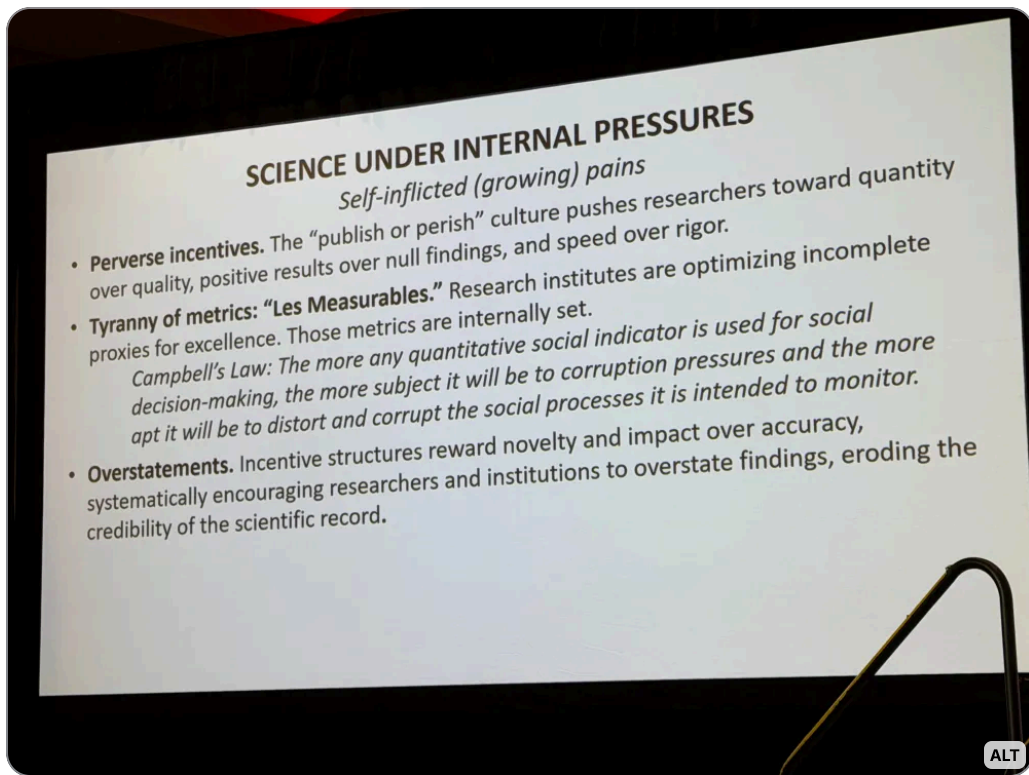
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RD: Scientific institutions are seen as more vulnerable to political influence, more so than scientists.

What are we doing to strengthen our internal structure? Make the ship sea-worthy, so to speak.

Tyranny of metrics "Les Mesurables" / Campbell's law.

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RD: The tobacco industry once wrote, "Doubt is our product" - even small influences from outside can generate a bit of doubt, which can grow larger and larger (butterfly effect).

AI generated/assisted misconduct is the new threat.

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RD: What can be done?

We are not measuring the right things. We need to reform the incentive system, overhaul peer review, invest in replication, educate early, clear policies AI use (Vancouver standards!), align disclosure practices, etc.

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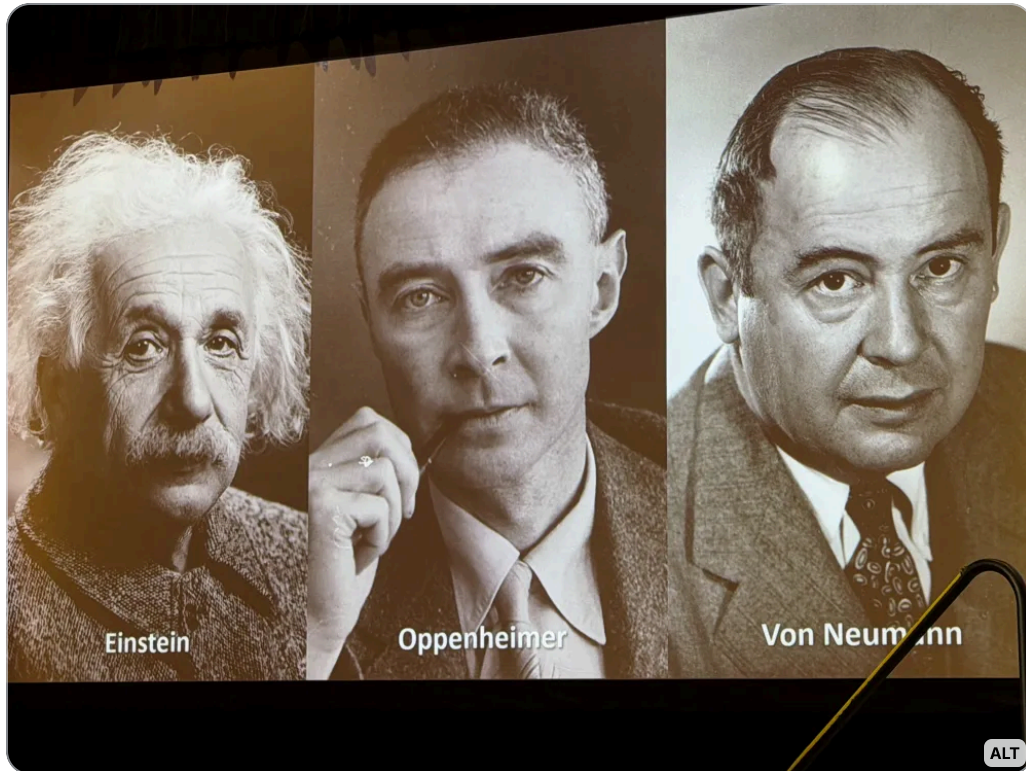


