

# FUTURES AND NARRATIVES IN HEALTH CARE POLITICS AND POLICY

**Tineke Kleinhout-Vliek**

**Utrecht University**

**Conor Douglas**

**York University**

**Eva Hilberg**

**University of Sheffield**

## **Abstract:**

Health care systems worldwide face significant pressure. While one might immediately think of the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges such as high costs, medicine shortages, and dwindling solidarity predate it. At the same time, the field is host to much innovation in terms of, for instance, personalised medicine and drug repurposing, but also experimentation at the political and policy level with conditional reimbursement and real-world data.

Whether through innovation or more institutionalised routes, meeting challenges and needs is strongly dependent on the futures and narratives invoked. STS scholarship shows us that both futures and narratives are co-constitutive of social orders: they are highly political. A patient telling their story in an attempt to gain access to costly treatment is but one example - a politician expounding on the alleged untenability of escalating costs is another. Because futures and narratives are contextualised and individualised yet dependent on shared understandings, they are anything but straightforward in a field populated with powerful actors with diverging interests.

We invite papers that critically examine the role of futures (including expectations, visions, and imaginaries) and narratives (including folk theories and stories) and their consequences in the politics and policy of health care. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Health care system sustainability and solidarity
- Prototyping and other forms of socio-material innovation
- Patient groups, needs-based activism, and patient and public engagement
- Forms of knowledge, including experiential expertise and big or real-world data
- Policy experimentation and alternative regulatory frameworks for access and coverage
- R&D partnerships across public, not-for-profit, and private sectors

Session organisers:

Dr Tineke Kleinhout-Vliek, Postdoctoral Researcher Social Pharmaceutical Innovation, Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University

Dr Conor Douglas, Assistant Professor Science and Technology Studies, Technology and Society Studies Department, York University

Dr Eva Hilberg, Research Associate, Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield

## **Key words:**

Futures; healthcare; governance