

OWL colloquium: Athena's platform for deliberating science-society interactions

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Athena's monthly colloquium



We are happy to announce that our next OWL colloquium speaker is

dr. Bart Walhout

In academic debate with

Jantien Schuijer, MSc

Date & time: **30 March 2017, 16:00-17:00**

Venue: Room **WN-C648** in VU University Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1085.

Abstract: Making a difference? Nanotechnology and the quest for Responsible Innovation

Is there a need for Responsible Innovation? Not for responsible innovation – lower case – but for Responsible Innovation capital: Responsible Innovation (RI) as a guiding idea. The notion has been around for a while, especially in the context of the European research and innovation program Horizon2020, in which it is called RRI (Responsible Research & Innovation). It has figured as a placeholder for bringing together various ideas about the role and governance of science and technology in society. As such, it has structured new rounds of academic inquiry as well as stakeholder engagement with respect to science and technology. However, some take offence – as if what they have been doing before has been irresponsible – while others question what difference the introduction of a new concept has made in practices of research and innovation. In this talk I will argue that making a difference with Responsible Innovation is not so much a matter of making it practical, but of addressing conditions of change. To this end I will draw on my research in the field of nanotechnology. In many ways nanotechnology can be considered as the cradle of RRI. Starting with the notion of Responsible Development, much has been invested in risk research, ethical reflection and public dialogue, so as 'to get it right from the start'. Yet, many of these efforts have been criticized for shaping public opinion rather than public value. I will show how

this can be explained by tracing the way in which new conceptions of responsibility, under the banner of R(R)I, had to gain track in existing networks, institutions, practices. Building on the work of the European research project Res-AGorA I will also propose a framework for facilitating strategic reflection on the conditions for making a difference though.

About our speaker: Dr. Bart Walhout is policy advisor 'new technologies' at RIVM, the Dutch national institute for public health and the environment. His work addresses the governance of risk in nanotechnology and biotechnology and the move towards Safe-by-Design approaches in these fields. Previously, Bart Walhout has been working as project officer at the parliamentary Technology Assessment department of the Rathenau Instituut and as researcher at the University of Twente. In this latter position he has started his PhD-research in the national nanotechnology research and innovation program NanoNextNL and has been involved in the development of a governance framework for Responsible Innovation as part of the European research project Res-AGorA.

About the Athena Institute

The Athena Institute at VU University Amsterdam is part of the science faculty. From its early days in the 1990s onwards, it has developed tools and methodologies to successfully deal with science-society interactions at all stages of research and innovation.

About the OWL colloquium

With its monthly OWL colloquium the Athena Institute aspires to stimulate an inter-, multi-, cross and trans-disciplinary process of deliberation about topics relating to the interface between science and society. Speakers from all corners both within and without academia (CSOs, policy, business and industry...) are invited to present on empirical, theoretical and methodological developments topical to bridging the variety of gaps that complicate science and society interactions.

For more information, please contact us at OWLcolloquium.falw@vu.nl.