

# **'Nano Jury UK' was well executed and important for moving forward deliberation on new technologies**

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Nano Jury UK has been enthusiastically embraced by the jurors, innovatively and proficiently executed, and has the potential to raise important questions about public deliberation on new technologies, suggests a team at the Centre for Environmental Risk in the School of Environmental Sciences, at UEA.

The team, Dr Tee Rogers-Hayden and Professor Nick Pidgeon, funded by Leverhulme trust, have been analysing and reflecting upon Nano Jury UK as it has been taking place. Their research concentrated on the processes of the jury and the jurors' experiences. They observed the jury, interviewed jurors, used the jurors' own criteria for success to undertake a questionnaire of jurors' experiences, and attended jury planning meetings. Preliminary findings on what has occurred so far are:

- The citizens jury type format adopted by the Nano Jury UK organisers was a particularly useful way of approaching public participation on new technologies, such as nanotechnologies, which are 'upstream' in nature - meaning that discussion on them takes place before significant R&D has occurred and while the technologies are relatively unknown to the public.
- The UEA team were impressed with the innovative organisation of Nano Jury UK. It was steered by a broadly constituted multi-stakeholder oversight panel (which included civil society, nano-scientists and government representatives) and also drew upon a scientific advisory panel.
- The close involvement of the multi-stakeholder oversight panel had a number of strengths. In particular it enhances the potential for the jury's findings to have impact on national policy through interaction with the oversight panel members both during and potentially after the process. It also ensures that the jurors were presented with a range of perspectives on the issue.
- The members of Nano Jury UK were chosen to represent a broad cross-section of society also being inclusive of a number of ethnicities and religions. This is good practice in citizen jury methodology.
- The jurors themselves reported a range of comments about the jury. In particular, that they thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They welcomed the opportunity to learn about, and participate in the jury on nanotechnologies.

They saw the jury, in creating a forum for 'ordinary folks' to provide perspectives on new technologies, as fulfilling an important function in society. Furthermore they saw it as significant in 'community building' in their own local west Yorkshire area. Both the good humoured, inclusive and dynamic manner in which the jury was facilitated, and the way Nano Jury UK built on discussions of an earlier topic chosen by the jury members (on local youth crime) were reported as central to their experience.

- As a cross-section of society, the jurors, like the majority of the British population, were not familiar with nanotechnologies at the outset. In 2004 the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering<sup>1</sup> found that only 29% of people in the UK had heard of the term nanotechnologies and even less were able to describe them. As the first ever jury on this topic, the organisers and participants had to work within this constraint. In particular, the jurors needed to learn about nanotechnologies, and how to appraise the different sources of information on the topic, before then making their recommendations. This type of public participation contrasts deliberation on established issues where there may be an entrenchment and polarisation of opinion, such as that which occurred on the GM Nation? Public Debate.
- The Nano Jury UK process – as an innovative experiment - provides many useful lessons for the future. In particular the ways in which upstream engagement requires new approaches to bringing citizens and science into interaction. Accordingly, the UEA team and jury organisers are planning to further examine the implications for 'up-stream' public engagement processes.

Although the jury released their recommendations, on 21 September, the larger process has not yet finished. The jurors and jury organisers will be tracking the impact of their recommendations on policy over the coming months.

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering (2004) *Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies: Opportunities and Uncertainties*. London: RS/RAE.