- auf die Frage, welche Faktoren für die *Wahl des jeweils verwendeten pTA-Konzepts* verantwortlich sind;
- auf die Anforderungen, die an ein erfolgreiches *Management von partizipativen TA-Verfahren* zu stellen sind;
- auf die *politischen Funktionen* partizipativer TA;
- wie schließlich auf die methodisch besondere Schwierigkeiten aufwerfende Problematik *manifeste wie latente Folgen* („*impacts*“) dieser Verfahren.

Das EUROPTA-Projekt, dessen Abschlussbericht demnächst unter der Internetadresse <http://www.tekno.dk/europta/> verfügbar sein wird, kommt nicht nur zu dementsprechend gegliederten *analytischen* Schlussfolgerungen, sondern spricht auch eine Reihe von praktischen *Empfehlungen* aus, die für (potenzielle) Organisatoren von pTA, aber auch für pTA erwägende Entscheidungsträger interessant sein sollten.

Zu den eher analytischen Schlussfolgerungen gehört nicht zuletzt, dass partizipativen TA-Verfahren entgegen vielfach geäußerten Befürchtungen wie Hoffnungen *kein* Potenzial für eine Veränderung von Macht- und Entscheidungsstrukturen in repräsentativen Demokratien zukommt. Vielmehr legen die untersuchten Fälle nahe, die primäre Funktion von pTA in der kommunikativen Vermittlung zwischen institutionellen (staatlichen) Entscheidungsstrukturen und Bürgern (bzw. der „civil society“) zu sehen.

Recht evident scheint ferner, dass die Einführung von Formen partizipativer TA-Verfahren trotz unterschiedlicher nationaler politischer Kulturen generell recht erfolgreich verläuft. Die Ausbreitung insbesondere des Typus der Konsensus-Konferenzen ist auch außerhalb Europas – von Kanada bis Korea – unübersehbar.

Bei den praktischen Empfehlungen, die sich aus den durchgeführten Untersuchungen nahe legen, ist einmal das Votum für die *Unabhängigkeit und Professionalisierung* der pTA durchführenden Organisationen hervorzuheben. Dazu gehört es, die bereits andernorts erarbeiteten Methoden und ausgewerteten Erfahrungen zu nutzen.

Des weiteren sollten, so lautet ein zweites Votum, die Erwartungen auf Seiten aller Betei-

ligter „realistisch“ bleiben und sich vornehmlich auf solche Ergebnisse richten, die als spezifisch für solche Verfahren angesehen werden müssen: nämlich Verbesserungen kognitiver und kommunikativer Art.

Der Abschlussbericht des EUROPTA-Projekts wird zusammen mit Kurzfassungen aller Fallstudien sowie Dokumentationen der verwendeten Forschungsinstrumente neben der Internet-Veröffentlichung auch als Buch publiziert werden.

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The Rathenau Institute's approach to participatory TA

by Rinie van Est, Rathenau Institute

During the last decade, the Rathenau Institute, the Dutch national technology assessment (TA) organisation, has build up a lot of experience in the field of participatory TA (PTA). The development of PTA within the Rathenau Institute can be told along two lines of development: public PTA and expert-stakeholder PTA. In public PTA citizens play a central role, and when experts or stakeholders become actively involved within the TA process, we speak of expert-stakeholder PTA. In section 1, these two types of PTA will be introduced, their use in different problem settings will be explained,

and some design characteristics of public and expert-stakeholder PTA will be discussed. In section 2, the Rathenau Institute's experience with both types of PTA will be described and reflected upon. Typical for public PTA at the Rathenau Institute is the parallel citizens' panel. This implies that involving the public is an activity in addition to classical TA methods. Instead of replacing studies and expert workshops, public involvement in the form of a lay panel complements them. The Rathenau Institute's approach to expert-stakeholder PTA can best be characterised as interactive TA. In interactive TA the conclusions of the TA project result from interaction between the involved actors and the TA analyst. Finally in section 3, conclusions are drawn and some challenges for the future with respect to PTA at the Rathenau Institute are formulated.

