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Empowering citizens in international governance of nanotechnologies

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The international dialogue on responsible governance of nanotechnologies engages a wide range of actors with conflicting as well as common interests (c.f. Malsch, 2011). It is also characterised by a lack of evidence based data on uncertain risks of in particular engineered nanomaterials (c.f. IRGC, 2006). The SUN project aims to develop a SUNDS software decision support tool in order to strengthen collective decision making on sustainable nanomaterials. The design of the tool is based on three rounds of stakeholder engagement with industry, regulators and insurance company representatives. The present paper aims at deepening understanding of the collective decision making context at international level by reviewing recent discussions in different fields including sociological and political studies of international relations (e.g. Risse, 2002, Haas, 1992) as well as political philosophy and ethics (Habermas, 2011, Rawls, 1999, Kant, 1795). This analysis of current trends in international law making is taken as starting point for exploring the role a software decision support tool could play in multi-stakeholder global governance of nanotechnologies. These theoretical ideas are then compared with the current design of the SUNDS tool highlighting discussion points for further consideration.

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