



# Third Berlin Forum **INNOVATION IN GOVERNANCE**

## **Shaping innovation in governance? Inducements, opportunities and limitations for engaging with governance in the making**

**31 May – 1 June 2012, Berlin**

**– CALL FOR PAPERS –**

The Third Berlin Forum Innovation in Governance is pivoted on the question of whether and how innovations in governance can be deliberately shaped. This suggests a focus on the relation between knowledge and politics in processes of advancing new forms of governance. More specifically, we are interested in discussing the relation between, on the one hand, a discourse of innovation in governance, theoretical models of change, the articulation of designs and strategies, and, on the other hand, the agency of innovation, actual practices of forging alliances, softening established orders, configuring and evaluating new arrangements, and linking up with broader transformation processes as they unfold.

The Forum will open with a public keynote dialogue between **Frank Fischer** (Rutgers University) and **Andrew Stirling** (University of Sussex) on challenges of innovating governance for sustainable development.

### **Outline of topic**

Perceived as a trendy slogan for a variety of fields, the notion of innovation has in recent years also become attractive in matters of political reform, institutions and governance. Attention shifts from novel procedures in science and technology, or economic products and processes, towards the creation and spreading of new instruments for public policy, new modes of governance and new political institutions. This is often linked to broader concerns about the enhancement of society's capacities to govern itself, i.e. to reflect and regulate its own development, including exuberant innovation in science, technology and the economy.

A host of studies on innovation processes and their dynamics underpin common knowledge that outcomes of innovation are not known in advance. Innovation generates novelty, entailing in certain respects, wider transformations, sometimes more and sometimes less stunningly. As new things emerge, they change the world as we know it. This is related to fundamental limitations for rational planning which relies on fixed goals and prognostic knowledge. Choosing to go down the path of innovation is thus a venturesome approach towards solving problems. It may well create new and larger problems. Autonomy and ambivalence of innovation processes are well understood with respect to novelty in science, technology and

firms. Manifold approaches of developing innovation strategies and anticipatory assessment exercises revolve around a dilemma of aspiring to shape something that does not exist yet and is therefore not known. How do these challenges find expression in the context of innovation in governance?

We invite proposals that touch on one or more of the following topics as explained further below.

- Discourses of innovation in governance: empirical studies concerning the way in which political and governance innovations feature in public discourse and policy programmes
- Practices of innovating governance: analyses of different forms by which actors try to shape the course of projects of political renewal, as proponents, opponents or intermediaries; as well as the role of concepts of innovation in informing these activities.
- Innovative designs: analyses of particular designs for new forms of governance with respect to implied understandings of innovation

### **Discourses of innovation in governance**

On a level of political discourse, the notion of innovation serves to encourage and justify new political projects and related attempts at unsettling established political orders. It suggests new potentials, the possibility to resolve conflict and overcome blockades, a way to step out of historical trajectories and institutional path dependence.

As such, innovation in governance is particularly welcome as a quasi-solution to counter “wicked problems” such as climate change, sustainable development, global health, education and security. These topics were recently proclaimed as “grand challenges” on which research and development should concentrate in order to earn public support. In this context, novel forms of governance, somewhat paradoxically, also become new topics of governmental innovation policy.

### **Practices of innovating governance**

With regard to practice, we can study how a variety of actors attempt to shape new forms of governance. Struggles over establishing and changing political order are as old as politics itself. Empirical studies of political mobilisation, constitutional politics, processes of public policy and governing provide a rich documentation of agency and unfolding processes. Innovation may come in here as a new analytical perspective which mobilises a conceptual repertoire from science and technology studies and from organisation studies, to make it fruitful for following new forms of governing as they emerge and stabilise. This may enable a new understanding of political dynamics and the interactive work involved in contesting established order and configuring novelty. Important aspects that may be highlighted in such a perspective are distributed forms of agency and heterogeneous cooperation, negotiation of different evaluative frames and references of justification, as well as the dynamics related to specific promises and requirements for political innovation projects.

Another aspect in relation to practices of shaping political change is to what extent innovation concepts figure explicitly in framing and reflecting political strategies. Do actors make sense of their practices in terms of innovation? In order to analyse problems and develop strategies, do they draw on results of innovation studies or on their own experiences with innovation?

## Innovative designs for new forms of governance

Finally, we may analyse specific designs for new forms of governance with respect to (implicit or explicit) understandings of the process that is involved in realising them. What kind of processes are envisaged to make proposed solutions work in practice? What is their take on ambivalence and contingency and possible precautions to make sure that fancy designs don't get stuck or are twisted to their opposite as they enter the "mangle of practice"? Here we may look at any kind of concept for new forms of governance, political reform strategies or dedicated methods of organising political change such as approaches of network governance, social learning, reflexive planning, smart regulation, participatory appraisal.

## Submission procedure

There are three ways of active participation in the Forum:

1. Proposals for **papers** which explicitly address one or more aspects of the outlined topic in empirical case studies and/or conceptual reflections (500 words).
2. Proposals for **posters** which present ongoing or completed research projects (also PhD theses) that relate to the outlined topic (500 words). A poster session includes a concourse with three minutes for each poster author to highlight questions, approach and findings.
3. Proposals to act as **discussant** of one of the papers selected for presentation at the Forum. Please give a brief outline of your expertise as well as current and past research work in relation to the topic of the workshop (300 words).

The submission deadline for all proposals is **Friday 20 January 2012**.

Please submit all proposals by email to Thomas Crowe [thomas.crowe@tu-berlin.de](mailto:thomas.crowe@tu-berlin.de).

We will be able to cover travel expenses for a limited number of participants. Please indicate your need for travel funds (including a rough estimate of costs) when submitting your proposal.

Successful applicants will be informed of their acceptance by late February 2012.

## Organisation

The Forum Innovation in Governance is hosted by the Innovation in Governance Research Group at Technische Universität Berlin. For more information see our project website at [www.innovation-in-governance.org](http://www.innovation-in-governance.org).

The Forum is the third in a series of conferences which provides an interdisciplinary research platform on the genesis, dynamics and politics of new forms of governance. The first Forum put a focus on patterns and dynamics of innovation processes in governance, the second on the role of governance knowledge and its co-production with new political practices. For more information on these past events, please see [www.innovation-in-governance.org/forum.html](http://www.innovation-in-governance.org/forum.html).

The Third Forum will take place at the Technische Universität Berlin which is located in west-central Berlin. Participants will be assisted in finding accommodation in the near vicinity of the venue.

For more information on the Forum aims, or should you wish to discuss your proposal in more detail, please contact the conceptual organisers. For all other information surrounding the event please contact the management.

**Concept:** Jan-Peter Voß  
Carsten Mann

**Management:** Thomas Crowe

**Scientific committee:** Nina Amelung, Jochen Gläser, Carsten Mann  
Arno Simons, Holger Straßheim, Jan-Peter Voß