1 Two types of participatory TA: public and expert-stakeholder

Since the beginning of the 1990s the Rathenau Institute has gained considerable experience in the field of participatory technology assessment. At the end of that decade the need was felt within the Dutch TA organisation to reflect on this experience. The Rathenau Institute was not the only TA organisation in Europe that felt the urge to advance the understanding of the role of participatory technology assessment methods. To pursue this aim six TA organisations from six countries – Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Austria and Switzerland – set up and participated from March 1998 to December 1999, in the so-called EUROPTA project (see Klüver et al. 2000).¹ In this project a comparative analysis of the practice and experiences of participatory technology assessment (PTA) of the six involved countries was carried out. In each country a minimum of two case studies had been carried out; 16 altogether. These cases concerned methods like the consensus conference, citizen's forum, voting conference, scenario workshop, interactive technology assessment, Delphi-approach, and citizen's foresight. The comparative analysis of the EUROPTA project is outlined on five themes each represented in the final report as a thematic paper (*ibid.*).

One of those analytic papers, written by the director of the Rathenau Institute, Josée van Eijndhoven, and me, takes a closer look at the relationship between the PTA method, the situation in which the method is applied and some design elements (Van Eijndhoven and Van Est 2000). Based on the type of actors (not) involved in a TA, a distinction is made between three types of TA: classical TA, expert-stakeholder PTA, and public PTA. In *classical TA* only the researcher or expert is involved. The result of the TA is a report that is intended to provide a neutral, factual input to decision making. The former U.S. Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) stretched this concept of classical TA by involving stakeholders in the advisory panel and the extensive external review process (Van Eijndhoven 1997).

Whereas OTA involved stakeholders in guiding the technology assessment and reviewing its result, stakeholders were still outsiders. When experts or stakeholders become actively involved within the TA process, we speak of *expert-stakeholder PTA*. Finally, we speak of *public PTA* when citizens play a central role in the method. An explicit role for citizens can be found in nine out of the sixteen EUROPTA case studies. The public PTA arrangements aim to give the voice of citizens a proper place within the social debate on a certain technology-related topic and to stimulate public debate around that topic.

1.1 PTA and problem setting

The EUROPTA project showed that most cases in which PTA, in contrast to more classical forms of TA, was conducted presented antagonistic societal situations and concerned widely recognised issues that were generally reported upon in the media. The apparent reason for this is that organising PTA is very resource intensive. In practice, those resources are only made available when stakes are high and societal relevance is generally acknowledged. More interestingly, the cases showed that public PTA and expert-stakeholder PTA are used within different problem settings.

In cases in which technologies were heavily institutionalised TA organisers normally opted for setting up an *expert-stakeholder PTA*.

Existing technological systems, like the food production system or traffic system, are generally at stake here. In such cases there may be a strong demarcation between those who are normally involved in decision-making and those who are not (primary and secondary actors). Apparently in circumstances where the roles are relatively fixed, the PTA is more directed at opening up the existing situation by introducing new stakeholders or confronting the old ones in a new way than by involving citizens. *Public PTA* was mainly applied in cases where the degree of institutionalisation is relatively low. For example, public PTA arrangements often address biotechnology issues. In the field of biotechnology the boundary between primary and secondary actors is still very much open to shifts. Public PTA was also used in cases where the existing institutionalisation is publicly contested.

1.2 PTA and design characteristics

The fact that public PTA and expert-stakeholder PTA involve different types of actors and are used to address different types of problem settings has consequences for the design of the PTA. There is a difference between involving citizens or experts and stakeholders. In contrast to experts and stakeholders, citizens do not represent a specific interest nor have a clearly defined position within the problem setting the PTA is dealing with. Citizens are supposed to represent the general public interest. Moreover, experts and stakeholders will have a history within the problem setting, and will play their role within the problem setting before, during, and after the PTA. In contrast, the lay people involved will likely play a temporary role and normally leave their involvement with the problem setting after the arrangement has ended. Since the connections between the involved participants within public and expert-stakeholder PTA are so different, the design characteristics between these types of PTA can be expected to be qualitatively different. The paper of Van Eijndhoven and Van Est (2000) focuses on four fundamental design features of participatory TA projects: relation to (political) decision-making, participation, interaction and problem framing.

