Call for papers

6th Tensions of Europe Plenary Conference *

Colloque international du projet ANR Resendem **

September 19-21, 2013
Université Paris-Sorbonne

Democracy and Technology
Europe in Tension
from the 19th to the 21st century

Deadline paper abstracts: February 25, 2013

Overall Theme of the Conference

The conference will be devoted to the complex relationship between democracy and technology from a European and transnational perspective. The core of this reflection will be the complementarities and cross-fertilization that arise in the interaction of technology and democracy, but also the frictions, tensions, and paradoxes that emerge in the discourses, representations and interplay of actors. The assumption that technology poses a threat to the liberal democratic political order rooted in the public debate, has fueled a critical approach to technology in humanities and social sciences. This also fueled various shared Europe-wide initiatives of technology assessment. Within the Soviet bloc, on the other hand, technology was promoted as a tool for building socialism.

More recently, calls for the democratization of decision-making related to controversial technical changes made the two terms meet in a dynamic no longer of opposition but of mutual construction: "technical democracy" would be an expansion of democracy, defined primarily as a continuously evolving process rather than a fixed form, open to new questions and new ways to find answers.

This historical conference is open to a wide range of interdisciplinary inquiry. It invites proposals for papers addressing an issue that up to now has mainly been investigated on a national basis. Focusing on circulations and appropriations of technology in a European and transnational perspective, the conference should open new ways to think and talk about the history of Europe.

While European spaces are privileged, papers on the themes of the conference but covering other geographical areas will also be considered.

General areas to be explored are:

Technical democracy: serving the citizen or the consumer?

• The concept of technical democracy, its uses, its meanings, its realities and imaginary through technologies, spaces, periods;
• The role of groups of stakeholders such as consumer associations and civil society in the design, ownership, development, or resistance and rejection of technology.

Technology and democracy: a co-construction?

• Democratic regimes facing technological challenges in their economic, political, industrial, ethical, social and/or cultural dimensions;
• Technology in political discourses (comparative approaches are welcome);
• Technology as vector of democracy: history of voting technologies;
• "Democracy by design": how aspects related to the values of democracy (privacy, transparency, openness, etc.) are considered in the invention of artifacts.

Regulating and governing technology: which models, what practices?

• The evolution, composition, role, challenges and limitations of the regulatory authorities;
• The evolution of governance in the field of technology;
• Soft and hard power of technology in democracy;
• The transition of national and regional governance logics to global governance.

Agoras: spaces for dialogue and debate about technology in democracy

• Public areas of debate around technology and large sociotechnical controversies;
• Sites and actors involved in mediating between citizens and technologies;
• The relationship between media and technology in a democratic context;
• Challenging technology in a democratic context.

Technology against democracy

• Technocracy: confiscated expertise?
• Threats to democracy from uses of technology (surveillance, intelligence, propaganda, databases, etc.);
• Democracies at war and the technical armaments choices (gas, napalm, nuclear bomb, mines, etc.).

Session formats

The Program Committee welcomes proposals that address the overall conference themes in the following three formats:
• Individual paper proposals.
• Research sessions with three papers based on original research, and an invited commentator. Because the conference encourages debate, appropriate time for discussion should be allocated to the commentators as well as the members of the audience. The papers will be pre-circulated to all conference participants.
• Research collaboration sessions which are meant to present results of a specific project. The session could be paper based, but could also focus on a discussion of the framing and wider implications of the specific project connected to the future of Tensions of Europe network.

Please note that paper and/or session proposals not directly related to the conference theme but relevant for the TOE network will also be considered. For more information on the TOE intellectual agenda see www.tensionsofeurope.eu and www.makingeurope.eu

Deadlines and Time-line

The deadline for proposals is February 25, 2013.

For paper proposals, please submit a title and abstract of no more than 500 words. Authors are invited to submit their titles and abstracts electronically on the homepage of the conference toe2013paris.sciencesconf.org with a copy sent by email to toe2013paris@sciencesconf.org.
For session proposals, please submit a brief abstract of the session (maximum 600 words) along with a one-page abstract for each participant. The organizer(s) are invited to submit their session abstracts electronically on the homepage of the conference toe2013paris.sciencesconf.org with a copy sent by email to toe2013paris@sciencesconf.org. Please note that on the website, for technical reasons, each abstract, even of a research session, has to be submitted individually.

The Program Committee will inform about its decisions no later than April 20, 2013.

Since the conference papers will be made available before the conference on our website, we will ask you to send them as PDF file to toe2013paris@sciencesconf.org before July 15, 2013.

We are seeking to provide a contribution towards travel, fees and/or accommodation costs for those who have no opportunity to participate otherwise.

Program Committee :

Pr Maria Paula Diogo, Chair, Universidade Nova de Lisboa,
Pr Pascal Griset, Université Paris-Sorbonne
Pr Martin Kohlrausch, K.U. Leuven
Dr Léonard Laborie, CNRS
Dr Larissa Zakharova, EHESS

Please direct queries to Arielle Haakenstad, conference secretary (toe2013paris@sciencesconf.org).

* Tensions of Europe (TOE) is an international scientific network consisting of almost 300 scientists from all over Europe and the United States. TOE explores the role of technology as an agent of change in European history by organizing inspiring conferences and summer schools as well as by stimulating international research collaboration and disseminating research results to various audiences. http://www.tensionsofeurope.eu/

** "Large technical networks and democracy: innovations, practices and groups involved in the long term, from 1880 to the present day (France and Europe)". Resendem project is supported by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche. It revisits the history of the fields of mobility, communications and energy, in terms of community involvement in their construction and management. http://www.msha.fr/resendem/