Kazimiero Simonavičiaus UNIVERSITETAS

Barriers and Communication in Making Political Technology Assessment Decisions in Lithuania

Prof. Dr. Arūnas Augustinaitis
arunas.augustinaitis@ksu.lt
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Austė Kiškienė
auste.kiskiene@ksu.lt

Outline

- TA and political decision-making traditions
- Barriers for effective TA and political decision-making
- Conclusions and recommendations

TA traditions in Lithuania

Two stages of evolvement:

- Soviet stage
- Post-soviet stage

Current processes of technology assessment and political decision-making traditions in Lithuania are significantly influenced by historic, cultural and social factors

Soviet stage

- Centralised planning and political decision making
- Criteria of militarised industry and technological perception of global competition
- Strong expert institutions
- Establishment, implementation and control of technological conditions of society existence by the government and administration

Post-soviet stage

Traditions and relicts from the Soviet stage

New developments:

- New technologies and rapid technological change
- Unprecedented growth of consumption
- Increasing role of commercialisation

When soviet structure with the existing institutions collapsed, the interception and conversion to the new system did not happen

Barriers for effective TA

- Civic factors
- Scientific institutions
- Political decisions and priorities
- Strategic planning
- Coordination and communication between stakeholders
- Legal basis
- Qualifications and specialists

Civic factors

- Weak civil society
- Unprofessional civil society organisations, which carry out mainly lobbying functions for business and political interests in narrow sense

Scientific institutions

- Scientific institutions do not have any influence on the political TA decision-making
- Universities do not implement the function of foresight and decision formation
- TA studies and research is left for the expert groups, controlled by administrators and politicians

Political decisions and priorities

- Political decisions and priorities in the field of TA are unprepared, chaotic and populist
- Examples, such as the referendum on the atomic power plant, show the lack of ability to make political decisions

Strategic planning

- No broad (horizontal) strategies in technological development and TA
- Lack of planning (example – regulation of solar power technologies and biofuel)
- No common strategy of state development (example – Chevron and slate gas)
- New mechanisms for strategic planning, which could combine technological development with culture, values, social, economic and regional development, do not exist

Coordination and communication between stakeholders

- Coordination and communication mechanisms between the different stakeholders (strategic planning, expert institutions, civil society organisations, public administration institutions and political institutions) in the technological development are lacking
- Political decision-making is quite fragmental, occasional and not bound with strong filtering through the CSOs

Legal basis

- Legal basis, which would create system for technology assessment and political decision-making, is lacking
- Specialised institutions for strategic technological development do not exist
- The mechanisms of political decision-making are presented mainly on the highest level of political hierarchy (Seimas and Cabinet of Ministers) make the TA sensitive, individualised and subjective

Qualifications and specialists (1)

- Not enough qualified specialists who could participate in TA process
- Few interest groups, which act without systemic justification from the public bodies for strategic planning and coordination with expert groups, social partners, CSOs and other institutions

Qualifications and specialists (2)

Interest groups:

- Narrow technological specialists and experts
- Green movement
- Political populists
- Mass media
- Governmental administration and its clannish interests

Current situation (1)

- Technological development is treated as systemic, but not organic, separate, but not integrated part of social development
- TA in Lithuania is divided into the several not related areas, spreading technological paradigms depending on the mental characters
- Paradigms: 1) gravitation back to the industrial model; 2) following the EC strategies; 3) flagships of technological development are left post-soviet “islands”

Current situation (2)

- Values, cultural and mental layers are dominated more by pragmatic, commerce and utilitarian, but not by political, state and strategic perception
- The concept of socio-technological life is non-existent
- Decision makers are more concerned with the price and current gain but not with the development of society in general

Current situation (3)

- Public opinion is formed by politicians, business sector and mass media, but not by other important stakeholders – influential scientific institutions, professional CSOs and experts
- Only a few future foresight studies were conducted in the last couples of years
- The first examples of perception of our national specifics emerge in the form of the discussions about smart specialisations

Conclusions and recommendations (1)

The necessary components for the TA:

- Autonomy
- Interdisciplinary approach (combining social sciences and technological research)
- Specialists and scientific rigidity, necessary for the forecasting

Universities and their think tanks can provide the necessary components for the TA

Conclusions and recommendations (2)

- The role of scientific institutions in the TA process has to be increased
- Scientific institutions, such as universities or research institutes, can become intermediaries between society and government

THANK YOU

arunas.augustinaitis@ksu.lt
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