Relation to decision-making

In most *public PTA* cases the relationship with the political decision making process is weak and it is up to politicians whether they take seriously the outcome of the public PTA or not. Whether the outcome of a public PTA is taken seriously by the political system depends on the history of that method within a certain political culture and the attitude toward that particular method. At the moment, most Danish parliamentarians acknowledge the added value of the consensus conference method, and its results are being appreciated as valuable input for the decision-making process. In other countries, MPs seem to be less acquainted with and more sceptical towards public PTA. Although organisers seldom claim that the outcome of the public PTA represents the voice of the people, its results are often criticised for not being representative. In the Netherlands this is also the case. It was found advisable to position *expert-stakeholder PTA* at arm's length of the decision-making process in order to make clear to politicians that the PTA is rendering a service to decision-makers and is not trying to take over their job. A general way to achieve this was by putting a future perspective on the issue at stake.

Participation

The EUROPTA cases showed that participants of both types of PTA are selected to represent a broad variety of views. With respect to expert-stakeholder PTA extra requirements are set for participants, like creativity and ability to mediate results. The issue of representation is relevant in both cases. Experiences in Switzerland and Denmark seem to show that in public PTA this issue can be dealt with by using survey techniques. In Switzerland the results of a survey were used to select participants with a diverse set of views. The PubliForum's (name of the Swiss consensus conference) outcome turned out to be in line with the results of the survey. This fact considerably strengthened the credibility and applicability of the outcome of the PubliForum for politicians. In expert-stakeholder PTA it seems advisable to involve key players in the selection process.

Interaction

In *public PTA* a crucial design criterion is how to shape the role of lay people versus experts and stakeholders. Several roles were found in the cases of the EUROPTA project: lay people being informed by experts, lay people using experts as advisers, lay people getting into dialogue with experts, and lay people and experts acting both as judges of proposed policy scenarios. The *expert-stakeholder PTA* shapes the interaction between experts and stakeholders. The EUROPTA project shows that organisers normally strive after creating a protected analytic space in which each participant – in principle – has the same position of power. In this way the outcome of the PTA is to be determined by argumentative instead of political power.

Problem framing

Whereas in the case of public PTA participants have to be informed about the problem setting, in expert-stakeholder PTA a huge effort has to be made to get the actors involved away from the myths and truisms that dominate the problem setting. Both public and expert-stakeholder PTA allow for a broad problem scope. Actually most PTAs are predominantly involved with problem finding. In these cases, the PTA seldom delivers ready-made advice for decision-makers. An extra more permanent effort seems necessary to elaborate on the ideas generated within the PTA in order to make them practicable.

2 PTA at the Rathenau Institute

The Dutch TA organisation, the Netherlands Organisation for Technology Assessment (NOTA), was established in 1986. NOTA got the task to set up a TA program. An evaluation in 1993 concluded that NOTA's activities were too scientifically oriented and recommended NOTA to strengthen its role in stimulating debate. As the mission shifted, the organisation's name was changed to Rathenau Institute. Since 1993 the Rathenau Institute started to broaden its expertise in the field of participatory TA. With respect to TA methods there was a shift from performance of studies and the

organisation of traditional expert workshops (classical TA) to societal discussion and interactive methods. As a result, forms of participatory TA developed in which the interactive process got more attention. Looking back two lines of development and experimentation with PTA can be distinguished. The two paths more or less overlap with the two forms of PTA that were introduced in section 1: public PTA and expert-stakeholder PTA.

2.1 Public PTA: the parallel citizens' panel

In the late 1980s, developments in biological and medical sciences led to an intense debate in the Netherlands, concerning the question of how to deal with the ethical issues that surround biotechnology and animals. The Dutch political discussion practically centred on the activities of the biotech company GenePharming, which in 1992 "created" the first Dutch transgenic bull Herman. The birth of Herman led to a lot of media attention. Already three years before, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries had set up an advisory commission to advise him on how to regulate the research on transgenic animals. The Rathenau Institute played a large role in structuring the debate on this delicate matter. Studies and workshops were organised in order to scrutinise the type of ethical arguments and opinions of various stakeholders and experts. At the end of all these activities, the organisers thought it might be interesting to see how lay people thought about this topic and whether their perspective would be similar to the arguments applied by ethical experts and interest groups. By that time a re-orientation within the Rathenau Institute in its approach to TA had created the opportunity to experiment with public participation in TA. Inspired by the experiences in Denmark, the Rathenau Institute, together with SWOKA (Institute for Consumer Research, The Hague) and PWT (Foundation for Public Communication on Science and Technology, Utrecht), in 1993 organised the first Dutch consensus conference on genetic modification of animals.

