

TAGUNGSBERICHTE

The 2nd PACITA Conference: A Lively Picture of (Parliamentary) TA

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The conference, with its subtitle “The Next Horizon of Technology Assessment”, was the second and final conference of the four year PACITA project (Parliaments and Civil Society in Technology, 2011/2015). This project was funded under the 7th Framework Programme for Research of the European Commission and brought together 15 European partners to collaborate with the aim of increasing capacity and enhancing the institutional foundations for Technology Assessment (TA) across Europe, with a particular focus on the diverse practices of Parliamentary Technology Assessment (PTA). This conference, organized by ITAS, reflected the broad aims of the PACITA project which are to contribute to the expansion of TA through training, integrating and debating TA methods and experimenting with cross-European methods. These aims were reflected in the range of topics and different formats of the conference, which included standard paper sessions alongside interactive formats such as panel discussions, round tables, workshops and a film presentation. While this brief summary report cannot do justice to the full richness and diversity of the conference program, it aims to highlight some of the key themes and recurrent streams of the presentations, discussions and debates that took place.

After a short introduction by PACITA Coordinator, Lars Klüver, the Chair of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment of the German Parliament, Patricia Lips (MP), officially opened the conference at the Umweltforum Berlin. Lips reflected on the contribu-

tion of 25 years of successful PTA in Germany and encouraged the expansion of TA related activities to more European countries. The broader uptake and numerous other topics regarding contemporary developments in TA were then discussed and debated by 350 participants over the three days of the conference. This comprised nearly 230 contributions in 42 sessions targeting diverse issues under the following broad themes: the state and further development of TA institutions; TA and policy making; infrastructures for TA; TA beyond Europe; TA for emerging thematic clusters including health care & ageing, and privacy/big data/data protection, and as addressed in both keynotes, a range of contributions, patterns of past, present and future technology governance. While many of these themes built on previous discussions held at the PACITA 2013 conference in Prague, the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) emerged as a strong theme in many of the sessions and discussions in Berlin.

1 Of Technofideism and Political Myths

The two keynote addresses of the conference by Professor Naomi Oreskes and Professor Roger Pielke Jr. explored the complex and often vexed nature of the interactions that take place between the spheres of science and policy, and how such interactions may be shaped by the governance, and in some cases politicization, of technologies. In her keynote address, Naomi Oreskes, Professor of the History of Science and Affiliated Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University, addressed the discrediting of science by lobby groups in the case of climate research. She described how this had happened in the US in an environment characterized by “technofideism”, which represents an ongoing faith in science and technology in relation to climate change. Oreskes also examined a range of social and political obstacles to action on climate change, focusing in particular on the roles of free market ideology and neo-liberalism in preventing the acceptance of scientific evidence on climate change in the US where the idea of “changing the way we live” was regarded as threatening the American way of life and deeply influenced by the conservative Cold War politics of the 1950s. She further examined

the “implicatory denial” of climate science, which she described as motivated by a range of factors including impacts on free market capitalism, the issue of planetary limits, and for the energy intensive Western lifestyle. According to Oreskes, technofideism has been used in the US to resist regulatory interventions into economic practices to prevent climate change, in line with the misguided expectation that the free-market will provide the required technological solutions. This provided the basis for Oreskes’ critique of the role of markets in advancing technological progress, and the failure of capitalism to provide the technologies that are most needed to address climate change, for example. Although the argument was criticized as being an overly simplistic assessment of capitalism, Oreskes’ address highlighted two often neglected, but rather contested, intellectual fields of relevance to contemporary TA: first, the relationship of TA to markets and their functioning; and second, the relation of TA to the history of science and technologies. Indeed, both fields were implicit in many of the contributions made during the conference, often in combination with the discussion of RRI.

In his keynote address, Roger Pielke Jr., Professor of Environmental Studies in the Centre for Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Colorado, focused more explicitly on the interplay between TA and policy making, inviting the audience to reflect on how the results of scientific work are often embedded in political processes. He challenged the audience to reflect on TA as a political myth and to consider the responsibilities of “what we do when we do TA”. Pielke Jr. subsequently explored how the processes of TA may influence and be influenced by the construction, reinforcement and defence of political myths, particularly with relation to the construction and use of power. This was illustrated through his discussion of the historical privileging of the role of basic research in the innovation process, and how basic research came to represent a political myth to both scientists and policy makers. Further, drawing on the example of famine in India, he examined how scientific evidence had been manipulated and reinterpreted to reflect broader strategic governmental goals (i.e. the creation of a US export market) to illustrate how political myths were also used to create and enact power.

