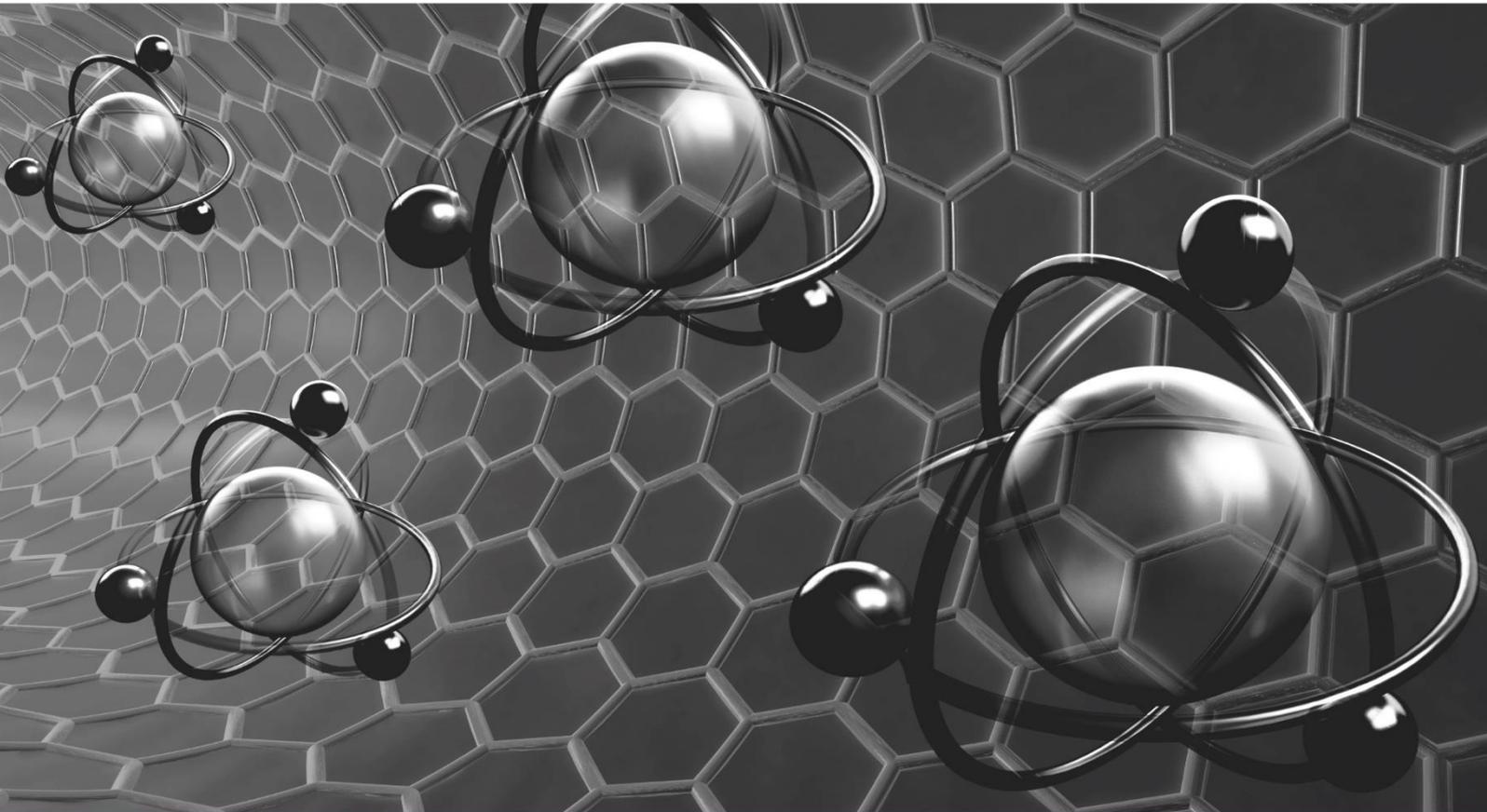




NANO2ALL
SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT ON RESPONSIBLE NANOTECHNOLOGY



preliminary results - Multi-stakeholder dialogue in France



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NANO2ALL – MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

