ENGAGING CITIZENS: THE HIGH COST OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN HIGH TECHNOLOGY

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341 BARDEEN

Consensus conferences are a mechanism to engage lay citizens in deliberation about highly technical matters. In Denmark, where this form of citizen participation emerged, reports provided by citizen panels are considered by members of parliament as they debate questions of science and technology policy. My talk will draw on a paper written with Jason Delborne and Ashley Anderson that contributes to ongoing discussions on civic engagement through an exploration of citizen participation in two citizen consensus conferences on nanotechnology, one held in 2005 and the second in 2008. I will discuss the factors that motivate citizens to participate formally in debates about emerging “high technologies” (technologies with high degrees of complexity, high costs, and potentially large impacts), and consider demographic and related characteristics of the participants in these two consensus conferences, and the reasons they provided for participating.

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