Again, the intersection of TA with the governance of technologies was addressed, containing an implicit warning for a discipline like TA, which is situated in the spheres of both science and policy.

2 What’s Next for TA?

Given the prominent focus of the PACITA project on parliamentary TA, the conference also valuably extended the discourse on the relationship between governance and technological progress. One of the recurring issues examined at the conference was the tension that exists between TA in providing prospective advice and the need to balance this against the practical requirements of policy development and implementation. This tension was discussed extensively in the plenum session, “What’s next for TA? Experiences, Perspectives, Outcomes”, by speakers from countries with and without institutionalised PTA. Therein leading members of European TA institutes made statements about the relation of TA to daily politics. For example, both Tore Tennøe (Norwegian Board of Technology) and Reinhard Grünwald (Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag) highlighted the need to provide TA related knowledge and advice on new and emerging technologies in more accessible formats, especially those which depart from the traditional 300 page assessment reports. Against this traditional type of reporting, which has favoured the presentation of comprehensive and well-balanced options for future decisions, Tennøe suggested that TA institutes need to take a firm position in public debates and present more user-friendly formats to communicate these positions. In line with this, Grünwald described a recent process involving workshops with 40 German parliamentarians on highly contested energy issues, and the production of a handbook for parliamentarians summarizing how best to respond to common citizen concerns. The handbook was widely praised and sought after by members of the German Parliament. Michael Nentwich (Institute of Technology Assessment of the Austrian Academy of Sciences) also outlined the continued shift to expanding participatory activities to include laypersons and citizens, which might then collide with a more traditional scientific orientation of TA. A number of the other con-

ference sessions also explored these themes. For example, in a session on “Varieties of Technology Governance and Opportunities for Technology Assessment”, Bettina Rudloff outlined the emotional side of governance of technologies with the example of the TTIP and transatlantic cooperation on technological regulation.

3 Responsible Research and Innovation – The Next Step?

In terms of the theoretical foundations of TA, the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) was discussed in a range of sessions, with titles indicating the disparate variety of views on the concept. For example, while some sessions (e.g. “RRI – Governance and Policies” and “Mobilising TA for RRI: Philosophies, Ethics and Stakeholders”) targeted the conceptual roots of RRI, other sessions (e.g. “RRI in Europe – First Lessons Learned”) were already presenting empirical insights from implementation-focused projects like the GREAT (presented by Petra Ahrweiler) and PROGRESS (presented by Miltos Ladikas) projects. But how can this rather fuzzy concept, still in the making and contested even on its very basic propositions, successfully inspire projects? What insights on the conceptual value of RRI were provided? In a presentation on “Mobilizing TA for RRI – Philosophies, Ethics and Stakeholders” by Harro van Lente, Tsjalling Swierstra and Pierre-Benoit Joly, RRI was presented as the next step of TA, a kind of evolutionary progress informed by ethical considerations and thus forwarding the agenda of the ELSA (studies of Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of scientific and technological developments) approach. Similarly, in the session “RRI-Governance and Policies”, Jack Stilgoe argued that RRI was a prospective and normative framework designed to shift us away from the retrospective management of accountability and liability. The culmination of this idea was expressed with the provoking presentation title “RRI – a critique of TA?” This triggered a lively discussion, where opponents of this view defended the contribution of TA, which could be demonstrated in its independent and longstanding history. Others argued that RRI had emerged as a policy induced concept, which requires the competencies of TA scholars in

providing the tools and methods to fulfil the process qualities required by responsible innovation, e.g. as in the case of deliberative procedures to include stakeholders within the innovation process. A more integrated way of thinking about RRI and TA was then proposed by Dirk Stemerding. He assigned RRI the role of combining the hitherto fragmented TA modes under a new kind of ethics of “caring for a better world”. He argued this would imply very new kinds of questions about technologies and innovation to be addressed, e.g. trajectories of innovations towards societal needs.

