

Berlin Forum Innovation in Governance

Interdisciplinary research platform on the genesis, dynamics and politics of new forms of governance

– Conceptual outline, updated November 2010 –

The Forum aims at providing insights into enabling the understanding of the emergence, stabilisation and expansion of new forms of governance. We invite researchers from policy and governance studies, organisation studies, innovation studies, and science and technology studies to share and discuss their views on the topic of innovation in governance and explore new research approaches across the boundaries of established research fields. The Forum aims to:

- Enhance the conceptual and empirical understanding of innovation processes in governance and their broader societal implications
- Support an emerging research community at the interface of governance studies, organisation studies, innovation studies, and science and technology studies
- Explore possibilities to engage with ongoing processes of innovation in governance with a view to enhancing the capacities to cope with challenges of sustainable development

Forum meetings are initially scheduled to take place each May between 2010 and 2013. Hosted by the Innovation in Governance Research Group at the *Technische Universität Berlin*, each event highlights specific aspects of innovation in governance and will be opened by two public keynote lectures, starting a dialogue between different, but complementary, perspectives on the topic.

Innovation in governance: a slogan or actual shifting patterns of practice?

Innovation in governance is *en vogue*. Against the background of a more general trend towards novelty and innovativeness becoming important values in an increasing number of areas of social life, innovation in relation to policy-making has become a key issue for policy actors and academic writers alike. Often, the new is presented as the desirable: While there are always critical voices, emphasis is generally put on the *need for* more efficient, more democratic and inclusive, or more sustainable forms of

governing. But what is actually required to create, embed and establish new practices in the context of already existing patterns of governance? And how do such processes work out; do they actually achieve what they promise?

Supposedly less normative, novelty is also (and as frequently) stated as the factual: during the last decades we *have seen* an abundance of new modes of governance, new policy instruments, new methods of regulation and public management. But what are the actual changes in the practices of policy-making? Is everything that is labelled as “new” really an innovation? What certainly has changed is the way and scope in which public policy design relies on technical expertise. With the emergence of private policy consultancies, think tanks, regulatory agencies, and governance schools, designs on and innovation in governance have very much become a professional business. As a result of this development, political debate frequently shifts away from an orientation towards ends and general values of governing and towards a discussion of the means and technical details of how to manage public issues, i.e. how to govern gains prominence over the question of *what* to govern *for*.

However, technical and functionalist debates of this sort tend to mask the *politics, practices and broader implications* of “technologies” of governing. When professional policy designers, for whom the invention, development, improvement and diffusion of particular policy instruments have become an end in itself, frame the challenges and shape the options for political action, critical questions arise as to the particular dynamics of governance change as well as the framing of issues, the transparency of decisions, and the distribution of power.

Innovation in governance as a research perspective

While this diagnosis of contemporary governance can be further elaborated, the notion of innovation can also serve as a starting point for the development of a particular research perspective. This perspective is interested in the genealogy of existing patterns and the exploration of possible future pathways of governance change. It also places special emphasis on the interplay of intentional design and emergent dynamics within these processes. Research in this perspective will target understanding social and political change by tracing, analysing and reconstructing the developmental pathways of new forms of political practices.

A particular research approach is to investigate governance and its dynamics through the evolving means of governing. This approach is currently being explored and developed by our newly constituted Research Group Innovation in Governance, the initiator of this Forum series. It takes particular governance designs (policy instruments, modes of governance) as the focal unit of analysis and traces their historical pathways of development (‘innovation journeys’) in order to analyse processes of articulation, stabilisation and travel across different countries and domains of application. These processes can be conceptualised as the social construction of ‘technologies of governance’ which may, supported by particular models of governance and professional ‘design communities’, become institutionalised and take on a social life of their own (e.g. emissions trading and other tradable permit

schemes, citizens' jury and other deliberative procedures). From this perspective, we expect new insights into how social dynamics of governance design and evolving patterns of governance within particular domains mutually shape each other. This may offer possibilities for a new understanding of transnational dynamics of governance and policy change.

