Selecting the Method:
The Quest of the holy TA Grail

Danielle Bütschi, TA-SWISS

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PACITA

Zentrum für Technologiefolgen-Abschätzung
Centre d'évaluation des choix technologiques
Centro per la valutazione delle scelte tecnologiche
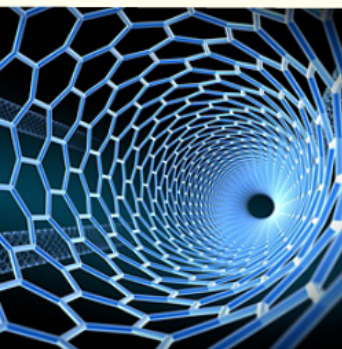Centre for Technology Assessment

TA SWISS

There is no "right" method: a same issue can be addressed by many methods

Human Enhancement
- Serious Games: SuperHuman (Rathenau)
- Studies: TA-SWISS, STOA
- Workshops: STOA Workshop in European Parliament

Nanotechnologies:
- Fact-sheets, dossiers: NanoTrust (ITA)
- Studies: Nanofood (TA-SWISS), TA on Nanotechnology (KIT)
- Participatory processes: publifocus (TA-SWISS)

A project can use several methods

Study on 2nd generation biofuels :

- Literature research
- Life cycle assessment of 2nd generation biofuels
- Scenario based analysis of future prospects

The future of Internet:

- Fact sheets
- Expert interviews
- Participatory processes ("consensus confe-rence light" + focus groups with young people

Methods

Scientific TA Methods

Mainly used for technology-driven issues to:
- Collect data and provide knowledge on science and technology developments, their impacts (on economy, environment, health, etc.), the related ethical or juridical questions, the interests and values at stake, etc.

Examples of methods:
- Delphi
- Modeling and simulation
- Discourse analysis
- Experts interviews.

Interactive / participatory methods

Mainly used for problem-oriented issues for:
- Conflict management and resolution
- Bringing together scientific expertise and citizens views
- Involving stakeholders
- Mobilising citizens for shaping future technologies

Examples of methods
- Consensus conferences
- focus groups
- expert hearings
- scenario workshops

Frame conditions
- What is the mission of the TA organisation?
- What is the institutional form of the TA organisation (independent, related to science, related to Parliament, etc.)?
- For/with whom is the TA organisation working?
- Which expertise is usually available within the TA organisation?
- Budget and resources available?

The issue at stake
- Is the issue technology-oriented or problem driven?
- Who are the central actors and what positions do they take?
- What is the stage of the policy-making process? How intense is the political debate?
- How far is the issue discussed in society? Is it conflictual?

What is the problem?
- Lack of knowledge (on scientific, social or policy aspects)?
- Lack of awareness about the issue at stake?
- Lack of debate?
- Conflicts around the issue?
- Policy needs to be questioned?
- Policy-makers need to take action?
- Etc.

Defining the goal of the project

The project

Method(s)

Choose, adapt or create a method or a set of methods

Procedure
- Time frame and steps
- Budget and personnel
- Involved actors (what is their role, when do they intervene?)
- Collaborations, synergies

Quality Criteria

Scientific quality criteria:
- Objectivity (separate facts and opinions)
- Reliability (peer review)
- Interdisciplinarity (combination of scientific perspectives)

Interactive quality criteria:
- Fairness (all participants can voice and be heard)
- Inclusion (all relevant actors are or heard)
- openness and transparency (of the process)

Project management quality criteria:
- Flexibility (adapt to the ongoing debate or to scientific advancements)
- Communication

