Call for Contributions

Standard-Takers and Standard-Makers:
Global Practices and Politics in the Age of AI

International Workshop
Date: 15-16 June 2026
Location: Humboldt University Berlin

Organized by the ERC-funded research group TECHtonics
https://hu.berlin/TECHtonics
Institute for Asian and African Studies
Humboldt University Berlin

Who gets to set technical standards in the age of AI? This kick-off workshop for the ERC-funded project *TECHtonics: Power, Politics and Contestation in Global Technical Standard-Setting* seeks to investigate the global practices and politics of standard-setting through a focus on rising standards powers.

We invite participation from **experts from the standardization community** and **scholars from various disciplines**, including Management, Area Studies, International Relations and Science and Technology Studies. We strive for a high degree of regional diversity and especially encourage applications from across Asia and Africa. There is funding available to finance the travel costs for a limited number of participants traveling from outside Europe. A hybrid option may be made available for participants unable to travel to Berlin.
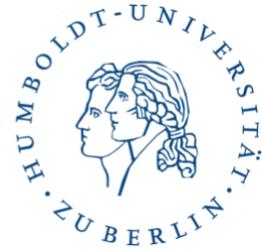
15th June 2026: Expert roundtables and open discussion about current challenges in global standard-setting, including barriers to participation, the rapid pace of innovation in fields such as AI, as well as geopolitical tensions.

16th June 2026: Academic workshop with paper presentations on various topics related to the workshop theme.

Application Deadline: 8 February 2026 (details below).

Workshop Theme

Global technical standard-setting is in the midst of an ongoing transformation. Long dominated by wealthy industrialized countries, rising standards powers have begun to shake this status quo in new technology fields like Artificial Intelligence, 6G, and E-Commerce. New players are increasingly breaching the high barriers to entry in standard-setting and are seeking global presence and influence.

How do "standard-takers" become "standard-makers" in the current landscape of global technical standard-setting? What barriers to participation persist and what new opportunities and challenges arise for industry, policy and society at large? We invite empirical research and case studies that address these questions, including, but not limited to, the following aspects:

Industry-focused:
- What does technical standard-setting look like in practice for new players in the field?
- How do new players become familiar with the networks and unwritten rules in standard-setting organizations like ISO/IEC, ITU, 3GPP, IEEE, etc.?
- How do they obtain the resources and master the bureaucracies of international travel?
- What roles do international cooperation and government relations play for diffusing knowledge and facilitating success in standard-setting?

Policy-focused:
- How are national standardization strategies formulated and implemented amidst bureaucratic hurdles and interministerial competition?
- How do governments facilitate industry-participation in standard-setting and scale training programs across the whole country?
- What is the role of standards diplomacy and standards promotion across countries?

Who should apply?

This workshop facilitates exchange among standardization experts and scholars interested in the global practices and politics of technical standard-setting. We hope to stimulate the creation of new formal and informal networks and to create a basis for further collaboration, such as the writing of grant proposals or the design of training programs. A possible outcome of the academic workshop is a proposal for an edited volume or a special issue of an academic journal.

Contact Information

Please let us know of your interest in taking part in this event by sending an email to techtonics-workshop@protonmail.com no later than **8 February 2026**.

For applicants interested in the academic workshop, please also submit an **abstract of up to 250 words** on a topic related to the workshop theme and **a brief biography**.

Funds are available to cover economy travel and lodging of a limited number of participants. When submitting your proposal, please indicate whether you will require financial or other support to participate in this event. This response will not be taken into consideration during the review process.