

Derk Loorbach:

Governance and Transitions. An integrative policy-framework based on complex systems thinking.

Environmental and social issues such as climate change, energy-supply problems, agricultural reforms and mobility problems are so complex and uncertain that traditional, rationalist problem-solving approaches are no longer sufficient. Traditional bureaucracies, highly specialized and focused on the short-term, do not seem to be able to come up with the required solutions and strategies. Governing our modern society in the direction of sustainable development will therefore require new forms of governance that explicitly deal with the diversity and divergence in societal and policy-processes.

Bureaucracies acknowledge the problems related to legitimacy, efficiency and accountability of contemporary government, and are therefore trying to make the shift from government to governance, whereby all societal actors are interacting in complex networks (Castells 1996, Teisman, 1998). In practice however, most governance-approaches fail because of a lack of methodology; the often-random selection of participants and the lack of coherence in and between different policy-processes. Because an integrative framework based on understanding of processes of societal change is absent, the transformation of government will not lead to better policymaking but rather to even more diffuse policy-processes.

The proposed paper further develops the model of transition management (Rotmans et al, 2001, NMP4, 2001, Loorbach, 2002), whose main elements are *multi-actor governance, envisioning, agenda building and experimentation*. The paper presents an integrative governance-framework, building on the concept of transition, recent literature on governance-studies (Scharpf, 1999 Hooghe and Marks, 2001) and complex systems thinking (Midgley, 2000, Holland, 1995). The governance-framework discriminates between strategic, tactical and operational levels of governance and allows for a focused selection of participants, timing of activities and choice of instruments during policy processes for sustainability. Transition management can thus be used to structure societal learning processes and serve to integrate policy and societal domains. The framework will be illustrated using recent experiences in the Netherlands and Flanders.

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