



International Corsage Winter Meeting 2008 in Nijmegen, NL

Genomics in the Policy Room

December 3, 2008 – 9.00 am to 5.30 pm

Pharmacogenomics, nutrigenomics and other industrial, agricultural, or forensic applications of genomics and medical research using genomics tools are examples how genomics have a strong potential to change the way we live our everyday lives. **Policy-making is introduced into the laboratory** when researchers have to deal with the **political demands** that come from The Hague or Brussels, and are involved in making policy for the **innovations** that result from their research activities. Such **influence** is seldom of a direct nature, but rather mediated through lobby organizations and science governance measures. Scientists as citizens at the same time influence public opinion. At this meeting, we would like to reflect about the **mechanics and meanings** of relations between policy and genomics applications.

The Dutch 'National Genomics Initiative' (NGI), itself a result of concerted action of Dutch Ministries of Economics Affairs and of Education, Culture and Science together with research institutions, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), and biotech companies, plans to allocate up to **€ 500 million** from government funds, industry, academia, and research institutes between 2002 and 2012. Demands for **valorization**, patenting and spin-offs are the visible examples of the policy that guides genomics. One of the reasons for investing in genomics is the expectation that it will stimulate economic growth. The NGI has chosen valorization as its chief long-term strategy, and defines it as a process of bringing "knowledge to the market: from concept to product or company".

On the other hand, genomics is subject to policy-making as its applications as well as research methodologies are highly **regulated**. Though not entirely genomics research, the recent debate on embryo selection is a clear example of conflict between technological possibilities, the policy developed by researchers, and political demands. The technological possibilities are now subject to a strict policy, one which is politically and medically desirable and acceptable. A related policy issue is the definition of criteria with which life-science research is **evaluated** in all phases of the funding process: to what extent are they scientific only.

We can **ask**, for instance: Which regulations are acceptable for researchers and other interest groups? What roles can and should scientists, policy-makers, and social scientists play to determine life-sciences policies? What policies are behind the formation of new disciplines like eco-genomics or synthetic biology?

Through "**policy-making**" interest groups seek to influence political decisions and to achieve desired outcomes. Policy-making is **closely tied** to genomics research. This can be both the policy that genomics **researchers** are confronted with, as well as the policy that researchers are making themselves in interest groups and lobby work. It also has to do with what **policy-makers** hope to achieve with setting the frames for research, development, and application of biotechnology. Through NGI, social scientists and philosophers are given roles as **mediators** between the academic disciplines and many other social groups and institutions.

At the meeting, we want to **explore** and discuss this policy dimension of genomics. What are the tricks of the trade in life-science policy-making? What **logics** do we have to follow or invent in order to deal with genomics in a world that consists not only of academics and policy-makers?

The meeting is designed as a forum for young (pre/post-PhD level) scholars at the junctions of science, social sciences/humanities and policy-making. For this meeting, we invite young

- **life-scientists** who are interested, in general, in policy-making related to genomics, or those who already have experience in that area;
- **policy-makers**, concerned with genomics and other life-sciences;
- **social researchers** from the field of science and technology studies, from ELSA and TA programmes studying the field of genomics

to share their concerns, perspectives and experiences.

Confirmed **opening plenary speaker**: *Cornelis A. van Bochove*, Professor of Science Policy Studies, University of Leiden, NL, former Director Science Policy at the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (1999-2007) who will tell first hand knowledge about the installation of NGI how one can perceive of the further development of life-sciences policy in the Netherlands.

Confirmed **closing plenary speaker**: *Joris Veltman*, Assistant Professor at the Department of Human Genetics; Principal Investigator Genomic Disorders & Head Microarray Facility Nijmegen, Department of Human Genetics-855, Nijmegen Centre for Molecular Life Sciences, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre. He will provide anecdotal insights into the relationship between his research (applying genomics technologies to the study of human disease, ever since these technologies became available) and policy-making, politics and societal issues.

Call for abstracts: Abstracts (no more than half a page) for this meeting can be submitted until **November 7, 2008**.

An example of a contribution to this meeting could be a short (10-15 minute) statement presentation. Take, for instance, **one** major question you encounter in your research or contributions to policy-making (related to, e.g., experiments with animals, stem-cell research, screening for hereditary diseases; mediating between key actors; producing analyses which are policy-relevant) and feed it as a concrete example into the discussion.

How do you (or your organizations, your supervisors) deal with questions, applied on genomics, like: How can life-sciences make sure that the government continues to provide ample funding for research? How to make sure that both basic and applied research is funded sufficiently? What makes a good valorization policy from the point of view of life-scientists? In which commissions and networks beyond those of the life-sciences must scientists engage in order to win the support of politicians and policy-makers? How much engagement in policy-making is necessary for life-scientists to manage research centers, to propagate new technologies or therapies? Such questions may include efforts to mobilize public funding, and political support for new research themes or institutes.

Both personal experiences and those observed in your work environment are welcome.

Grants/fees: International speakers can be supported with travel grants. The individual amount of the bursary will depend on the number of eligible speakers. The conference, including catering, is free of charge for all participants.

For more information and to submit a proposal, please contact both

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The meeting is organized by Peter Stegmaier, CSG Nijmegen, & Erwin van Rijswoud, Department of Philosophy and Science Studies, Science Faculty, Radboud University Nijmegen in close cooperation with Eline Huisjes and Jurgen Haanstra from **GeNeYous** (the Genomics Network for Young Scientists; www.genevous.nl/home.php) and also with the **Postgraduate Forum on Genetics and Society** (PFGS, based in Exeter/UK; www.pfgs.org/pfgs). Corsage is a thematic cluster of GeNeYous.

See also: www.society-genomics.nl/?page=640 and www.genevous.nl/corsage/.

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