In the meantime, the discussions around biotechnology had also triggered a debate within the Ministry of Science and Education about the need to involve the public in ethical

issues in science and technology. As a result, the Minister asked the Rathenau Institute to orient itself on a co-ordinating role in a “Platform” for societal debate on ethical questions in science and technology. In 1993, the *Platform for Science and Ethics* was set up as a four-year experiment to try out several methods to stimulate public participation and debate on normative issues (see e.g. Van de Poll 1997). Its first activity was the organisation of a so-called public debate on the topic of predictive genetic research. Typical for the public debate was that the lay panel was not obliged to reach consensus. Its aim was just to clarify the spectrum of opinions that existed among citizens. Like with the first Dutch public debate, the second one was preceded by workshops with interest groups and experts to actualise and deepen the debate. The results of the workshops were made publicly available at the start of the public debate. The Platform also organised a public debate around the topic of nature development. In this case the panel consisted of both lay people and people that had specific expertise or interest (e.g. farmers) in the issue at hand. In the field of information technology (IT) a public hearing based on the format of an American trial was organised. The computer was charged with violating human values. A prosecutor pointed out the charge, a lawyer defended the computer, witnesses – both in charge and defence – were called in court, and a lay panel acted as a jury.

In 1998, the government decided to institutionalise the *Platform for Science and Ethics* and integrate it into the Rathenau Institute. Also the expertise on public participation that has been build up by the Platform has become a normal part of the Rathenau Institute’s way of doing TA. A large TA project *Clones and Cloning* serves as an example here. In the autumn of 1997, the Minister of Public Health, Well-being and Sports asked the Rathenau Institute to contribute to the societal debate on cloning. The reasons were the public reactions to the birth of the cloned sheep, Dolly. To determine the agenda for its activities, the Rathenau Institute started with a hearing in the old conference room of the Lower House on March 26, 1998. At the hearing a panel of (former) Members of Parliament asked questions of experts and representatives of interest groups.

The hearing clarified three relevant issues for debate: cloning of stem cells, cloning of animals for the production of medicine, and animal cloning in animal husbandry. On these topics expert meetings, open to the public, were organised. Also two meetings were held to obtain more insight into the way various religious and political traditions deal with the ethical problems surrounding cloning. To further the public’s input to the cloning debate a lay panel was set up. The panel could take part in all of the other activities organised by the Rathenau Institute and was also given the time and money to develop its own activities (e.g. questioning experts, visiting firms, etc.).

A common theme in the practice of public PTA at the Rathenau Institute is the phenomenon of the *parallel citizens’ panel*. This means that involving the public within a TA project is an activity next to and in addition to classical TA methods, like studies and workshops. Instead of replacing classical ways of information gathering, public involvement complements those types of activities, and thus completes a TA project. A citizen’s panel that is organised as part of a long-term TA project has several advantages. Compared to the panel within a consensus conference, a parallel panel has more time to gather information and develop its arguments. It can also profit from the other expert-stakeholder-oriented TA activities to get a better feeling for the positions of and relations between the various players in the field of interest.

It has been fairly problematic to communicate the *dual TA approach* – that is, the parallel use of studies and expert-stakeholder workshops open to the public and lay panels – to the outside world. In particular, it has been hard to position the individual activities as integral parts of a complementary set up. As a result, critics and the media may reflect on the activities of the lay panel in isolation from the other activities and ascribe too much (political) importance to the role of the lay panel within the whole TA project than actually is the case. By putting the lay panel forward as the one and only activity, the method becomes vulnerable for critique. For example, despite the fact that the Rathenau Institute has never claimed that the selected public panel is representative for the whole (national) population, the use of

public panels is often criticised for the fact that some 15 people can never represent the whole population. The Dutch media constantly highlight this issue. The standard remedy of the Rathenau Institute has been to leave out the demand of reaching consensus. Showing a variety of public views was considered to be of more importance than reaching consensus.

