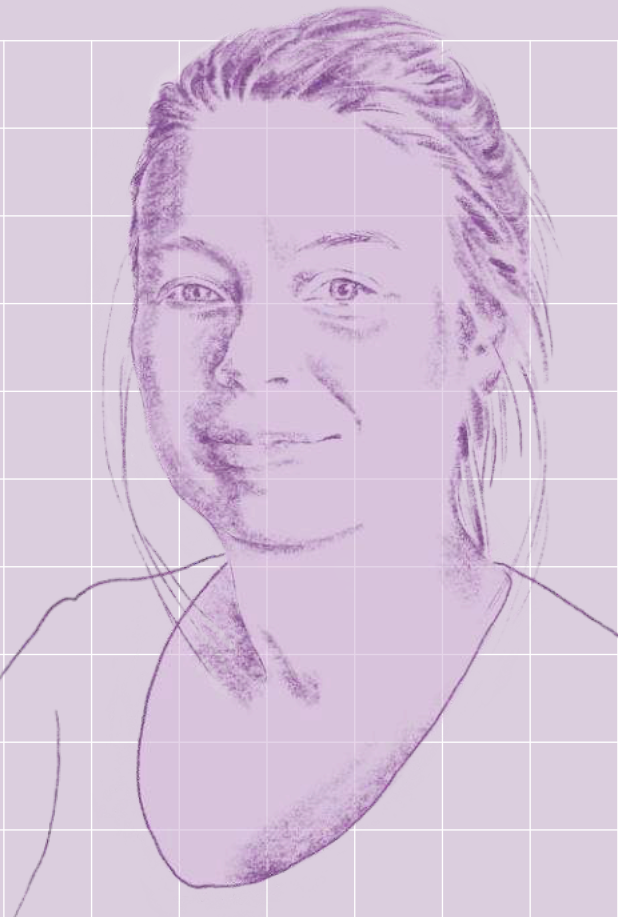


Britte Bouchaut



Britte Bouchaut grew up in Kloosterzande, a village in the Dutch Flanders part of Zeeland. She spent her childhood in this area of natural beauty around the Western Scheldt (Dutch: Westerschelde), the estuary of the Scheldt River.

Standing at the Zeedijk looking out at the horizon, you feel the river's spaciousness. Look to the right and see the nuclear plant and maritime traffic from the Port of Antwerp. To the left, you can observe seals and other wildlife and people enjoying recreational activities. The stark contrast between heavy industry and natural beauty has always been there. Still, now Britte feels a strong urge to take action and contribute to protecting this area with strong family ties as much as possible.

In the acknowledgements of her 2022 Thesis, 'Responsible Learning about Uncertain Risks', there is a humorous shout-out to her cousins, which offers insight into how involved and very personal her motivation in current research is:

Unfortunately, we cannot get the PFAS out of the Westerschelde, but we can devote more drinks to discussing it. Cheers!

"I have lived in Eindhoven for over ten years but am going home when I return to Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. My family is still there, and some of my friends stayed, too. Our conversations on current affairs and global issues at home revolve around our collective interests and professional expertise. My cousins and their partners are professionals in technology, science, health and environment

sectors. Inevitably, we talk about the PFAS scandal in the Westerschelde. If only swift action was taken after the discovery of PFAS in the Westerschelde. But for me, this isn't simply about the injustice caused by multinationals. It is about our health, and we don't even know the full extent yet. My parents still live in and near Kloosterzande, along with many others I love and care about."

"If you were to ask my parents if they are surprised at my academic and professional career choices, I'm sure they would tell you they are not. I grew up in a village where everyone generally respected water and nature. They knew about my intrinsic desire to protect our planet. What bothers me is that while we can stand up for ourselves, our land and animals do not have a voice. As a child, I was like a little activist on behalf of animals. A proud member of the World Wildlife Fund and Kids for Animals, I would knock on doors to collect money!"

After my BA in Chemistry, I took a master's in Innovation Sciences at the TU in Eindhoven. I started noticing and exploring the interactions between policy and innovation. If I take a step back and reflect, my PhD at Delft is a natural confluence of my interests, frustrations and intrinsic desire to contribute to a better and safer environment.

Did Britte miss an opportunity in politics? She laughs and states she is much happier right where she is, confident that she can make a tangible contribution to change for the better.

Britte Bouchaut is assistant professor at the Safety & Security Science group at TU Delft. Her research focuses on the ethics of safety in Chemistry and Biotechnology and how we can work towards safer and more sustainable industries using Safe (and sustainable)-by-Design and Responsible Research and Innovation.

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Today's grand challenges can no longer be solved with a single perspective or approach

Aukje Hassoldt

Dean TU Delft Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management

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