

# Assessing Expectations. Promises and Silences in Telecare Technologies Websites

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# The sociology of expectations

- Ø Promises as instruments of tentative governance
- Ø Sociology of expectations: promises can be considered as 'wishful enactments of a desired future' (Borup et al. 2006:286)
- Ø Expectations are not merely rhetorical but 'constitutive' or 'performative' in attracting the interest and mobilizing the support of actors (Lente and Rip 1998; Borup 2006)

# My contribution to expectation studies-1

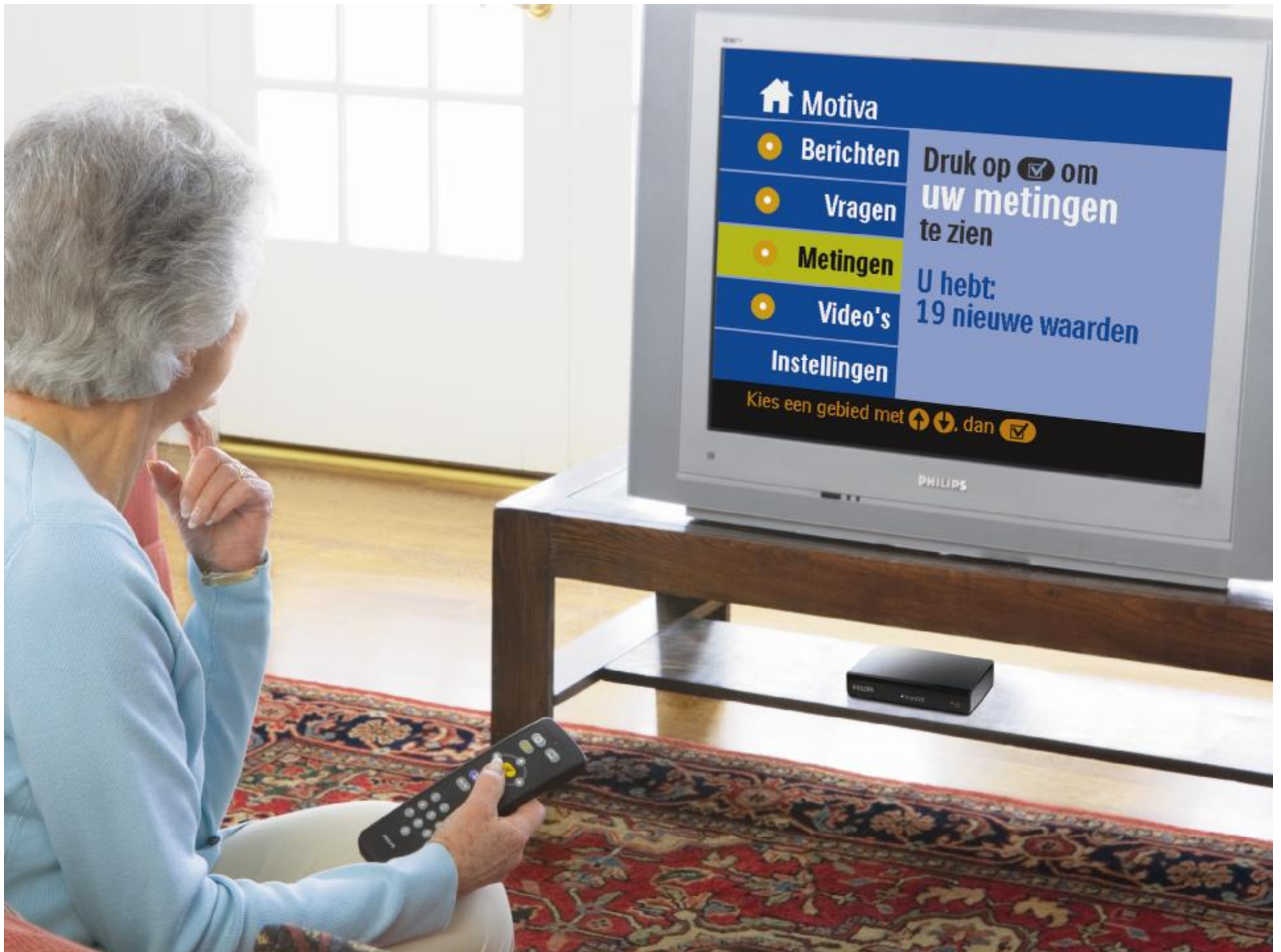
- ∅ Most studies primarily focus on the early development of technologies within R&D departments in industry and academia
- ∅ I suggest it is relevant to study promises articulated in a later phase of development as well
- ∅ This shift in focus is important because studies in the sociology of expectations tend to camouflage the socio/cultural processes that may constrain technological innovation.

