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**The International Journal of Deliberative Mechanisms in Science: new Opportunities and Challenges for the new Millennium**

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# Editorial. The *International Journal of Deliberative Mechanisms in Science*: new Opportunities and Challenges for the new Millennium

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**T**he relationship between science and the rest of society is inherently dynamic. In light of unprecedented opportunities for deliberation in society, new participatory mechanisms are emerging in order to incorporate the views of diverse social groups into scientific decision-making. Undoubtedly, if we consider their potential impact upon science and society, these links are fascinating, but although fascinating, they are also challenging. The great variety of participatory activities and methods developed in different contexts require forums for reviewing approaches and comparing new ideas. It is in this context that DEMESCI is founded.

Apart from science, political, educational, and health care systems are also involved with these participatory processes. Though the boundaries between these social domains have become increasingly blurred, it is still possible to make analytical distinctions among them. DEMESCI will focus on the epistemic function, in other words, how the scientific outcomes are changed and potentially improved by these forms of



participation. Moreover, this journal is also interested in publishing articles on the decision-making of technical and scientific aspects that have political relevance for decisions, particularly those involving risk and uncertainty. The educational aspects of the participatory mechanisms are also crucial to society. Last but not least, the active role of patients and non-patients in the health care programs and the consequences for the health care systems is another vital aspect of examining the public engagements with science.

These frameworks of analysis include several sub-fields of study, like the representation in these activities (who and why citizens and scientists are involved with them), transparency of communication (how the process of deliberation works), outcomes (what goals are defined and potentially reached), and impact (the social consequences in the long-term for participants and science), among other aspects. We welcome case studies that illustrate these questions, but we particularly encourage those contributions that attempt to integrate them into a broader perspective by widening the understanding of the public participation in science in the context of complex society.

This first number includes four articles and a book review. In the first article *Challenging Participation in Sustainability Research*, Ulrike Felt, Judith Igelsböck, Andrea Schikowitz, and Thomas Völker, show how public participation in science challenges traditional boundaries of science, but at the same time, how this participation, due to the still existing disparities between theory and practice, still remains a challenge. This article explores the possibilities, but also the limitations of these activities, focusing on the field of sustainable research in Austria.

From Australia, Craig Cormick introduces ten key questions about the public participation in science. Aspects like how to measure the quality of these activities, when to engage with the public, and how to deal with the new technologies of information, among others, invite the reflection about participatory mechanisms.

Marta Soler and Cristina Petreñas have written an article about the way that elderly people participates in science through the *Nano and Elderly: meetings between elderly people and science. New strategies for social participation* funded by the National R&D&i Plan in Spain. The article

focuses on the potential barriers that elderly people encounter when they try to participate in these activities, and what can be done to overcome them.

Finally, Nemesio Espinoza explores the way that the dissemination of scientific knowledge in Peru is carried out. While in other countries the dissemination of scientific knowledge is being complemented by more participatory approaches, in Peru the dissemination has not been consolidated due to the social context analyzed in the article.

The first book review of this journal is of *100 controversias de la biología (100 controversies in biology)* by David Bueno. Íñiguez shows the way that Bueno has explored issues like transgenic organisms, stem cell research, human cloning, and climate change, among others, stimulating the public debate taking place over such topics.

DEMESCI appreciates the selfless cooperation of all the people that have made this (what we think is a) timely journal possible, and especially, we would like to thank all the Hipatia Press team. The next issue will be published in January 2013. Until then, we wish you exciting reading and fruitful discussions on the science of the new millennium, namely the science that returns to its collaborative roots, albeit in a very different context, but that, nevertheless, continues to look towards the future.

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