Reflexive Modernization in action

The institutional pathway of PTA offices

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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)

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

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

«DBT»

Openness to plurality
- Orientation towards consensus + depoliticized approach
- From 1995: Inclusion of stakeholders
- 1988: Focus on public involvement
- 1985: Creation of boundaries

1985
1989
1995
Creation
Inclusion of stakeholders
Focus on public involvement
Orientation towards consensus + depoliticized approach
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
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