

Workshop in Barcelona (24th May)

After Public Engagement? Towards a Critical Governance of Emergent Technologies

When talking about the governance of emerging technologies words such as complex, precautionary, inclusive and deliberative are repeatedly used as defining terms. Seen through these concepts, ‘the governance of science’ has been used as a recursive discourse at the national and European levels for more than 10 years now. The emergence of new technologies such as nanotech and synthetic biology is seen as imminent. At the same time, the realisation of these technologies is often presented as a matter of public deliberation, and eventually as a collective choice of the ‘European’ citizens. Some proponents of public engagement have reacted to a current ‘institutionalization’ of public engagement, and even talk about the ‘tyranny of participation. For instance, less than 5 years ago, nanotechnology was presented as both entailing imminent market opportunities and as *The Opportunity* for upstream public engagement. During these years numerous public engagement nano-exercises have been carried out. It is still unclear whether these exercises have critically influenced the developments of nanotechnology. Is public engagement merely providing legitimation without empowerment? In this workshop we aim to address a number of key questions in the governance of emerging technologies: has ‘real’ public engagement ever happened? If so, on what occasions? If not: why did it not come about? And why did some (citizens and academics) seem to get tired of public engagement before it even happened? Is it simply becoming an obligatory and tiring issue for citizens and scientists? Does the emerging character of some technologies limit the emergence of real engagement? If so: how? Why did some emerging technologies such as GMOs provoke so much ‘spontaneous’ engagement, while others, such as nanotechnology, never really became an issue of public concern in the same way? Do we need alternatives to institutionalised ideas and practices of ‘precaution’, ‘public engagement’ and ‘deliberative democracy’ for the governance of emerging technologies? How can we think about alternatives?

Workshop Program

8:30-9:00: Workshop introduction and round of presentations. Ana Delgado

Session I. Complexity and Governance.

9:00-9:30. S. Funtowicz and R. Strand: “Why we need to go beyond the precautionary principle?”

9:30-10:00 B. Wynne: “Beyond risk and uncertainty”

10:00-10:30 Comments and Discussion (Discussant: J.A. López Cerezo)

10:30 -10:45 Coffee break.

Session II. Sick of Engagement before Engagement. Will Public Engagement Ever happen?

10:45-11:15. A. Stirling: “Engagement: enlightenment, enablement or empowerment”

11:15- 11:45. J. Chilvers: (waiting for presentation title)

11:45-12:15 Comments and Discussion (Discussant: F. Wickson)

12:15-13:25. Lunch

13:10-13:25 (Right after lunch, we will project a short movie on synthetic biology)

Session III. Why the governance of emerging technologies is so difficult, in practice?

13:30- 14: 30

F. Wickson.: Governing the invisible (nanotechnology)

K. Rommetveit: Governing movements (biometrics)

A. Delgado: Governing the making of life (systems and synthetic biology).

14: 30-15:00 Comments and discussion (Discussant: B. Wynne)

15:00 – 15:15 Coffee break

Session IV. The entanglements of governance.

15:15-15:45. Mario Giampietro (waiting for presentation title)

15:45- 16:15. J.A. López Cerezo (waiting for presentation title)

16:15-16:45 Comments and discussion (Discussant A. Stirling)

Roundtable. 16:45-18:00. Critical approaches to the governance of emerging technologies.