Due to the widespread diffusion of the RRI concept, various aspects were covered in a number of other conference sessions. For example, in “Experiences with Early Engagement Activities – The Problem of Pro-active Public Engagement”, insights from the Synenergene project were presented by Steffen Albrecht, Christopher Coenen and Harald König. In their description of the project’s “Mobilisation and Mutual Learning Action Plan”, they detected a gap between the conceptual deepening of deliberative activities on the one hand, and the requested level of knowledge on the other hand, to really ensure a level-playing field for laypersons to have a voice in the discourse. They argued that RRI operates as a boundary object that is still open to very different meanings. In the same session on early engagement, Imre Bárd raised the question on where to draw the boundaries between academic debates with its “cybersaloons” and “enhancement festivals” and real engagement in technological trajectories, arguing that even education could be seen as a form of engagement. Moreover the tensions around specifying the core objectives of such engagement projects were discussed. For example, on the one hand, the advertisement of big, overarching themes can be used to raise awareness and increase engagement, but on the other hand, the specification and need to achieve real workable solutions can sometimes be at the expense of the public interest. Similar challenges were explored in the session, “Public Engagement with RRI”, with Nina Amelung challenging technologies of participation as implicitly requiring citizens to engage on the terms of those defining engagement processes, and Ulrike Bechtold exploring the limits of public participation in complex policy problems with a particular focus

on the tension that exists between individual freedoms and ensuring environmental sustainability.

4 New Methods and Topics for TA

In a further set of sessions, methods of TA were discussed. Two sessions on “E-infrastructures for Technology Assessment” introduced recent approaches like bibliometrics, micro-blogging and the new TA Web portal, openTA, as new IC related instruments for research and representation of TA related activities. The session on “Engaging Citizens in E-Participation and Policy Making on the National Level” also prompted further reflection on the abovementioned issue of “festivalization”, that has become apparent in some of the TA-methods being introduced. A presentation on “New debate visualisations in the UK – The Election Debate Visualisation Project” by Giles Moss also showed how an App for citizens enables real time assessments of the performance of politicians during election-campaign events. However it was noted (and this was criticized as a trigger for depoliticisation) that the assessment rates only the performance and not the content of the debate. While the app was introduced as a way of undertaking accompanying research to support techniques of e-democracy, it raised a number of discussions on the role TA ought to play in that game: the distant and critical analyst or the opener for deliberative (and in this case virtual) real time spaces?

Parallel to these thematic threads and discussions, a range of standalone sessions were also arranged around single technologies and TA related specific activities. These included topics which sit at the centre of public debates across Europe and the world such as ageing and health care and big data and privacy. Numerous sessions on these topics generated considerable interest at the conference. Further, there were also a number of sessions on specialised topics such as soil technologies and geothermal energy, and an examination of new contexts for TA such as the application of energy technologies in the developing world and South Asia. While this report can only represent a short summary of selective impressions of the keynote addresses and sessions, strong themes on technology governance and the role of RRI were apparent throughout the

conference. In particular, these themes coalesced in discussions about the future focus of TA with respect to serving the needs of day-to-day policy making by providing viewpoints instead of reference works (as discussed in the plenum session) and a move in direction of technology governance, where TA acts closer to technology policy.

5 Entering New Horizons

In building on the successes of the PACITA 2013 conference held in Prague, this conference attracted more participants from even more diverse geographical backgrounds. The 350 participants attended from 33 countries, with the majority coming from EU countries (i.e. strong representation from Germany (150), Austria (22), The Netherlands (21), UK (20) and Denmark (15)) and a growing representation from a number of non-European countries including Japan (8), USA (5), Russia (3), China (3) and Australia (3). As part of on-going efforts in integrating new forms of TA in public dialogue, the PACITA project presented its own manifesto. The main insights were translated to claims for on-going and expanded TA activities across Europe: “*Citizens in Europe have a democratic right to be heard about the technological development, since technology is strongly influencing their lives.*” The full manifesto is available at the conference website (<http://berlinconference.pacitaproject.eu>). Although in general this is a worthwhile venture – and a protagonist of TA can hardly argue against it – caution is also required. Do not all the different views from the conference hint at the diversity and richness of TA that reflect its spatially different cultural and socio-technical contexts? Taking the qualities as proposed in the debate on RRI as universal accounts that equally apply to the frontrunner countries likewise to the late adopters of TA is questionable. Instead sensitivity for a country’s preparation and openness for TA would perhaps require more customized approaches, which do not start with that exposed positioning of citizens? The entry point for a country seeking to familiarize itself with TA may not be the latest deliberative effort provided by Rathenau, ITA, ITAS and the like. Thus, it may not be the inclusion of citizens that is the first step to opening the doors to spreading the landscape

of TA in Europe and beyond. We must also maintain other, perhaps more traditional styles of TA, which may also prove beneficial in entering new horizons of TA in a truly spatial sense.

