

Innovation in Governance Research Group

Reconfiguring policy practice, governance regimes and social-ecological change

- project outline, October 2008 -

How do practices of policy-making develop and change? What is the role of new policy instruments as models of governance? How do existing governance regimes influence ongoing innovation in governance? What brings about persistence and change of governance regimes in the course of transitions towards sustainable development?

These questions are taken up by a **newly established research group “innovation in governance”** hosted by the **Technische Universität Berlin**. The group investigates innovation and transformation dynamics in governance in the context of a larger interdisciplinary community of scholars concerned with the intertwined dynamics of social, technological and ecological change.

The overall objective of the group is to **enhance understanding of dynamics in governance patterns by following emerging policy instruments along their life course** and by investigating processes and mechanisms through which they emerge, take shape, solidify and expand their scope of application – or become stunted, dissolve and dwindle away.

Empirical work will focus on **‘tradable-permit schemes’** and **‘deliberative procedures’** as two families of policy instruments that are widely discussed with respect to sustainable development. Case studies will be carried out for a selection of specific approaches and their applications (e.g. emissions trading, fishery quotas, biodiversity credits, for one, and consensus conferences, citizen juries, scenario workshops, for the other).

The conceptual approach combines policy & governance studies with science & technology studies. This gives rise to a theoretical perspective on policy

instruments as **‘social technologies’** which are constructed in interactions of **heterogeneous actors** (from science, professional services like law and consulting firms, public policy, industry and civil society etc.) and are co-evolving with a dynamic multi-level governance context. In this view, the development of a policy instrument can be analysed with respect to the momentum generated by articulating a universal model of governance and constituting a community of specialised policy designers and service providers. The transnational organisation of such a community introduces institutional dynamics that transcend locally embedded policy-making practices. It puts to life a particular form of ‘governance technology’ thus adding a new force to the multi-level dynamics of governance change.

A special sub-project within the group is dedicated to the question **how dynamics of governance are part of and embedded in broader processes of socio-technical and social-ecological change**, and how governance dynamics can be endogenised in modelling transformation (and deriving strategies for sustainable development).

Apart from specific academic objectives the broader perspective is to support reflexive design practices for the governance of sustainable development. The group engages with ongoing innovation in governance through a special **Policy Foresight** methodology. This assists political actors in developing contextualised innovation strategies that reflect the embedding of governance designs in broader social, technological and ecological dynamics.

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