Designing a TA project

Frame conditions

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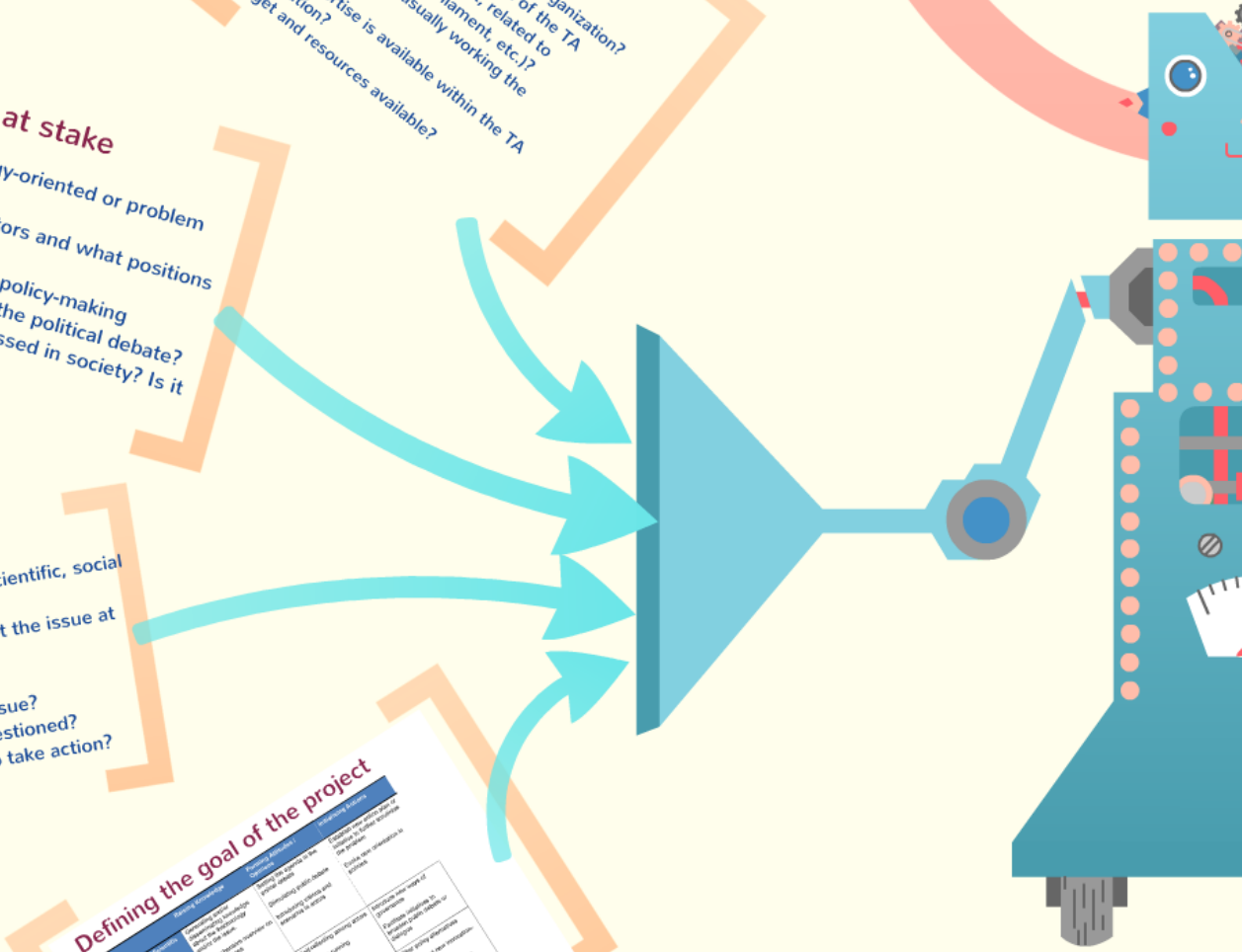
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Defining the goal of the project

	Raising Knowledge	Forming Attitudes / Opinions	Initialising Actions
Technological / Scientific Aspects	Generating and/or disseminating knowledge about the thechnology and/or the issue. Comprehensive overview on consequences	Setting the agenda in the polical debate Stimulating public debate Introducing visions and scenarios to actors	Establish new action plan or initiative to further scrutinize the problem Evoke new orientation in policies
Societal Aspects	Making social conflicts transparent	Self-reflecting among actors Blockade running Bridge building	Introduce new ways of governance Facilitate initiatives to broaden public debate or dialogue
Policy Aspects	Exploring policy objectives Assessing existing policies	Increase comprehensiveness in policies Enhance democratic legitimacy	Filter policy alternatives Implement new innovation-process Initiate new legislation

