Call for Abstracts for TATuP special topic in issue 3/2020

"Democracy and TA. Practical issues and conceptual consequences"

Guest editors of this TATuP special topic: Armin Grunwald (ITAS, KIT); Thomas Saretzki (University Lüneburg)

Deadline for submitting your abstract: 28 February 2020

Technology assessment (TA) was established more than 50 years ago to support democratic opinion formation and decision making. The idea of a societal development influenced by "technical constraints" should be overcome by a scientifically reflected analysis of preconditions, fields of conflict, and impacts of technologization processes. A policy supposedly "without alternative" should be replaced by a policy providing different options for action that could be subject to debate and decision making in democratic processes. Since that time, TA has developed and diversified in democratically constituted societies, especially towards participation and inclusion. Four developments give reason to put the relation between democracy and TA in the focus of a TATuP special topic:

- All over the world, the assessment of technology impacts is also relevant for countries whose traditions and forms of government are far away from western democratic ideals;

- populist movements and authoritarian politicians experience sometimes considerable increases in popularity in almost all western countries, so people often talk about a crisis of western democracy;

- digitalization allows for new communication and mobilization patterns far from traditional forms of democratic decision-making processes;

- at the local or national level, grass-roots and participative negotiations are becoming more and more relevant for the acceptance of new or obsolescent technologies. There is a conflict in the relationship to the attempts of democratic legitimization of global mechanisms and institutions of negotiations for global impacts of technology.

Expected contributions

Traditional forms of policy-advising and participative TA reach their limits here. Against this background, we invite you to hand in conceptual/theoretical analyses of the current situation in the relationship between democracy and TA as well as empirical case studies in this field. In both categories, perspectives for the further development of TA should be

identified. The contributions should be dedicated to one or several of the following questions:

- How important is the reference to democracy for TA: indispensable, debatable, or accidental? What nuances can be identified? How pragmatic may or must TA be in this respect?

- What is TA's attitude towards the threat that western models of democracy experience "from within", arising from populist provocations or in the framework of democratic elections? Is TA observer, mediator, or does it have to take sides?

- How can TA assess and co-design technologies – and their options for use – that have a tendency to or at least might endanger or impede democracy, such as the ones that are currently discussed in the field of digitalization and artificial intelligence?

- How does TA deal in the course of its own globalization with concepts of TA that evolve in non-democratic countries? What are the impacts of extremely different forms of government, ranging from deliberative democracy to authoritarian dictatorships, on a globally acting TA and the western TA community? Which analytical or action-related points of contact exist between the latter?

Submissions

Please send your abstract with reference to the above-mentioned topic description and questions by email to redaktion@tatup.de by **28 February 2020** at the very latest. Please note the following:

- max. 3,000 characters incl. spaces;
- the editorial office will correspond with the author submitting the abstract;
- name all authors with full names, email addresses, and institutional affiliations.

Schedule

28 February 2020: deadline for submitting your abstract
Mid-March 2020: decision on inviting authors to submit a full manuscript
Mid-June 2020: deadline for submitting your full manuscript, followed by a double non-blind review process
Beginning of September 2020: feedback from the reviewers, followed by authors' revisions
Mid-October 2020: editorial deadline
December 2020: publication of TATuP 3/2020 (print and online)