

Open Source in Biology:

exception or alternative to intellectual property?



*The potential and pitfalls of open source as an alternative
to the ownership of
seeds, genetic materials and genetic information'*

Friday 20 November 2009 from 13:00 – 17:00 at the Lloyd Hotel

Introduction

Intellectual property rights have been introduced and strengthened in the last decades, including those on source code and genetic code. An important difference between informatics and biology is, however, that shortly after the introduction of intellectual property rights, an alternative became available in informatics. The open source movement has demonstrated since the early eighties that innovation in informatics is possible on the basis of the sharing and the improvement of the source code of software programs and operating systems. A comparable development occurs in biology as a consequence of the tensions between intellectual property and changing conceptions in research about genes, genomes, proteomes, cells and so forth. Increasingly this involves digital information that needs to be shared and modelled in distributed networks. It is in this context that open source appears as an alternative to intellectual property: it is among several exceptions to intellectual property that become necessary when genetic information and genetic modification are involved. The aim of this seminar is to open for discussion about a different kind of interpretation of open source in biology. Could open source in biology also be about a more desirable alternative? – could it be a counterbalance to the further increase in private control and public regulation of genetic resources that are the crucial for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation?

Program 20 November 2009

13.00 Introduction / Opening

13.10 First speaker + discussion;

Prof. Dr. Guido Ruivenkamp. Wageningen University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

“Genomics and the production of commons: Open source as a method "to go beyond" public and private knowledge production.”

13.45 Second Speaker + discussion;

Prof. Dr. Jack R. Kloppenburg Jr., *University of Wisconsin Madison*

“Impeding Dispossession, Enabling Repossession: Biological Open Source and the Recovery of Seed Sovereignty”

14: 20 Coffee break

14:50 Third speaker + discussion

Dr. Jan Velterop, “concept web alliance” and Netherlands Bioinformatics Centre (NBIC)

“Nano-Publication in biology”

15:25 Fourth speaker + discussion;

Prof. Dr. Ir. Steve Hughes, *University of Exeter*

“Navigating Genomes”

16.00 Coffee break

16.15 Fifth speaker + discussion;

Dr. Jane Calvert, *University of Edinburgh*

“Synthetic biology: the open source engineering of nature?”

Registration

Participation is free of charge. Please send an e-mail to Eric Deibel (ericdeibel@yahoo.com) to confirm attendance (seats are limited but registration is possible until the 18th of November 2009).

Speakers

Prof Guido Ruivenkamp is a professor at Critical Technology Construction Group of Wageningen University and the Athena Institute of Vrije University Amsterdam. Since 2005, he is an associate professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and one year later he initiated the Critical Technology Construction group as a new platform for critical constructivist studies into the relation between modern technologies and social relations. Research on open source in biology has been one of the principle components of the interdisciplinary research program that he initiated in 2004. It is called: “*Genomics Between Prescriptive Code and Social Construction: An analysis of the constraints and possibilities for social choices in genomics for developing countries*”

Prof. Jack Kloppenburg is a professor at the department of Community and Environmental Sociology of the University of Wisconsin Madison. His book *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology, 1492-2000* is widely recognized as a seminal work. His current interests include biological open source.

Dr. Jan Velterop is one of the initiators of the Concept Web Alliance. He is a science publisher, amongst others he is a former director of Nature and director of Open Access at Springer. He is one of the initiators of BioMed Central, one of the first commercial open access science publishers, and of the 2001 Budapest Open Access Initiative.

Prof. Steve Hughes is professor at the University of Exeter where he is co-director of *Egenis*. His current research project focuses on the impact of advanced genomics-based tools for agronomy, plant breeding and food production on local agricultural practices. He has a long standing interest in open source, having been the director of CAMBIA, known for its Biological Open Source (BIOS) initiative.

Dr. Jane Calvert is a researcher at *Innogen*, the University of Edinburgh. She has published widely on a range of topics related to the sociology of science and is currently working on the sociology of the life sciences. Her interests include intellectual property in the life sciences and the emergence, development and epistemic aspirations of the new fields of systems biology and synthetic biology.

Directions to the Lloyd Hotel Amsterdam

Public transport from the Central Station

Take tram 26 (IJtram) for a direct connection and get off at stop *Rietlandpark*.

By car, approaching from the A10 ring road

Take exit S114 (Zeeburg/Centrum/Artis) and follow the signs for Centrum, the centre. Follow this road straight ahead. It will lead you into the Piet Hein tunnel. In the tunnel, keep to the right hand lane. When you exit the tunnel turn right at the lights, onto the Piet Heinkade. Turn right at the first lights. The road takes a sharp turn to the right, you are now on the Oostelijke Handelskade. If you wish to park in the parking garage, you turn right into the garage after the second building. If not, keep going straight ahead along the Oostelijke Handelskade. Prices of parking garage are €3,00 per hour or €25,00 per 24 hour. The Lloyd Hotel is located 400 meters along on the right hand side.

Approaching from Central Station (by car or bicycle)

From the back of the central station (facing the water), turn east (to the right). The water is on your left. Follow the road until there are buildings on the left hand side of the road. Continue straight ahead, and turn left at the second light. The road takes a sharp turn to the right, you are now on the Oostelijke Handelskade. If you wish to park in the parking garage, you turn right into the garage after the second building. If not, keep going straight ahead along the Oostelijke Handelskade. The Lloyd Hotel is located 400 meters along on the right hand side.

For more directions see: <http://www.lloydhotel.com/>