

New Modes of Governance in Forest and Environmental Policy: Conceptual Innovations and Empirical Insights

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Changing modes of forest and environmental governance

The context of environmental and natural resource politics is changing. More than ever before, governmental actors lack the powers to deliver the required policy results on their own. Under the term "new modes of governance", policy makers are striving for more inclusive and legitimate, better integrated but less intrusive policy means of achieving policy goals. Governance particularly describes those types of political processes in which non-hierarchical modes of guidance, such as persuasion and negotiation, are employed, and public as well as private actors are engaged in policy formulation and implementation.

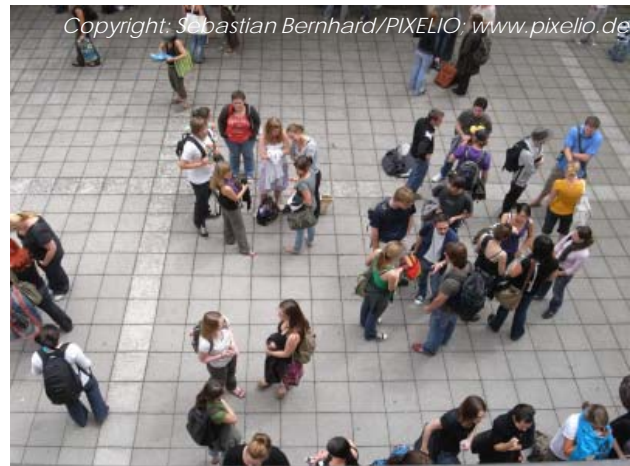
Bridging gaps between science and practice

At the 15th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management ([ISSRM 2009](#)) which was held July 5-8, 2009 in Vienna, Austria, a tripartite paper section, co-sponsored by IUFRO Group 6.12.02 'Forest Governance', focused on new modes of governance in forest and environmental policy. The twelve presented papers brought together innovative conceptual approaches with rich empirical insights from real-world forest and environmental policy processes from some 20 different countries (incl. the European Union). The sessions which were attended by about 120 scientists and practitioners sparked off vivid discussions and generated numerous judicious insights.

Core elements of governance

All three sessions did not deal with environmental governance as such but rather focused on specific procedural elements of governance, i.e. participation, multi-level co-ordination, and the role of science and expertise.

The first session addressed a number of challenging questions as regards two main underlying rationales for increased participation: the enhancement of effective policies and implementation, and the need for more legitimacy and acceptance of the process and policies. The four speakers stressed the importance of legitimacy and effectiveness as overarching rationales in participatory governance. Emphasis was put on the role of the government as process designer, the threat to representative democracy and the link



between legitimacy and effectiveness in governance processes.

The second session dealt with the role of science and expertise in environmental and natural resources policy. The presenters of the papers put special emphasis on new conceptual models of the science-policy interface that go beyond the simple notion of 'speaking truth to power' and they reported upon the latent tensions between technical-rationalist approaches (cf. the buzzword of 'evidence-based policy-making') and calls for the democratisation of expertise in real-world science-policy advice processes.

Finally the third paper section in particular focused on challenges and modes of policy coordination from a multi-level governance perspective. Presentations analysed the institutional design for national implementation of EU policies such as rural development programmes, the Habitat Directive as well national implications of EU environmental conditionality as regards the transition towards sustainable forestry in South-Eastern European countries. The findings showed that, on the one hand, reforms induced by the EU policies have partly increased stakeholder participation and mobilized societal capacities at regional and local levels. On the other hand, when contrasted against the often overly optimistic governance rhetoric, the results still indicated major problems with regard to cross-sectoral coordination.