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CALL FOR PAPERS

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Articles can be in any language and length chosen by the author, while its abstract and keywords have to be in English.

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the topic of this issue

BEYOND DEMOCRACY: INNOVATION AS POLITICS

Innovation is increasingly shaping our world and the way we live. It is, to a greater extent, governing our biological, social and political life. Nanotechnologies, AI, robotics, ICT and biotechnologies – just to mention a few – are intertwined with our individual and collective dimensions, fundamentally and increasingly transforming the organization of our society.

The understanding of the current global transition asks to be rooted in the complex and liquid relationships between innovation and society, in which the causes and effects of the various changing phenomena are not immediately discernible. Innovation – and the management of innovation – is now far less in the hands of traditional politics. The time between research advances and the spread of new technologies is narrowing and new knowledge and power ecosystems are rapidly growing. The rate of innovation is dramatically increasing and much more effort is needed in order to assess the connections between the disruptive forces of highly transformative technological developments and the glocal dynamics that already have been afforded in the previous issues of this journal. From the contemporary divorce between power and traditional politics to the new features of smart cities, from the reforming significance of the human relations composing the “network society” to the changing role of governance or of new media.

All of these topics are densely entangled with the innovation of products and processes. Innovation, which we define here as the “realization of the improbable”, is hacking society at different scales of space and time and with different levels of indeterminacy. In order to overcome the apparent contradiction between the improbable and the regulation *ex ante* and in order to square the circle of reconciling democracy with expert techno-scientific knowledge, in the last decade, many important scholarships have proposed and encouraged approaches like the Public Understanding of Science and the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), grounded on the belief that robust innovation is socially founded and that a collective, proactive, future oriented path is needed. Ten years after the pillar publication “Taking European Knowledge Seriously”, several emerging issues – such as distrust towards expert knowledge or widespread populism – are breaking into the innovation debate. In this scenario, concepts like the coproduction of knowledge or public engagement, just to mention a few, need to be renovated and the innovation narrative urgently demands philosophical and political reorientation.

Now more than ever, it is clear that innovation is more than just technological invention and society as a whole is undoubtedly at a crucial juncture that is opening unreleased opportunities and risks at the same time. Scientific knowledge is sliding from the hands of ancient elites and contextually the public debates on new technologies increasingly tend to be polarized. A complex approach including the different aspects of innovation is strongly demanded, however dichotomized discourses seem to exceed the synthesizing ones.

In a technologically dense society, the relationship between innovation, knowledge, power and politics is at a turning point. Several authors agree that the governance of frontier research and emerging innovation is one of the major challenges facing contemporary democracies. Can the distrust in expert knowledge challenge or nurture deliberative democracies and innovation quality? How are disruptive innovations impacting the status quo and can innovation drive the development of new forms of tyranny? Who should decide upon innovation and how? Is the democratization of science still the way forward? Further theoretical perspectives and empirical exercises around techno-scientific ‘Innovation as Politics’ are needed. This is compulsory for contemporary society if we want to shape innovation instead of be shaped by it.