Despite this the critique remains and forces the Rathenau Institute to find new ways to address it. In line with the discussion above, improving strongly the communication of the Rathenau Institute's dual approach to TA represents an important way to address the issue. This will be done by writing articles like this one, by spreading information concerning our TA approach through our website, but most important, by communicating to the outside world each individual TA activity as part of a larger and comprehensive set of activities.

Beside this effort, the Rathenau Institute is looking for ways to empower the lay panel. For example, similar to the environmental impact assessment (EIA) approach, the lay panel on cloning launched the idea of a health impact assessment. A feasibility study has just been carried out to elaborate on this interesting recommendation. In fact, expert study is used here to work out a proposal of the lay panel. This again fits the dual TA approach of the Rathenau Institute. Moreover, we are considering some new options that might strengthen the status of the citizens' panel. In a large project on *replacement medicine* we will probably enable the public panel to contact the Dutch public, and vice versa, via the Internet. In the cloning project the role of the lay panel was not very visible for the outside world. In the project on replacement medicine, we will try to give the public panel a more visible role by communicating its way of working and its role within the entire project to the media and by organising a public event to present the panel's final declaration.

2.2 Expert-stakeholder PTA: interactive TA

Besides experimenting with public participation in TA projects, the Rathenau Institute has elaborated on methods to actively involve experts and stakeholders. Since its foundation in

1986, the Rathenau Institute regularly organised workshops with experts and stakeholders in order to identify key issues and clarify basic premises and visions within a certain societal problem setting. In 1995, the so-called *GIDEON project* took the level of participation of experts and stakeholders a big step further. The project dealt with the issue of crop protection. Its aim was to provide an overview of existing views on (future) sustainable crop protection methods, and to provide the Parliament with insight into the opportunities and threats for realising it. To achieve this objective the Rathenau Institute chose to try out an *interactive TA approach* that involved people from the agricultural sector, plant improvement, pesticide and retail industry, consumer and environmental organisations.²

The project started in February 1995 and ended in the summer of 1996. It consisted of various research and debating activities. By means of an exploratory study, two rounds of interviews and a future-oriented workshop, opinions about the present agricultural system were identified and policies, chances and barriers of sustainable crop protection were discussed. During the interactive workshop three future scenarios were formulated, each derived from different underlying value systems. These long-term visions (2030) were documented and linked with options that were thought to lead to the desired futures. In a subsequent conference, the draft visions were further discussed, in particular in the light of international developments and consumer preferences. This led to two major visions titled "chemical refinement" and "system-oriented prevention". The first concerned the refinement of current crop protection practice, while the other concerned a far-reaching prevention of diseases, plagues and weeds. Finally, the two views were discussed in a meeting with about fifty participants.

In the meantime, the interactive TA approach is being further explored and used, for example, in the project on *water management*. The water management system is currently subject to political discussion and challenged by society to change. Policy papers and statements show that politicians in theory agree on the need for integral and sustainable water management. The implementation of this view,

however, faces many practical problems and institutional boundaries. The project particularly focuses on the problematic connection between the professional worlds of water management and physical planning. By means of interviews and workshops the Rathenau Institute lists the various dilemmas and tries to interactively develop new perspectives and options in order to place them on the agenda of relevant experts and stakeholders and policy makers.

The Rathenau Institute has come to the conclusion that communication in the broadest sense of the word is crucial for the success of (interactive) TA. Communication not only concerns formulating and briefing the results to the political world. It ranges from selecting participants to organising their interaction. Moreover, communication relates to managing the strategic interactions between the TA project and the outside world, in particular the policy network that the TA focuses on. As a consequence, communication is no longer seen as an appendix to the project, but is gradually becoming a central and integral part of project design and management at the Rathenau Institute.

