LOTA – a software tool supporting transparency of normative orientations:
Enhancing quality in participatory research by improving rational discourse

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Keywords

participatory research, software tool, transparency, values, technology assessment, quality
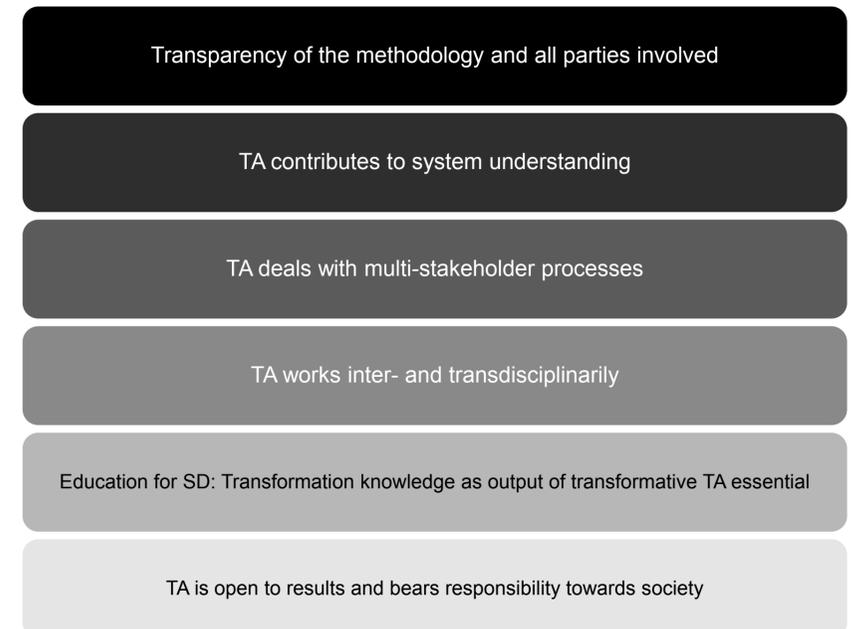
Problem

- In transdisciplinary and participatory research, participants contribute their own views (knowledge and opinions). They play an active role in framing the outcomes of the studies.

- In the case of technology assessment, experts and stake-holders are usually invited to assess the opportunities and risks of a new technology.

- It often remains unclear for what reasons the participants arrive at different assessments.
→ Because they start from different assumptions about the factual possibilities, limits and the concrete design of future applications of the technology?
→ Because they evaluate the consequences of the prospective applications of the technology in different normative frameworks and thus base don different values?
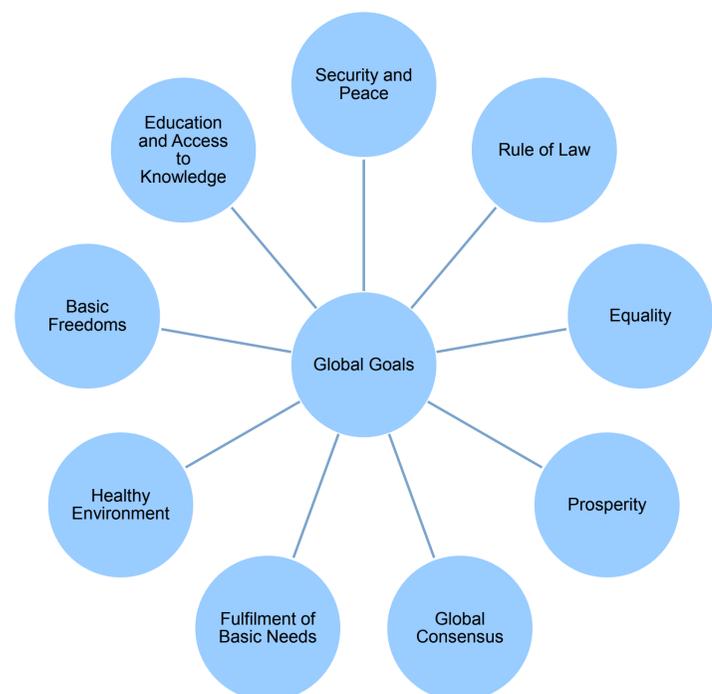
Chosen Solution

- Before the participants enter into a direct discourse, they take part in an online survey in which they can express, among other things, their normative orientation.

- The result is visualized as an "opinion landscape" with the help of the LOTA software and fed back to the participants at the beginning of a workshop.

- By initializing the discourse with such an analysis, we want to help participants to distinguish between descriptive and normative basic assumptions and get a better understanding of why their conclusions differ from person to person.

- Another advantage of the tool is that the project managers can use it to make sure that there is sufficient diversity of normative orientations in the discourse; either by inviting further actors or, for example, for focus groups, invite only a subset of the survey participants without excluding minority opinions.

Landscape of Opinions

Quality Criteria in Transformative TA

Transparency of the methodology and all parties involved

TA contributes to system understanding

TA deals with multi-stakeholder processes

TA works inter- and transdisciplinarily

Education for SD: Transformation knowledge as output of transformative TA essential

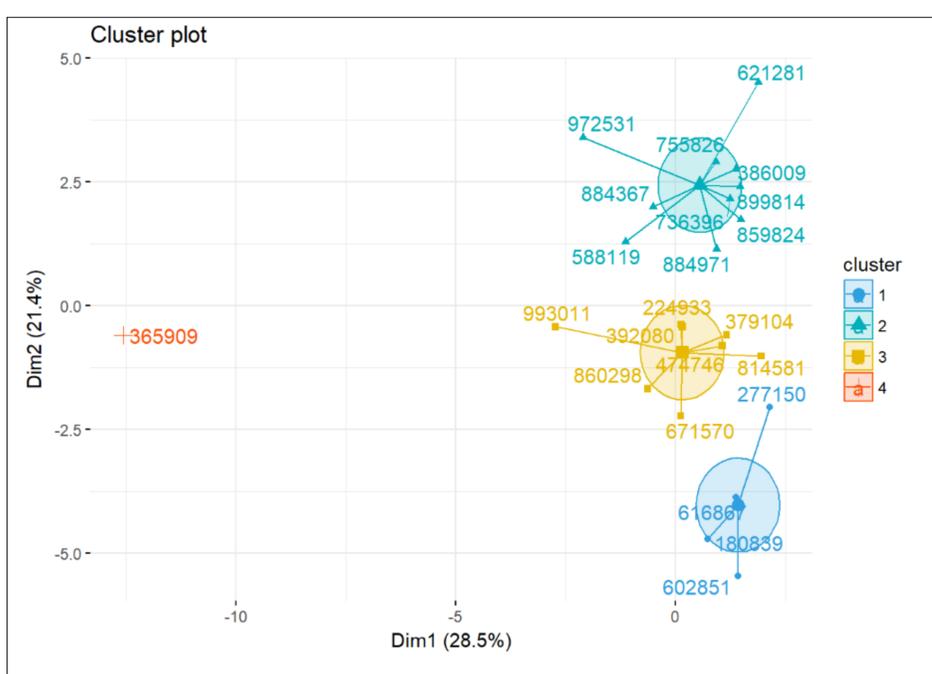TA is open to results and bears responsibility towards society

Global Goals as Value Reference

As a means to elicitate the normative orientation of the participants, the tool uses a list of aggregated global goals (based on the US SDGs, the Declaration of Human Rights, and others). Particpants select and rank global goals. This is followed by questions about the time horizon and the urgency of the selected objectives as well as an assessment of the opportunities and risks of the technology application in relation to the selected goals.

References

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