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RD: Almost all key technologies have dual-use aspects - to use science for economic competitiveness and national defense. Einstein, Oppenheimer, Von Neumann, all working together at the Institute for Advanced Study,

Princeton - war criminals or peace activists? Small and narrow path.

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RD: We need to collaborate, to transport our values and gain critical knowledge.

What can scientists do? Push back against the push-back. Avoid a risk-averse censorial posture in collaborations.

Advocate. Engage the scientific community. Exchange best practices.

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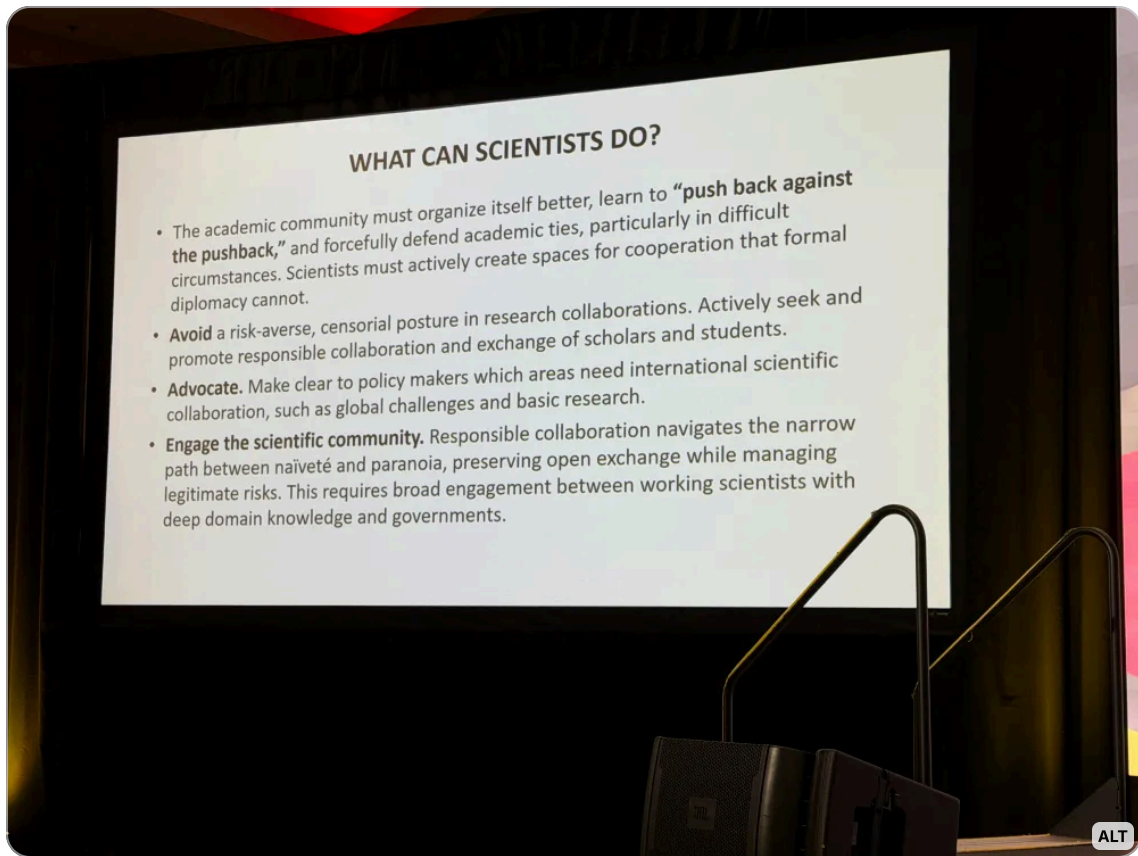
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5:55 PM · May 4, 2026

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RD: Science is a complex ecosystem, its strength lies in the connectivity of the network, but it also serves society.

The whole of science is more than the sum of its parts - like the rainforest, it is diverse as well as brutal.

We need to improve the low ceilings, internal walls, etc.

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RD: Science is in transition - we don't know what we will transition to, but it can be better.

International collaboration is key. Our lifespans are longer than political governments. These are no ideological goals, but operational requirements.

Thank you all for your incredible work!

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