



---

***Ethics, Technology and Governance : Condition for efficiency of ethical reflexivity in technological project - Investigating contextual proceduralism-***

---

**Prof dr. Philippe Goujon**  
director of the legit laboratory



**fundp – Namur - Belgium**

### **1. Presentation of the context**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have a growing impact, including ethical and social impact, on all aspects of life today. The potential for ethical impacts increase as ICT becomes more complex and invisible to the user, as envisioned in the concepts of ubiquitous and ambient intelligence, and converge with other new and emerging technologies. It appears important to consider potential ethical issues before and during information technology development, even if the ability to anticipate these effects by the proposers of the technology projects can be more difficult due to the complexity and convergence issues.

EGAIS and ETICA are two European research consortiums funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The aim of EGAIS is to address some of the problems discussed in the computer ethics and information ethics fields by investigating the consideration of ethics within research and development projects from the perspective of ethical governance procedures. The aim of ETICA is to identify and evaluate emerging Information and Communication Technologies in order to analyse potential arising ethical issues.

One of the problems investigated by our projects EGAIS and ETICA is how and when 'ethical reflexivity', ie the consideration of the potential ethical aspects of the technology, could be incorporated into the research and technology development culture. This research

objectives requires an articulation between theoretical and practical investigations in order to better understand the complexity of the relationship between norms and contexts as well as the possibility of frame reflection and shift in the governance of technology.

## **2. Investigating contextual proceduralism**

EGAIS and ETICA researchers are concerned with the extent to which the ethical governance of technology can be grounded upon the sole procedural approach that gives priority to the use of arguments and to the quest for consensus. The procedural approach to norms as developed by Rawls and Habermas has been criticized over the past years by several streams of philosophy, ethics and epistemology that pointed out the contextual limits of proceduralism. Among these critiques, that of Lenoble and Maesschalck emphasized the limits of rationality, as suggested in the problem raised by the disjunction between the justification and the application of norms. It concentrated on the conditions for reflexivity, and in particular on the function of the context reflection and transformation for the adjustment of norms to contexts, in order to guarantee their relevance and effectiveness. The context here is to be understood not as a mere 'situation', an 'environment' or a 'milieu', but as the complex relationship - usually unconscious or implicit - between the background frames of the individuals or communities and some aspects of the world that are interpreted precisely as being part of the context.

In the line of the critiques to procedural approaches, this conference 'Investigating contextual proceduralism' seeks to present further the option of a contextual adjustment of procedures. The way of 'contextual proceduralism' suggests one basic question: *how far can a procedure be adjusted to the context of individuals or groups so that it can produce (a) a shift in their cognitive and normative framing (b) a new relationship to the norms and to the stake of normativity (c) an integration of values in the process of elaboration of norms?*

## **3. Research hypothesis**

The option of contextual proceduralism grounds upon several hypotheses:

- A process of multi-stakeholders governance cannot be implement without making use of any procedure, though a procedure is not neutral and carries about a range of substantial commitments and some implicit or explicit functions and objectives.
- A procedure cannot be reduced to a unique rational form (i.e.: argumentation) and can be conceived of according to a variety of possible forms, including 'non-rational' aspects (i.e.: narration).
- A context if viewed as a kind of inescapable *a priori* for judgment can be de-stabilized and possibly re-structured through interaction with other actors, but cannot be entirely reflected by the actors themselves.
- A procedure can be adjusted to the context of individuals or communities without requiring a complete reflection of the context by the actors and by implementing at most a re-construction of it.
- A shift in the cognitive and normative framing to occur depends upon a plurality of factors that, to be effective and relevant, are themselves related to the specific context of an individual or a community.

- The disjunction of norms and values questions the relevance and effectiveness of any procedure of inclusion that is supposed to reduce the disjunction of norms and contexts occurring in any procedure of discussion.

**As suggested by the set of hypotheses, the option of contextual proceduralism requires investigating the limits of rationality (discursive and inclusive), the conditions for reflexivity as well as the link between norms and values.**



## Presentation

Doctor of Philosophy (1993 ) . He has authored numerous articles on artificial life, self-organization, thermodynamics, the complexity, biotechnology, genomics and also the connection between science, techniques, education and culture. He authored books about the autoorganisation concept and about the ethics of technology. He has addressed the epistemological and ethical problems of this new scientific field which is named genomic and of GMO. He has organized many international seminars and symposia, and has conduct international projects. He has taken part in a European biotechnology research program entitled "The Industrial Use of Genome Resources in Europe". In 1997, he was responsible for coordinating a project concerning ethics in engineering, (context: SOCRATES program). In 2004 , he was qualified as "Maître de Conférences" and Professor in Epistemology and History of Science and in 2004 he obtained the Habilitation à diriger des recherché (Paris VII) under the direction of Professor Claude Debru (ENS - Paris).

He direct various international conferences concerning governance ethics and ties and edited international books concerning the relation between governance ethics rationality and ties. He is member of the WG 9.2 and of the SIG 9.2.2 of IFIP association (The International Federation for Information Processing). He was partner in the Miauce European project (Multi-modal interactions analysis and exploration of users within a controlled environment). He was responsible in this project of the ethical requirements necessary to design new technical systems (<http://www.miauce.org/>).

He is actually partner in two European projects the Etica project (Ethical Issues of Emerging ICT Applications : <http://moriarty.tech.dmu.ac.uk:8080/index.jsp?page=10520>) and the EGAIS project (The Ethical GovernAnce of emergIng technologieS - New Governance

Perspectives for Integrating Ethics into Technical Development Projects and Applications(<http://www.egais-project.eu/?q=node/4>).

He codirected the IG3T international project (Internet Governance: Transparency, Trust and Tools).

His research fields concerned the history and philosophy of science (biotechnology and Technologies of information and communication) the epistemology and ethics of computing technologies, the governance theories (relation between rationality, reflexivity, ethics and governance), the internet governance issues.

He is member of the reviewing panel of the international "Journal of information communication and ethics in society" (JICES)

- He was member of the program committee of the international colloquium ETHICOMP 2010 (Universitat Rovira y Virgili, Tarragona, Spain from Wednesday 14 April to Friday 16 April 2010).
- He has co chaired EDAmI wxorkshop at Sunday 19.7.2009, Technical University of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain, in conjunction with IE09, 5th international conference on Intelligent environment, July 20-21, 2009.
- part of the scientific committee of the IFIP tc9 meeting in Brisbane Australia and coorganized and chairED track Track 1: Ethics and ICT Governance dans le cadre du Human Choice and Computers conference (HCC9 2010)ethic governance and ICT of the World Computer Congress j'ai coorganise et preside le track

He has coorganized the following event

**29-30 mars 2011 : lieu : Metropol hotel bruxelles : internationa workshop titled : Investigating contextual proceduralism : Ethics, Technology and Governance organisateur Philippe Goujon et Sylvain Lavelle**

**31 mars 2011 au European Parliament in collaboration with STOA (scientific technology options assessment of the eurpean parliament) titre : IT for a Better Future How to integrate Ethics, Politics and Innovation**

**26-27 avril 2011 : European Commission : Training workshop on integrating ethical reflection within EU research projects.**