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Regulation Policy: Explanation of its Genesis, Continuity and Change

For initiating innovation in Governance and eliciting its alternative future paths, an understanding of contemporary policies is crucial. Such an understanding can be generated with respect to the genealogy of governance processes by the means of analytical reconstruction and tracing of the emergence of policy paths, its continuity and change. Exogenous explanation patterns have to be used as well as endogenous ones. The latter become especially explicit in analyzing the interplay of interests, motivations and actions of actors, public and political discourse, and institutional settings of decision making.

Such a concern requires an analytical approach which integrates policy analysis, conceptions of path dependence within the historical Neo-Institutionalism and discourse analysis in order to have analytical instruments that are more sensitive for different degrees of rebuilding policy paths. What appears as continuity on the institutional level may already be changing on the level of discourses, e.g., new interpretative patterns can enter the social knowledge resources. A differentiated description and explanation of the inner functioning of stagnating, reform oriented and revolving policy paths is thus viable. Such a proceeding allows conclusions regarding the issue of which actors at which point of time have to start what kind of activities concerning a sustainable development.

The paper demonstrates by using the example of the implementation of regulation policies for green genetic engineering in Mexico and Chile, how hierarchisation and prioritisation of impact factors on policy paths as well as the elaboration of necessary (though not sufficient) preconditions for a change of regulatory policy paths generates ideas how to initiate successful innovation of governance in the sense of sustainable change processes. As an example the transformation of the public regarding sustainability — such as the emergence of new story lines and its reproduction by an increasing number of actors — is a precondition for a long-term manifestation of these story lines in institutional arrangements and for the establishment of new political and social practices. In this context it is possible to anticipate, how policy change has to be arranged to follow the desired path.

Thus the article presents an approach to elaborate the how and why of continuity and change of policy from an interior view by using comparative case studies. It positions the presented analytical approach theoretically, for example in its relation to the approach of discursive Neo-Institutionalism as well as to other research traditions with focus on continuity and change of policy. That way the article serves the purpose of the forum to discuss new approaches for studying innovation of governance.