

# Glocalization of Technology Assessment processes in Belgium & Argentina

Pierre DELVENNE

SPIRAL – Université de Liège, Belgium

Federico VASEN

Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Argentina

# Introduction

- STS approach (ongoing and recent collaboration)
- TA as a prism to look at different contexts
- Comparative analysis of (southern) Belgium and Argentina where there is no TA (yet)
- Contrasted cases (EU/LA)

# The glocalization of S&T policies

- Globalization of S&T policies...
- ... While there is an embeddedness in local contexts → GLOCAL (Asche, 2000)
- Risk society (Beck, 1992) and side effects of S&T
- Need to bridge the gap between S&T and politics and society; TA is one example.

# Technology Assessment as an instrument of governance of S&T

- Born in the US (1972), then extended to the EU (1980's onwards)
- Considerable variation from one (political, institutional, cultural, historical) context to another
- Fit with the context = Only valuable crusade for TA

# (P)TA = product or process?

(Van Eijndhoven 1997)

- Product: expert-based policy advice
- Process: social assessment (ELSA + involvement of social actors)
- European context contains both types
- Latin American context can draw on both or develop other ones

# (Southern) Belgium

- Already existing “TA history”
- First reflection in 1988 (parliamentary)
- One institutionalization between 1994 and 2002 (Science policy council) → failure
- What happened?
  - No demands from the clients + lack of entrepreneur
  - No internal analytic capacity
  - Science policy council is reactive

# Reflections on the 2002 failure

- TA is a fragile institution
- A TA emerges within the political system
- (at least) Two conditions to successfully implement a TA institution:
  - Political willingness (and support)
  - Modulation of science and innovation system
- Applicable to Latin America?

# Latin American context in the 1960s and 1970s

- The period of social relevance in science policy (Elzinga & Jamison, 1995) in which TA emerged did not have the same characteristics in Latin America
  - Environmental, ethical and social consequences were not in the forefront
  - Keywords were instead “autonomy”, “liberation”, “development/dependence”, “industrialization”
- Science and Technology as forces for development.
- The quest for Technological Autonomy (Adler, 1987)
- Latin American World Model



# TA in Latin America

- TA in developing countries is noted as a strategy for socioeconomic development.
  - UN Seminar on Technology Assessment for Development (1978 : Bangalore, India, organized by UNCTAD).
  - Stress on technological choices
- No specific TA institutions were created in Latin American countries
- TA functions in LA are not in charge of a single organization or department.
- Science and Technology policy explicit orientation insists on positive aspects of S&T (*National Innovation Systems*).

# Who cares about negative effects of S&T in LA?

- Environmental and other non-governmental organizations
- Social movements
  - Open-pit mining with cyanide in Catamarca
- Academia
  - Research projects / networks (Renanosoma - Brazil)
- Governments?
  - The case of transgenic soy and Roundup (glyphosate)
  - Pulp mills conflict between Argentina and Uruguay

# Public Participation in S&T

- Not many experiences
- Consensus conference in Chile on medical records (2003)
- Workshop on social relevance of research at the University of Buenos Aires (2003)
- MERCOSUR's Civil Society Council (ongoing)
  - Commissions:
    - Science and Technology
    - Climate Change & Sustainable Development
    - Natural Resources
    - Food Sovereignty

# TA & Public Participation

## Possibilities for Latin America

- From appropriate technologies to “tecnología social”
  - Sociotechnical co-construction processes
- Institutional framework for TA/participatory methods in S&T
- University “extensión” as a expert/lay dialogue opportunity
- Are there *risk societies* in LA?

# Conclusions (1)

- TA responding to risk society are limited to Europe (so far)
- Southern Belgium: ongoing discussions, future of TA may emphasize the link between science and politics
  - Learning from the past: political willingness to involve, evolved science and innovation system (Prométhée program, networks of firms, competitiveness clusters)
  - Challenge = social concerns are (still) left behind

## Conclusions (2)

- Argentina: future of TA may emphasize the link between science and society
  - European TA diagnosis to implement TA is invalid:
    - Discursive resources deployed against slowing down the progress, no political willingness to engage with scientists
    - Science and innovation system is not stabilized yet
    - A TA may emerge in the educational system
  - Challenge = keep connected to public policies

# Thank you very much!

- Contact:
  - [pierre.delvenne@ulg.ac.be](mailto:pierre.delvenne@ulg.ac.be)
  - [www.spiral.ulg.ac.be](http://www.spiral.ulg.ac.be)
  - [federico.vasen@gmx.net](mailto:federico.vasen@gmx.net)
  - <http://redonpat.ning.com>