Through the range of efforts represented at the conference, it is clear there is a broad scope of TA activities already present in many European countries. For some newcomers, this breadth of interests was perhaps hard to capture. But floor talks and the concluding statements of participants from abroad indicated a strong respect for the richness and diversity of the discussions and experience of the European TA community. The conference was highly successful in bringing together the constantly growing TA community and in providing an arena for discussing the urgent contemporary issues of TA. There was also a great deal of support for expanding of the existing landscape of TA. In this regard, the further institutionalization of TA at the transnational and even global level was flagged as a pending issue for further discussion. For this, there is no doubt that we will need to draw on the full range of expertise and the theories and methods of TA that were showcased at the conference. And, as we move together for future collaborations and forms of TA it's up to us to explore and shape the next horizon of TA.

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Aneignungs- und Nutzungsweisen Neuer Medien – Intuition, Kreativität, Kompetenz

Bericht von der CULTMEDIA-Jahrestagung 2014

Karlsruhe, 2.–4. November 2014

von Björn Egbert und Antje Zapf, Universität Potsdam

Angesichts des wachsenden Einflusses der sog. *Neuen Medien*, v. a. des Internets inklusive der *sozialen Netzwerke*, in allen Bereichen des privaten, beruflichen und gesellschaftliche Lebens sind auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene Forschungen zur Aneignung und Nutzung dieser Medien zunehmend wichtig. Die Auswirkungen

von Globalisierungsprozessen auf die Medienutzung und umgekehrt machen international vergleichende Betrachtungen dieser Wechselwirkung unverzichtbar. Analysen zu Veränderungen kultureller Praxen etwa bei Nutzungsmustern, -motivationen und -situationen, die im Zusammenhang mit der Anwendung der Neuen Medien stehen, sollen helfen, Chancen und Gefahren zu erkennen und zu beurteilen. Insofern stellt sich die Frage neu, wie die sich ständig verändernden Möglichkeiten und Auswirkungen des Internets hinsichtlich neuer Formen der Information, Kommunikation und Kooperation im Bereich der *Kultur des Alltäglichen* einzuschätzen sind. In diesem Zusammenhang stehen die diskutierten praktischen Aspekte, ob die Gefahren durch gezielte Vorbereitung der Nutzer kontrolliert werden können und/oder ob eine *vernünftige* Medienentwicklung möglich ist. Sind die globalisierten Neuen Medien überhaupt noch steuerbar?

Die Jahrestagung des International Network on Cultural Diversity and New Media (CULTMEDIA-Netzwerk) widmete sich dem wissenschaftliche Ziel, Einflüsse technisch geprägter Medien auf der Grundlage unterschiedlicher disziplinär-theoretischer Zugänge in multidisziplinärer Perspektive zu erfassen. Sie wurde, mit beachtenswerter Resonanz, im Institut für Technikfolgenabschätzung und Systemanalyse des Karlsruher Instituts für Technologie veranstaltet.¹

1 Im Fokus: technisch vermittelte Kulturen

Dass Diversität innerhalb des Netzwerks nicht nur in thematischer Hinsicht im Fokus steht, verdeutlichte die Jahrestagung sowohl durch die Nationen, die von den fast 40 Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmern vertreten wurden (Deutschland, Polen, Tschechische Republik, Spanien), als auch hinsichtlich der von ihnen ausgeübten Fachdisziplinen (Philosophie, Soziologie, Ethik, Erziehungs-, Medien-, Kultur-, Verwaltungs-, Rechts- und Betriebswirtschaft sowie Informationstechnik, Romanistik und Sprachwissenschaft). Deren spezifische Sichtweisen bereicherten die Diskussionen der Tagung maßgeblich, wovon letztendlich alle vertretenen Fachgebiete profitierten. Die Verzahnung unterschiedlicher Fachperspektiven erfordert aber auch vergleichende Theoriediskus-