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For session 3: EMERGING CONFIGURATIONS OF BIOMEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES

Configuring and deliberating personalised medicine in expert and citizen dialogues

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The term "personalised medicine" (PM) is generally used as a buzzword for future trends in biomedicine today. More narrowly, it refers to strategies of stratification that divide patients into subgroups based on specific biomarkers to prescribe more tailormade, effective therapies. But PM is also hailed to encompass proactive, predictive and post-treatment healthcare approaches. Thus, PM is still a largely contested term. Additionally, critical issues concerning the technical realisation of PM, its costs or data protection aspects are up for debate. Since patients and citizens are called upon to make their biological tissue and genetic data available for research purposes, public participation is considered necessary to realise the vision of PM on the EU as well as national level.

The paper reflects on an ongoing participation project that seeks to stimulate deliberation on PM among Austrian experts and citizens. It analyses how experts from a variety of backgrounds (research, medicine, industry, ethics, and regulation) discussed the current framework conditions, expectations and challenges in three stakeholder workshops, and compares these results with the ways in which members of the "lay" public debated the term PM as well as the issues of prevention, costs and data contribution in four citizen dialogue events. These dialogue processes not only represented venues to engage with current configurations of PM but also contributed themselves to the continuing configuration of PM in the Austrian techno-political context. The paper focuses on a comparison of how experts and citizen converge and diverge in configuring PM and in relating to existing configurations.