Organised by TRACES - Espace des Sciences Pierre-Gilles de Gennes (ESPGG)

Paris, France - November 23, 2017

Venue: Espace des Sciences Pierre-Gilles de Gennes (ESPGG)

Context

The French multi-stakeholder dialogue took place at the Espace des Sciences Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, Paris, on the 23rd of November 2017. A recruitment campaign successfully identified a good variety of participants. 11 persons attended the workshop, including 2 citizens who formerly participated in the French NANO2ALL citizens' dialogue, 2 representatives from the scientific community, a representative from the industrial community, a science policy maker, a journalist, and several citizens engaged in organisations related to nanotechnology and/or scientific topics. A very serious and nice atmosphere characterized the day: it was collaborative but not consensual, and it did not hide the diversity of points of views while also respecting them. The outcomes were strong and concrete.

The workshop was not without some difficulties: due to last-minute schedule conflicts, representatives of the scientific community with specific expertise on nanotechnology could not be present at the event for its entire duration, and thus were unable to share their fullest expertise. Moreover, we believe that having a "hard" industry representative – people whose business performance would depend on the application of nanotechnology – at the dialogue could have helped the discussions touch upon the truly conflictual issues of RRI in nanotechnology, perhaps by challenging the general underlying consensus shared by all participants on the need to exercise stronger civil society control over the development of technology with high potential impact.

Participants coming from critical citizens' associations had a negative a priori opinion on the Nano2All project: the website and material consulted prior to the workshop made it appear as a pro-nanotech exercise. Participants expressed doubts on the fact that their critical voice would be heard in Brussels, at the European level. Despite this attitude, they accepted to participate constructively and took the occasion to refine their position and argumentations, and finally expressed positive feedback concerning the dialogue event.

Findings and conclusions

Participants gave some interesting advice for a responsible innovation agenda in the application of nanotechnology to brain-machine interfaces. Although the full range of results of the workshop can be grasped only by consulting the ensemble of the material produced, we can summarize some preliminary outcomes. We will present them in relation to the different actors, as discussed in the final session of the workshop.

Concerning citizens:

- ensure opportunities for life-long learning, information gathering and information sharing, reaching all sectors of society (“education populaire”), as informed citizens are essential for constructive debates, and unbiased information needs to be guaranteed;
- ensure that contact between citizens and their elected representative takes place on nano-related issues;
- facilitate and support financially the creation of civil society organisations.

Concerning researchers:

- protection of whistle blowers;
- development of spaces for ethical reflection within research institutions, that is, development of opportunities to address ethical issues as a standard (“environmental”) components of research institutions (“Lieu de vie ethique”);
- greater opportunities for researchers to understand civil society by including civil society representative in the definition, evaluation and implementation of research programmes;
- engage in the development of training modules for secondary schools on ethics and the social impacts of research;
- promote transdisciplinary research teams including humanities, social sciences, hard sciences,...

Concerning industry/business:

- protect whistle blowers within industries;
- impose quality standards and quality control, analogous to the ISO system, but adapted to issues related to health and environmental impacts;
- protect and help SMEs which engage in alternative routes;
- put in place procedures to understand public opinion which go beyond marketing and communication;
- participate in debates with citizens and participatory democracy approaches.

Concerning civil society organisations (CSOs):

- capacity building to better understand the evolution of public opinion, and better understand the actors & powers at play and thus have a stronger and more constructive impact;

- ensure funding for the role of CSOs as counter-lobbying; funding should be proportional to the extent of the potential impact of new technologies;
- support CSOs to focus on the nano-systems at large, and not only on bioethics or health- and environment-related issues.

Concerning others stakeholders:

- at the EU level, transform the budget nowadays devoted to communication and outreach into support for CSO as auxiliaries and consultants for public policies;
- promotion of “scientific culture”: generate public events to foster discussions and debates, provoke occasions of encounters between civil society, research, industry, policy making, etc.

Concerning policy makers: The role of policy makers was mostly considered by participants as enabling and facilitating other actors’ roles. Recommended actions concerning policy makers were mostly included in recommendations for other actors.



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