

Reflexive Modernization in action

The institutional pathway of PTA offices

Dr. Pierre Delvenne, Aspirant FNRS
Université de Liège (SPIRAL)
RC 23 ISA 2010

Research questions

- Can we test reflexive modernization empirically?
- How can reflexivity be (qualitatively) measured at the institutional (TA) level?
- What does it mean, for reflexive modernization and for governance (of S&T)?

Governance of S&T

- Governance (of NEST) is «out of breath» (Kooiman 1993)
- Modern institutions take initiatives, adapt to changing circumstances
- Calls for democratic accountability of S&T choices, taken up e.g. through institutionalised public mechanisms

Parliamentary Technology Assessment (PTA)

- Imported concept from US to Europe
- Link with Parliament
- Multiple missions of anticipation and evaluation of S&T
- Effects on political agenda and connexion with decision-making processes

The broader picture

Reflexive modernization (macro level)



Regime (meso level)

PTA



Institutional practices (micro level)

Research hypotheses

- Emergence and evolution of TA reflect the move of Western societies into reflexive modernization process
- PTAi are indicators of reflexive modernization in action (Delvenne 2010, Delvenne and Rip, forthcoming)

Conceptual framework

Openness to plurality

Plurality of values,
expertise/participation (e.g. Stirling 2008)

Blurring of boundaries

Boundaries become choices,
Construction of new boundaries (e.g. Beck et al. 2003)



The reflexivity pathway

*Caminante no hay camino
Se hace camino al andar.*

Antonio Machado

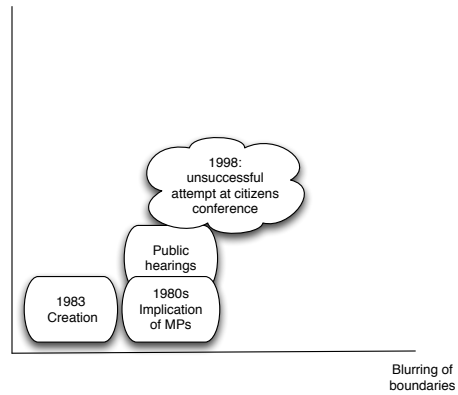
Case studies

France, Denmark, The Netherlands

«OPECST»

- Strong implication of MPs
- DM support to elite
- Reports, (public hearings)
- Interface between science and politics

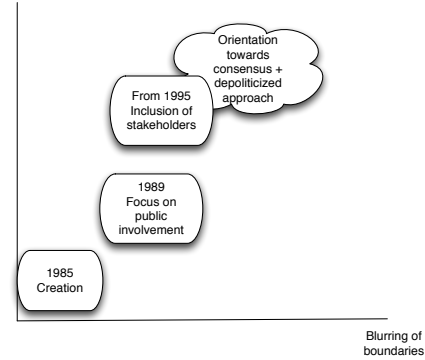
Openness to plurality



«DBT»

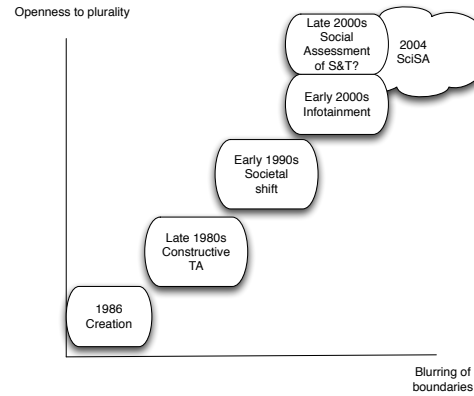
- DM support and public participation
- Implication of various stakeholders
- Scientific reports, deliberative forums (consensus)
- Interface btw science, politics and society

Openness to plurality



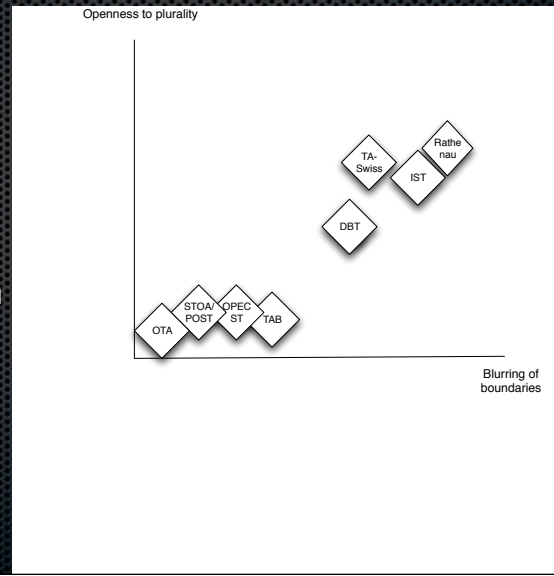
«Rathenau Institute»

- Social assessment of S&T, implication of citizens, (DM support)
- Reports, deliberative forums, festivals
- Interface btw science and society



Different positions of PTAi on the reflexivity pathway

- Importance of political culture and identity (e.g. Horst and Irwin 2009)
- Dynamics of institutionalisation and path dependence
- Preexisting institutional landscape



Conclusions

- Reflexive modernization can be operationalized for empirical research
- It shows a complex co-constructed process (regime/TA) that deploys different effects
- Overcoming Western bias

Contact

- pierre.delvenne@ulg.ac.be