Social Sciences
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Acceptance of New Technologies

Speaker:

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Shaping the future: the role of communication for technological innovations

Scientific and technological innovation open up new options for thinking and action. In science-based societies technological products and systems influence strongly the lifeworld of citizens. Therefore science and technology can be seen as a strong driver for ongoing transformation of societal evolution. Since science and technology production itself is not a linear process towards 'progress' but to a high degree constructed within complex social processes, technological developments are contestable. Modern societies have experienced manifold the negative and surprising side-effects of technology. Methodological innovations such as technology assessment, risk assessment, forsight etc, have been developed in reaction to this situation. It became obvious that because of pluralism in knowledge, interests and values elaborate communication activities are needed to handle technological conflicts. Starting from a hierarchical logic of expert-lay-people relationship, the so called 'deficit-model', in which expert knowledge just have to be translated into lay-peoples language, there has been emerged a broader perspective. In addition to one-way communication in order to raise technology 'acceptance' by promoting technology, there has been identified a growing need for serious two-way-communication on technological chances and risks. Especially in the context of the internationally agreed ethical framework of sustainable development a more participatory perspective on future socio-technical developments have emerged. With a broad range of procedures (consensus conferences, future workshops, participatory technology assessment, participatory technology design etc.) it is hoped to not only raise technology 'acceptance', but to raise the 'acceptability' of technologies, with regard to social, economic and environmental aspects. In my talk I will give an overview of this developments and I will discuss some ideas on fair and competent science and technology communication.