Technologies of similarities and differences : on the interdependence of nature and technology in the Human Genome Diversity Project

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Citation for published version (APA):

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Words of Thank

Just like any other text, this book embodies many hidden stories. It combines various different worlds and contexts, and contains the help and efforts of many colleagues and friends. Although writing involves solitary journeys, I could not have realised that the key to getting a Ph.D. research done lies in collective work. In a sense this book produced its networks of intellectual exchange, it taught me many things about work and life in academia, and it had gifted me a number of very good friends. It got written, but it has also written my life.

One day in 1996 I called Annemarie Mol. I told her that I had been to the lab, had gathered all that material, but did not have a clue what to do with it. She suggested that I would come and visit her in Utrecht. We had a long walk in the woods nearby. She made me talk about the lab and the material I had, and as we came out of the woods many hours later we had a structure for the book. From that day on Annemarie Mol had become the most crucial adviser for this thesis. Her voice is unmistakably in the chapters that follow, but I want to thank her for the process that led to this thesis. While giving me the feeling that we were heading somewhere, Annemarie was strict, critical and indeed “supervising” the project. I appreciated her professional way of working, which consists of a fine balance between tutoring and caring, though never taking over or taking the responsibility out of my hands. Her enthusiasm, her wit and support made working together real fun. Although it seems to me now that it could not have been otherwise, I am extremely happy (and lucky) that I dared to pick up the receiver that day in ’96.

Next to Annemarie Mol, this thesis has three other advisors, Gert-Jan van Ommen, Ruth Oldenziel en Selma Leydesdorff. Although not formally, Gert-Jan was involved in my research from the beginning. I thank him for long and insightful discussions, and for opening the doors to the community of geneticists, which was crucial for my research. Gert-Jan turned out to be a very careful reader of my work, providing me with comments and suggestions. I thank him for that, but especially for thinking along with my arguments and my specific ways of looking at genetic practices. Ruth Oldenziel was responsible for taking me into the Belle van Zuylen Institute. She encouraged me to apply and to do a Ph.D. within her group. I very much thank her for this opportunity. We had our ups and downs along the way, but I am content that we managed to sort out our differences and similarities, and appreciate her enthusiasm once the manuscript was there. Selma, I first of all thank for providing the space and the infrastructure for my research, and for willing to take two advisors on board from outside of the Institute. I especially thank her for moral support during the finishing job and for providing practical means to do so.
The Belle van Zuylen Institute is one of a kind. It houses different interdisciplinary research and an incredible number of very talented and wonderful colleagues. These are the ingredients that make me sometimes long back to it. I want to thank my colleagues for being mates, for good fun and for intellectual and moral support: Tineke Jansen, Yvette Kopijn, Monica Scholten, Wendy Janssen, Gerjan Sterk, Ellis Jonker, Irene Cirraad, Christien Brouwer, Judith Metz, Carianne van Dorst en Hanne Drogendijk. During the couple of month that Ruth was on leave, Gertrud Blauhof was charged with supervising my research. This was not an easy task, since it was just after I had started. It was pleasant working together. The “Promotie Club” is a gathering within the Belle van Zuylen where those who are working on a Ph.D. thesis can present and discuss their work. My work has benefited a lot from these gatherings. I also thank colleagues from outside of the Belle van Zuylen for their feedback, especially Odille Jansen, Annemie Halsema, Sandra Veen and Susan van Velzen. Two members of the “Belle” were crucial during the period I was there: Barbara van Balen (former office manager) and Wilma Cohen (former secretary). Barbara has a talent for community building and she gave me the feeling that I belonged there. I appreciated her support and enthusiasm, and her unorthodox ways of solving problems. Wilma was the centre of the institute. She made the secretary office into a place of coming together, where stories, coffee and cake was shared. I thank Wilma not only for endless practical help, whenever I needed it, but especially for a warm friendship.

Marion de Zanger is an inspiring colleague from which I learned a lot. Her work and distinct way of looking at things has grown valuable to me. Marion’s comradeship, engagement and great humour make me long for our next dinner party. In her own way Inge Boer has always been a supportive and inspiring member of the institute. It was pleasant having her around. On my leaving the institute many new members entered. Francis Gouda is a new professor at the “Belle”. In a very short period of time I learned to appreciate her company and contribution to the institute at large. I very much thank her for her support and positive approach. Astrit Blommestijn, Ingrid Helsloot, and Patricia Lulof are thanked for practical support. Astrit’s professional way of taking work out of my hand, when I was rounding up, and her wonderful spirit always produced moments of ease even when the pressure was high.

Sybille Lammes and Catherine Lord have fulfilled my human condition of being among friends on a daily basis. I am indebted to them. Sybille, Catherine and I shared the same room, and every other thing that comes with doing a Ph.D. We exchanged ideas about our work and our lives, shared our dreams and our anxieties, and advised and supported each other. We became a join of three, The Spice Warriors. Catherine’s brilliance and
interest in the spaces in between; between art and science, between gossip and academic life, between film and improvisation, made virtually every late afternoon into an event. In daily life, Sybille’s methodological “cut the crap” approach goes hand in hand with an enormous space were there are dreams, interconnections and joint efforts. Her broad interests, creativity and wit made our joint intellectual journeys into adventures.

The Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (Asca) was my partial home. The Theory Seminar was an exceptional occasion for learning about the intersections between philosophy, cultural studies and narratology. I would like to thank a number of colleagues that I met there for intellectual exchange, good company, and for making the seminar so extraordinary: Patricia Pisters, Murat Aydimir, Edit Zsadanyi, Peter Verstraten, Sasha Vojkovic, Markha Valenta, and Françoise Lucas. Asca conferences were always great events, and I especially thank Mieke Bal and Eloé Kingma not only for creating these opportunities, but also for warmly adopting me into their tribe. My friendship with Frans Willem Korten is a precious “spin off” of participating in Asca. He has been an intellectual mate and a coach at crucial moments of my research.

Rob Hagendijk introduced me to the WTMC-school. Rob’s panchromatic academic interests make him into a surprising person to work with. Working together was not only fun, but resulted in interesting hybrids. Participating in the WTMC summer and winter schools I met some valuable colleagues whose effects on my work are more than can be traced in the written text: Ruud Hendriks, Ruth Benschop, Paul Wouter, Els Rommes, Irma van der Ploeg, Jessika van Kammen, Brenda Diergaarden, Anne Beaulieu, Ruud Dael and Roland Bal.

Having conducted field work I am very much indebted to the people who work there, whom’s work I have been studying. Peter de Knijff is the head of the Forensic Laboratory for DNA Research. Because of those who populate it, his lab is a great place to be. I want to thank them all: Patrick Dieltjes, René Mieremet, Claus van Leeuwen, Els Voorhoeve, Marion Blom and Bert Bakker. It was a pleasure working together. I thank Peter for reserving time and space for my research, for his engagement, and for countless discussions. After the manuscript was handed in, I returned to the lab to work there. The lab has changed, some had left others came. Peter Henneman is among the latter. Peter’s humour and fascination with new technologies made working together into an interesting adventure. Jacqueline Koreman is also thanked for various practical assistance.

Svante Pääbo has facilitated my second field study. His Laboratory for Human Genetics and Evolution houses so many talents, and I feel privileged to have been there. I want to thank Svante for this chance and for the many things I learned in his lab. I also want to thank all lab members, for it seemed
that there was always somebody around, whenever needed I help or advice. Alex Greenwood, Michael Käser, Andreas Kindmark, Matthias Krings and Abdel Halim Salem are also thanked for being such good company. I especially want to thank Valentin Börner and Maris Laan for their generosity and friendship.

Being in Munich I participated in the Hauptseminar: Natur, Gesellschaft, Technik, supervised by Ulrich Beck. I thank him for these interesting gatherings, and especially Cordula Kropp, Gerhalt Beck, Marcus Holzinger, and Olaf Posselt for cutting edge after seminar discussion, which of course went hand in hand with the drinks.

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger I met on a train journey between Salzburg and Munich. We had planned that. After this encounter he became a careful reader of my work. I want to thank him for generous comment and suggestions, as well as for giving me a living example of how to combine working in different fields. The Postgraduate Forum on Genetics and Society is an international network of young academics conducting research on genetics. I thank Richard Tutton, Andreas Steiner, Ruth McNally, Ina Hellsten, Niel Scot, Sandra Parsons, Wan Ching Yee, Shaun Pattinson, Sarah Gibbons and Adam Hedgecoe for important feedback and wonderful gatherings.

In the course of finishing my Ph.D. I moved between institutes. My colleagues at the Department of Science Dynamics and at the Biology Department of this university, were thus faced with such a stormy phase. I want to thank them for being considered and for their collegiality: Leen Dresen, Willem Halfman, Olga Amsterdamsca, Nelly Oudshoorn, Stuart Blume, Loet Leydesdorff, Chunglin Kwa, Anja Hiddinga, Sylvia Manuputy and Thea van den Valkenhof. I also thank my colleagues at the Biology Department and especially Antje van der Does-Bianchi and Belinda Oude Essink. It is through my involvement at these departments that I started teaching Maatschappelijke Biologie. My students, especially the "class of '99" are thanked for a great experience. One of the guest teachers in this course is John Grin. He became a colleague and a mate, and was always there when I needed advice.

I thank Michael Collins and Gary Price for polishing my English. Gary, who in a short period of time grew to be a friend, I thank particularly for instructive comments, insightful discussions and comradship.

My friends had to bear me over last couple of years. I have seen too little of them and in most cases when we did meet, it often involved work. I thank them for having been there during the minute time we had: Carla van El, Ernst van Velzen, Adrieenne van den Bogaard, Marc de Leeuw Edith Kuiper, Margreth Hoek, Manon Oostdijk, Ayfer Tandogan, Debbie de Rooy and Erik den Dobbelraere. The evening I was writing my research proposal
for the Belle van Zuylen I had a phone call with my best friend, Marianne Dijkstra. She was having her birthday party and I couldn’t be there. Although she did encourage me to apply for the position, I am sure that on occasions she regretted that. I want to thank her for insisting on meeting each other despite the lack of time (on both sides), for her care and company, and for her understanding when things just went different.

My parents Mohamed and Miriam M’charek I thank for many things, but especially for their imagination and flexibility. Just like many parents they had difficulties to understand what I was doing. For example, sitting behind a computer all day long, is just not easy to communicate in terms of what is being done. But they surprised me so now and then when they would find their own metaphors or analogies for making what I was doing tangible. My sisters Besma and Moufida and my brother Adel are crucial to me. I thank them for their encouragement and support, and for bringing in irony whenever I grew too one sighted. My sister Houda is no longer here, but she knows that she is a precious one and a continuous source of inspiration for me.

Last, but certainly not least, there is Olaf Posselt. He is intellectually, conceptually, emotionally my sparring partner. It is difficult to imagine work and life without him. This book is with/for him.