This is just one approach of many possible ways to frame innovation in governance. Others, for example, may focus on the process of articulating new topics in the context of dominant policy discourse, on processes of institutional renewal within particular domains, the creation of new actor networks and alliances, or cultural changes and the establishment of new roles and habits in political practice.

In setting up the Forum, our intention is to learn about the variety of approaches that can be taken to analyse how and why new forms of governance come into being and to enable researchers to inspire and criticise each other for the field as a whole to develop.

Studying innovation in governance opens the view on a range of different research topics which reflect specific aspects of innovation dynamics and their embedding in broader contexts. As a starting point for tapping into this variety, we can identify three complementary analytical foci that generate an initial list of research questions.

Processes through which innovation unfolds:

- How do new forms of governance come into being and how do they unfold?
- What drives innovation in governance, how do particular forms gain momentum?
- Are there specific phases or patterns in the innovation process?
- How do new forms of governance become embedded in institutional contexts?
- What are the tensions between new practices and established governance patterns and how are they addressed?
- How do new forms of governance travel across administrative boundaries and policy domains?
- How do path creation and path dependence play out in the innovation of new forms of governance?

Constellations in which innovation emerges:

- What is the "breeding ground" from which novelty in governance emerges?
- What are the relevant actor networks that push or pull for new governance forms – or oppose and hinder them?
- How do specific organisational structures, social institutions or dominant discourses facilitate or inhibit innovations in governance?
- How does innovation for new forms of governance relate to particular problems and public discourse?

- What are the chances for innovations in governance within different policy domains and (national) political systems?
- How do technological and ecological contexts shape the substance and the course of innovation in governance?

Agency in bringing about and shaping innovation:

- How do different forms of agency and design induce and give shape to innovation in governance?
- What are the motives, interests and expectations of actors in different roles to get involved in the innovation process?
- What role do ideas, conceptual models, theories, claims and expectations play in the innovation process?
- How do certain agencies get aligned in the course of innovation, how are innovation agendas constructed?
- When and how do controversies about new governance forms open up and how may they be closed down?
- What role do politics and power play in innovation in governance?
- How are technologies, such as ICT, accounting, statistics, surveillance and control, transport, logistics etc. interwoven with innovation in governance?
- What are appropriate strategies and methods to anticipate innovation in governance and engage with its dynamics?

Mobilising insights from diverse research traditions

The central aim of the Berlin Forum Innovation in Governance is to bring together scholars from a variety of relevant research traditions, such as policy and governance studies, organisation studies, innovation studies and science and technology studies in order to engage in a common endeavour to explore new approaches to the study of innovation in governance. The Forum provides a platform to probe and exchange ideas, discuss insights from ongoing research and sketch perspectives for future work in this area. One of the envisaged outcomes is the publication of a series of special journal issues or edited volumes with Forum contributions. Ultimately, the Forum may support the formation of a new interdisciplinary research community.

A combination of insights and findings from different research traditions will enable the improvement of our understanding of innovation in governance. A broad repertoire is available, and we list (non-exhaustively) relevant topics and approaches below.

Policy and governance studies:

- policy instruments and modes of governance
- policy analysis and design
- policy process, agenda setting, implementation
- ideas, learning and policy change

- policy transfer and diffusion
- policy styles, institutional path dependence, policy convergence/divergence
- (transnational) policy networks, epistemic communities, regulatory regimes
- multi-level governance

Organisation studies:

- processes of organising, rule-making, institutionalisation
- organisational change and learning
- professionalisation
- entrepreneurship, change management
- path dependence and creation
- organisational networks, organisational fields
- transnational governance, global institutions, world culture
- travel of ideas, translation and imitation

Innovation studies:

- models of the innovation process
- innovation networks, communities of practice, innovation systems
- incremental and architectural innovation
- paradigms, regimes, trajectories
- system innovation, regime shift, technological transition
- standardisation, dominant design
- foresight methodology

Science and technology studies:

- socio-technical configurations, socio-technical systems, actor-networks
- the social construction of technology
- politics of facts and artefacts
- design, inscription of users in technology
- dynamics of science and technology
- constructive technology assessment
- science-policy interaction, politics and expertise
- performativity of science
- market devices, simulations

The Berlin Forum Innovation in Governance will build on this rich variety of approaches. We warmly invite you to join us. And in the spirit of innovation, we

definitely welcome those of you who add to the list of keywords and approaches outlined here.

