

# Making responsibility matter

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PROPOSITIONS  
belonging to the dissertation

**Making Responsibility Matter**  
**The Emergence of Responsible Innovation as an Intellectual Movement**

By Danielle Shanley

1. Ideas about responsible innovation, popular today in both academic and policy circles, are part of a long history within which different ways of understanding responsibility have been made to matter by different actors, at different moments, in different places, for different purposes.
2. Paying attention to how different visions of responsibility have been made to matter reminds us that, as an intellectual movement, responsible innovation could have been otherwise.
3. Intellectual movement trajectories are often non-linear. Rather than assessing intellectual movements in terms of their success or failure, we should instead focus on how previous movements create the foundations for new activities, forms, and fields.
4. As a key dimension of responsible innovation, reflexivity involves meditating on and acknowledging one's positionality. Reflexivity therefore necessarily involves some historical thinking regarding how particular positions become established.
5. Though RRI practitioners imagine their field as correcting or going beyond the top-down, elitist nature of previous efforts to make responsibility matter, numerous antecedent movements were notably inclusive and oriented to the grassroots.
6. The interpretative richness provided by historical ethnography can offer important insights that enable a reimagining of entrenched historical narratives. Such reimaginings can then help to open up ways of thinking and talking about different possible futures.
7. Ambivalence towards technological change is nothing new. Historical attention to those who were ambivalent, and their reasons for being so, is however long overdue.
8. Given that most people are ambivalent, embracing ambivalence can be seen as a way of making responsibility matter, as working from and with ambivalence entails carefully reflecting upon conflicting ideas and alternative courses of action.
9. Given that withholding judgement and weighing up conflicting sides of an argument are key features of good scholarship, ambivalence might even be considered as an intellectual virtue.
10. Writing up a PhD is essentially an extended exercise in trying to heed George Orwell's advice on writing: use short words, be succinct, use the active where possible, and avoid scientific jargon at all costs.