



International Corsage Winter Meeting 2008 in Nijmegen, NL

Genomics in the Policy Room

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Corsage, a thematic cluster of GeNeYous, would like to invite you to our annual meeting on December 3, 2008. Corsage is a platform of social scientists who study developments in many fields of genomics.

One of the reasons for investing in genomics is the expectation that it will stimulate economic growth. Demands for valorization, patenting and spin-offs are the visible examples of the policy that guides genomics. The Dutch National Genomics Initiative (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 are 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 acceptable. But what genomics related policies are acceptable, how to determine such policies, what roles can and should scientists, policy-makers, and researchers from social and humanist sciences (SHS) play? Which are the “policy rooms” where influence can be wielded? What policies are behind the formation of new disciplines like ecogenomics or synthetic biology?

So, this year we have chosen to discuss the policy around genomics. Policy-making as the planning and course of action to influence decisions and achieve desired outcomes 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. At the meeting, we want to explore and discuss this policy dimension of genomics. Since we plan to spend years of our working lives in this field, we all have good reasons to be very interested in sharing and learning from the experiences and ideas of life scientists, policy-makers and social researchers regarding genomics policy. In short, we want to bring together three worlds that share a common object of interest.

An example of a contribution to this meeting would be a short (10-15 minute) presentation of the major policy questions you encounter in your research or policy-making work (e.g., experiments with animals, stem-cell research, screening for hereditary diseases). How do you (or your supervisors, your organizations) deal with these? Do you think both the policy problems and solutions are reasonable and realistic, or not? Are policy concerns making life as a scientist more difficult, or is it just part of the world you work in? Such questions may include efforts to mobilize public funding, and political support for new research themes or institutes. After the presentation we can start talking about this, and exchange ideas or experiences. Both personal experiences and those observed in your work environment are welcome.

In short, we wish to shed light on this space of public science policy and start mapping it. We invite to address some of the following issues:

- What are the genomics policy issues at stake today, which are likely to emerge in the near future? What are the major thematic shifts compared to the past?

- How do social and economic aspects of genomics relate to each other in practice and in policy-making? What is the role of industry in all this?
- How are societal & genomics policy issues put forward and how do they evolve?
- By which means and in which ways do researchers and policy-makers negotiate their perspectives and interests?
- What are the aims and objectives of typical encounters between researchers and policy-makers? What are the forums or spaces in which they meet?
- Which roles are taken in the policy room, and by whom? To what extent are tasks and roles in genomics policy increasingly professionalized and controlled?
- Are there informal policy structures for genomics, evading formal policy-making?
- What is 'forbidden' in society & genomics policy in terms of taboos, forbidden areas, contested terrain, or even non-issues, and how are these situations dealt with?

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:

- researchers from the field of science and technology studies, from ELSA and TA programmes studying the field of genomics
- life-scientists who are interested, in general, in policy-making related to genomics, or such who have already made their own experiences in that area
- policy-makers, concerned with 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)

Call for abstracts: Abstracts (no more than one page) for this conference can be submitted until October 13, 2008.

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.

The meeting is organized in cooperation with **GeNeYous** (the Genomics Network for Young Scientists; www.geneyous.nl/home.php) and the **Postgraduate Forum on Genetics and Society** (PFGS, based in Exeter/UK; www.pfgs.org/pfgs).

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

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