



3rd European Technology Assessment Conference

MAY 17 TH - 19 TH 2017, CORK, IRELAND

CALL for PAPERS

Untamed participation?

The role of bottom-up engagement in Responsible Research and Innovation

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Session Duration:	90 plus 60 minutes
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Word Count	Max. 400 words

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) reinforces the call for societal engagement in research and innovation. A variety of initiatives has been launched to define, test and implement 'good practice' formats and methods for involving citizens and stakeholders in science, technology and innovation (STI) debates. Most of these initiatives are 'invited participation' where specialized institutions or experts formally invite participants.

Despite the emphasis on invited participation in the RRI discourse, bottom-up initiatives have always played important roles in STI debates. Technological developments, notably nuclear energy and agri-biotechnology, have often been accompanied by public protests and resistance. Societal movements and non-governmental organizations aim to bring societal concerns to the political agenda. Such organisations do not wait to be invited but engage with STI actors and the public through protest campaigns, legal interventions or media. Particularly in regard to emerging technologies they often adopt fundamentally critical positions.

Another form of bottom-up engagement are Do-it-Yourself (DiY) or hacker communities. Originating in the IT sector, they can now be found in a variety of emerging technologies such as synthetic biology or neuroenhancement. These communities may follow quite different rationales, ranging from (scientific) curiosity to a fundamental critique towards the capitalist system.

We invite presentations that reflect upon the **role of uninvited or bottom-up engagement in Responsible Research and Innovation**, addressing one or more of the following questions:



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- **Value of uninvited participation in RRI:** How does the call for societal engagement under RRI value and integrate initiatives of non-governmental organizations and DiY communities? Is RRI meant to 'tame' bottom-up initiatives, to mitigate protests or to control counter-cultures? Does uninvited participation face a loss of legitimacy under RRI? How could RRI take better account of the diverse bottom-up initiatives that already exist?
- **Emotions, conflicts and dissent:** RRI aims at mutual understanding and rational deliberation of all actors, a notion that is emphasized by the principle of co-responsibility. Bottom-up initiatives often appeal to emotions and outrage to mobilize the public. Does the rationalization of the debate in invited participation formats mitigate or only postpone conflicts? How can emotions or outrage be taken account of? What does it mean for RRI if fundamental and permanent dissent cannot be solved?
- **Framing of RRI and technological debates:** Bottom-up initiatives often challenge dominant framings of technological issues. How is RRI reframed by NGOs and DiY communities? Which interpretations of responsibility, societal benefits or sustainability become influential? To what extent do these interpretations challenge dominant STI discourses?

Further information: Please send your proposal directly to the organizers of the session.

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