Topics and tentative programme for Forum meetings

An initial set of four meetings is scheduled for the period 2010-2013. The first three Forums will be organised as workshops on specific aspects of the overall topic of innovation in governance, each involving two keynote lectures, about ten presented papers and a poster session. Junior scholars are encouraged to participate. The fourth event in 2013 will be larger: an international conference which is oriented toward exploration of the potential of the innovation in governance research perspective for a better understanding of and more reflexive engagement in the challenges of sustainable development.

First Forum Innovation in Governance (May 2010): Studying the emergence and development of new forms of governance (workshop)

– see separate Call for Papers at www.innovation-in-governance.org –

Second Forum Innovation in Governance (May 2011): Knowing governance: The making of governance knowledge and the transformation of politics (workshop)

– see separate Call for Papers at www.innovation-in-governance.org –

Third Forum Innovation in Governance: Contexts, competing innovations and the battle of new against old (workshop)

Context matters! But how?

The third Forum is all about the relation of new governance forms to their environments. In order to understand the dynamics of innovation in governance, we have to look at how innovation processes interact with and are shaped by the particular contexts in which they emerge or through which they travel on their course. The goal of the workshop is to understand better in which way context can be usefully integrated in the analysis of innovation in governance. How can multi-level, multi-dimensional and changing contexts be operationalised for study? How do policy histories, institutional settings, techno-scientific structures, or ecological contexts constrain and facilitate the formation, development and stabilisation of new forms of governance? How, for example, do environmental issues, such as climate change and sustainable development, create pressures for the development of new forms of governance? How do technological infrastructures or geographical settings constrain or enable the applicability of certain forms of governance? Of particular importance is how emerging novelties relate to ongoing innovation processes and to existing patterns of governance. When certain governance regimes are in place, what room is there for new policy practices? How does “creative destruction” work out in innovation in governance? How and when will novel forms be embedded in existing patterns, how

and when do they result in broader regime shifts? Another question concerns co-existing ongoing innovations: To what extent do they work as a selection environment for each other? What are dynamics of competition (e.g. eco-taxes vs. tradable permit schemes) or complementarity (e.g. tradable permit schemes linking up with information and communication technologies)?

Keywords: interaction with context, embedding, selection environment, co-evolution, social-ecological context, competing innovations, incumbents and newcomers

Fourth Forum Innovation in Governance: Innovating governance for sustainable development (conference)

How can governing capacities be enhanced to cope with the challenges of sustainable development (SD)?

SD poses new challenges to governance. There has been a lot of activity with respect to new forms of governance, in practice as well as in scholarly debates. Often, these activities have approached innovation in governance in an ad-hoc manner or concentrated on model design rather than implementation. With the benefit of recent intense study and discussion of the dynamics of innovation in governance, we can discuss past and ongoing activity in relation to new forms of governance for SD in order to take stock and look ahead. What are the challenges and how are they translated into requirements for new forms of governance? What kinds of innovation have been undertaken and how? How did they work out? Where did they take place? Who are the protagonists, who are the opponents? And which “third parties” exerted leverage? How do new concepts such as adaptive management, reflexive governance, deliberation, trading, etc., relate to and have an impact on policy practice? How do different conceptions relate to each other? How can innovation in governance be linked up with respect to socio-ecological systems and concepts such as resilience? How can innovation processes be anticipated and shaped?

The conference will also include a number of sessions that are designed for interaction between academics and practitioners of innovation in governance for sustainable development (e.g. from sustainability councils, EU commission, UN bodies, OECD, think tanks, NGOs, IHDP).

Keywords: challenges of governance for SD, reflexive governance, experiments with new forms of governance, R&D policy for new forms of governance, constructive policy assessment, policy scenarios/foresight

Forum Secretariat

For more information on the Forum aims, or should you wish to discuss your proposal in more detail, please contact a member of the organising committee. For all other general information surrounding the Forum, please contact the Forum management.

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