2.3 The Rathenau Institute as a reflective PTA practitioner

As noted before, participatory TA is a relatively recent phenomenon. Since both public and expert-stakeholder PTA arrangements take up a lot of resources and time the accumulation of knowledge and experience in this field tends to progress slowly. Over the last years the need has grown, both within the Rathenau Institute as well as within other related institutions, both on the national and international level, to reflect on past experiences with PTA. The EUROPTA project presents the best example of such a need on the European level.

On the national level, the Rathenau Institute is currently involved in two projects which aim at deepening our understanding of PTA. One project focuses on public PTA, the other on expert-stakeholder PTA. The Board of the Rathenau Institute has just approved of a project *Debating the societal debate*. Its objective is to study and discuss the meaning and design of societal debate around science and technol-

ogy in the Netherlands. The project will consist of a process evaluation of the project *Clones and Cloning* and a workshop to confront various opinions and practices in this field.

With respect to expert-stakeholder PTA, the Rathenau Institute takes part in the so-called working group *Knowledge Fusion*. The organisations represented in this group are in one way or the other involved in analysing system transitions, e.g. sustainable development, and discovering impulses for new development paths and knowledge. One challenge is to find new knowledge and options through existing experts and expertise. Against this background knowledge fusion is defined as "knowledge creation in ad-hoc networks, to support the analysis and realisation of a relatively fundamental reorientation of social action". The members of the working group are pioneers in this field and share a need to reflect on their own experiences and learn from each other's insights.

3 Conclusions: challenges for the future

This paper started with reference to the EUROPTA project, a European Commission sponsored research project on participatory TA. The international sharing of experiences and theorising on PTA has gained serious momentum by this project. The project has also helped the Rathenau Institute to reflect on its own experiences with PTA. In the EUROPTA project a distinction was made between public PTA and expert-stakeholder PTA. The development of PTA at the Rathenau Institute can be told along the lines of these two types of PTA.

With respect to public PTA, the *parallel citizens' panel* is a typical Rathenau phenomenon. This means that involving the public within a TA project is an activity next to and in addition to classical TA methods. While the lay panel can gain from visiting the public expert meetings, the citizens' panel completes a TA project and produces valuable extra information for politicians. In addition, experts can investigate promising policy suggestions made by the lay panel. The challenge for the Rathenau Institute is to improve this dual approach to TA and communicate its benefits to the TA community, the media and policy makers.

With respect to expert-stakeholder PTA considerable experience has been gained with forms of interactive TA. First the various viewpoints of experts and stakeholders are mapped. This information is used to confront the various players with each other's interests and values, and find new and common ways for the future. Communication in the broadest sense is crucial for strengthening the impact of interactive TA. In the coming years the Rathenau Institute will make strategic communication an integral part of the design and management of a TA project.

Footnotes

- 1) The EUROPTA project "European Participatory Technology Assessment. Participatory Methods in Technology Assessment and Technology Decision-Making" was carried out on the issue of participatory technology assessment (PTA). The project received funding from the European Commission (Directorate General XII), TSER programme. It was co-ordinated by the Danish Board of Technology (Copenhagen) and included partners from Austria, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and an associated partner from Switzerland.
- 2) The basic principles of the methodology of interactive technology assessment are described in Grin et al. 1997.

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Recent Developments in Public Participation in the United Kingdom

by Gary Kass, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology¹

The scope of participation in the United Kingdom is broadening. The paper draws together the recent developments in public participation and decision-making in the UK which are taking place in many areas of public policy; particularly in local government, community health planning and development, and science and technology. According to a House of Lords Science and Technology Committee inquiry into "Science and Society", a change is necessary in the cultures and constitutions of key decision-making institutions. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology has been given a new remit in keeping the members of both Houses of Parliament informed on the development of public consultation and dialogue on science-related issues.

Introduction: Participation and UK Politics

Direct involvement of citizens in political decision-making compared with the involvement of expertise and elected representatives has been debated in the UK for at least 200 years. Some of the leading thinkers in this area (e.g. Edmund Burke) formed theories of government, setting out a dialectic that has run throughout UK politics. The current situation is that the most common form of public participation in politics is voting in elections. However, the level of voting (turnout) is variable, and by continental European standards very poor². Typically, the turnout at national elections for the Westminster parliament is around 75 %,