

The Claim for Reflexive Interface-Communication and its Institutional Destiny

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Theoretical Reflexions and First Findings of the Research Project:

*„Knowledge for Decision-Making: Steps Towards a More Reflexive
and Dialogical Interface-Communication between Science and Politics“*



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Relationship between science and politics becomes more and more precarious

- ⇒ Scientific knowledge and its „mode of operation“ have spread out trough society
- ⇒ At the same time its limitations, unwanted side-effects, context-embeddedness and its status as contested knowledge become visible
- ⇒ The search for a sustainable developement needs new forms of knowledge-production an -communication.

- ⇒ ***Call for new forms of reflexive and dialogical interface communication between science and politics***

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Conceptual Clarification:
**Dimensions of a reflexive and dialogical
knowledge-production and -communication**

A. Cognitive Dimensions:

1. Selectivity and Perceptiveness of Knowledge
2. Plurality of Interests and Values
3. Plurality of Knowledge
4. Limitations of Knowledge
5. Self-Conception of Expertise

B: Process-Related Dimensions:

1. Reflexive Institutions
2. Dialogue processes
3. Inter- and Transdisciplinarity

Questions: **How do and how can institutions react to this new claims?**

Sociological Understanding of Institutions:

set of social rules which structures, normatively regulates and legitimizes social behaviour in a certain societal area.

- ⇒ Institutions have to stay stable over short-term crises and political “daily business”
- ⇒ if they don't manage to adept, they can loose their structuring function and „dry out“

The German Agricultural Sector: Institutions between Evolution and Governance

- ⇒ high degree of closeness and the very dominant paradigm of output-orientation
- ⇒ 2000 / 2001 strong scandalisation of existing system used by the German red-green government as a “window of opportunity” to proclaim the “Agrarwende” (turn around in agriculture policy)
- ⇒ Slow evolutionary change and loose of unambiguousness since the late 80s through:
 - quest for new sources of legitimation ,
 - alternative visions
 - public claims for more than healthy food

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Practical Restraints:

- (e.g.) ⇒ institutions of integration of different forms of knowledge makes it necessary for its agents to perform their own stake
- ⇒ the dynamic of such a process can sharpen the differences instead of emphasising the similarities

Limitation:

- (e.g.) ⇒ reflexivity means to bridge borders to other areas of knowledge and relevance
- ⇒ these borders might be crucial for the role of institutions and their distinctiveness to other institutions

Systematic Contradictions:

- (e.g.) ⇒ reflexivity as such is time-consuming and per se non-ending process
- ⇒ Especially political institutions need fast and unambiguous expertise to translate it into decisions

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Conclusions:

- ⇒ **Reflexive Governance presumes a reflexive design of knowledge-production and –communication**
- ⇒ **Reflexivity has to be implemented in a context-sensitive way and stay aware also of its own wanted and unwanted (side-) effects.**
- ⇒ **Reflexive institutions are the start and not the outcome of the search for more reflexive and sustainable solutions. The establishment of places of learning is essential for their success**

Thank you very much for your attention !!