

Mapping and understanding Responsible Research and Innovation

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Abstract

As a concept and project, responsible research and innovation (RRI) is being embedded in research policy across Europe but is still currently open to experimentation. This paper explores some of the important dimensions of RRI that remain opaque and disputed amongst researchers and practitioners. We reinterpret Owen et al's (2012) 'dimensions of ambiguity' (motivations, theoretical conceptualisations and translations into practice) as a point of departure to analyse a diverse body of literature on approaches to RRI. A total of 48 papers were selected through a systematic literature search followed by a content analysis. Our results suggest that RRI is a fundamentally integrative concept, embedding elements of existing approaches to the governance and assessment of emerging technologies. At its core rests scholarship from within STS that attempts to examine how science, technology and society mutually shape each other. In consonance with this scholarly background, RRI tries to do a lot; encouraging anticipation of future consequences of emerging technologies; reflecting on their societal and ethical aspects; as well as highlighting a need to recognise the embedded narratives, interests and values of different actors in technoscientific arenas. However, the concept is also a point at which STS is articulating with other disciplines and practices. We argue that, as with any collaboration, making the conceptual and practical assumptions, and the commitments that go with them, explicit will be key to the future of RRI as it co-evolves with academic and political agendas.

References

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P., Stilgoe, J. (2012). Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. *Science and Public Policy*, 39(6), 751-760.