# My contribution to expectation studies- 2

- ∅ Focus on which actors and perspectives are prioritized or silenced
- ∅ Inspired by the work of Anselm Strauss and Leigh Star: invisible work and marginalization

# Research question and method

- ∅ Which actors and perspectives on which the future of technologies depend are prioritized or silenced in promises on telecare technologies
- ∅ Analysis of websites of producers, press bulletins of **two telecare devices** for heart patients currently implemented in the U.S. and Europe



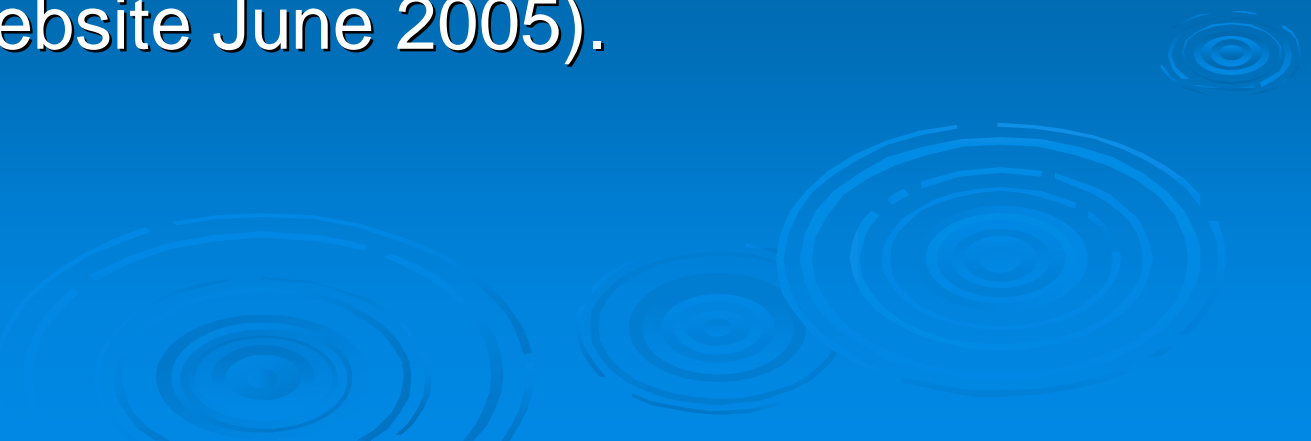


# Heart-failure monitoring system: perspectives and silences

- ∅ The most dominant perspective expressed in the press releases and web pages is the managerial view of care: costs, productivity and efficiency
- ∅ Term used to refer to the technology: ‘a home-based management solution’ (Philips Press Information, October 2004).
- ∅ This managerial view is reflects the economic interests of the producer

# Expectations in terms of strengthening the firm's position

“The improvement of the quality of life of chronic patients is one of the ways to realize brand fidelity. By doing this we strengthen our position as a healthcare, lifestyle and technology company. This is also the driving force behind the new interactive Motiva-platform for communication in healthcare”  
(Philips website June 2005).





# Marginalized perspectives

- Ø Perspectives of healthcare providers: they are only represented by quotes of cardiologists participating in the clinical trials
- Ø Perspectives of patients: promises only refer to abstract notions such as improvement of quality of care or statistics of reduction of hospital admissions.

Plak de witte elektrode boven de rechterspel en de zwarte elektrode onder de linkerspel (diagonaal). Sluit de holterfoon aan op de contactdraden. Bevestig de holterfoon eventueel met de clip aan uw kleding

**0900-46273**

ID nummer: \_\_\_\_\_

**HARTIS**  
[www.hartis.nl](http://www.hartis.nl)

CARD  
Sleep  
CG-6106

**CR 2450**

REPLACES  
D12450, 5029LC, E-CR2450

**CR 2450**

REPLACES:  
D12450, 5029LC, E-CR2450

# Perspectives and silences in promises of the ECG recorder

- ∅ Different pattern: promises explicitly address the concerns of patients, general practitioners, and health insurers
- ∅ Patients: website adopts their perspective ('care in your own hands'); lay terminology instead of expert language
- ∅ General practitioners: 'heart-rhythm diagnostics will remain preserved for first-line care'



# Marginalized and silenced perspectives

- ∅ Patients and gp's: promises only address their instrumental actions
- ∅ Concerns about how the use of the device may affect the daily lives of patients, or whether patients are willing to 'take care in their own hands' are not addressed
- ∅ Actual work and perspectives of telecare workers is silenced

# Conclusions-1

- ∅ Promises on telecare devices paint a rather rosy future of the new technology
- ∅ Emphasis on positive expectations at the expense of constraining aspects is not restricted to R&D phase
- ∅ Explanation: economic interests
- ∅ Yes, but there is more at stake: View on technology

# Conclusions-2

- ∅ Promises reflect an instrumental view on user-technology relations
- ∅ Technologies can simply be added to or replace existing healthcare practices if potential users are convinced of the advantages of the new technology
- ∅ STS: successful implementation of new technologies involves much more than simply introducing a device into its context of use (Berg and Mol 1998; Webster 2006; Lehoux 2006)



# Conclusions-3

- ∅ Technogeographical approach to understand and anticipate consequences for healthcare
- ∅ Technogeography:
  1. *the ways in which technologies participate in changing the landscape of care by connecting previously distinct places, redefining the meaning of these places and creating new sites where care takes place.*
  2. *the ways in which technologies contribute to creating interdependencies and distributing responsibilities between people, places and technical devices, thus reconfiguring who cares.*

# Governance implications

- ∅ Promises as instruments of governance (performative rather than rhetorical): problem when crucial actors or their perspectives are not addressed
- ∅ Promises as tools of governance could be improved by adopting a techno-geographical approach to assess (future) use, including the perspectives of ALL relevant actors, perspectives and places.

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***Telecare Technologies and the  
Transformation of Healthcare.***

*Palgrave MacMillan 2011*