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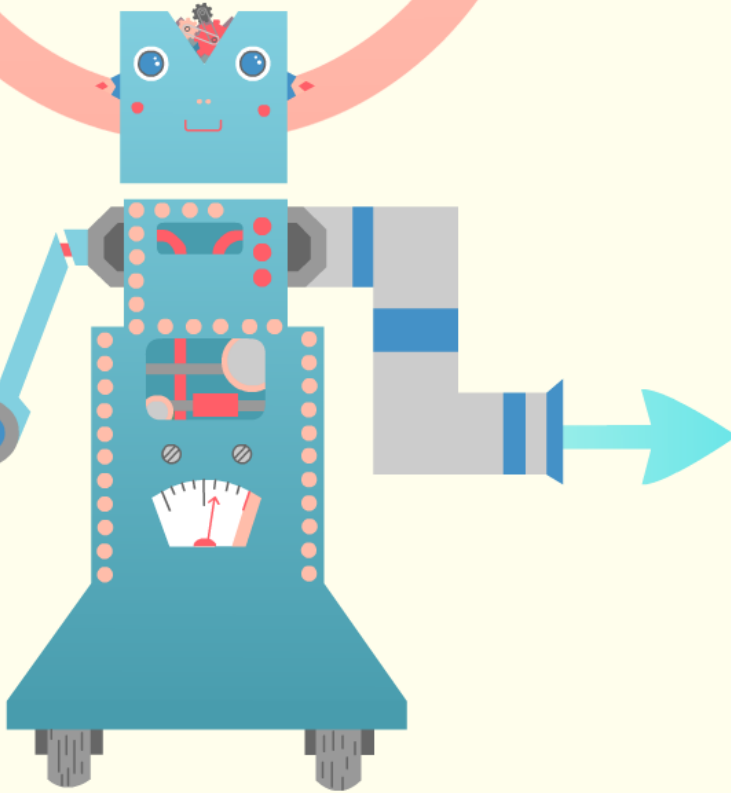- Experts interviews.

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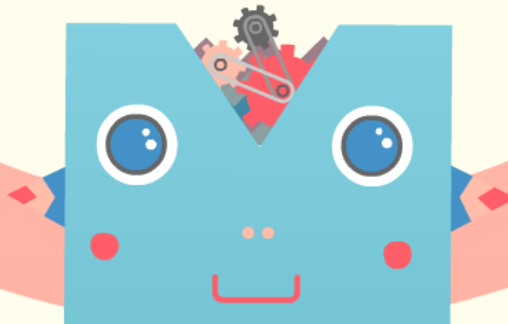- Experts interviews.

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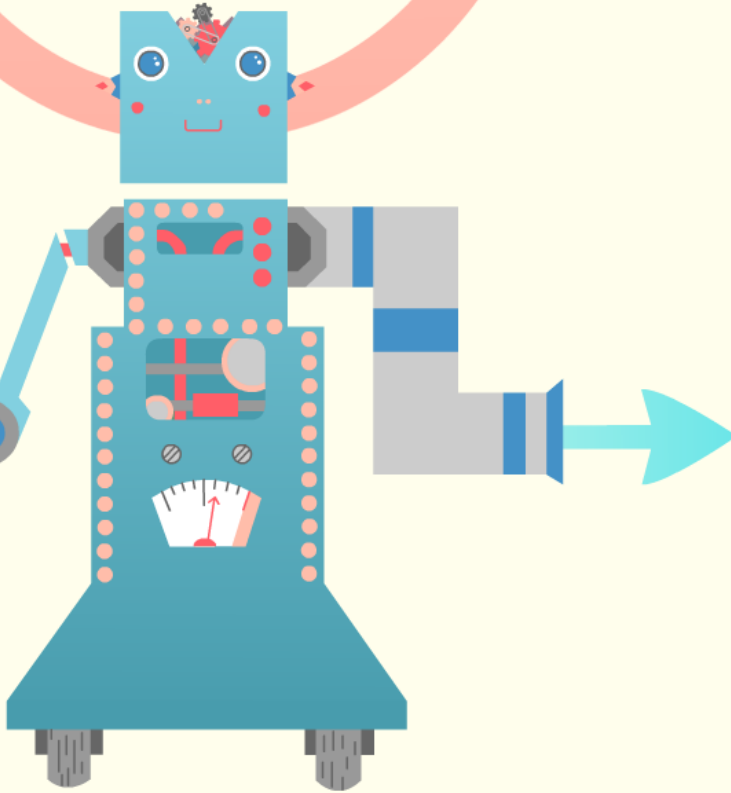- Experts interviews.

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