

# Report from the 2003 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change: “Governance for Industrial Transformation”

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## About the conference

The Environmental Policy and Global Change section of the German Political Science Association (DVPW) and its partners arranged the [2003 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change](#) in Berlin 5-6 December 2003. The conference was organised by the [Environmental Policy Research Centre of the Freie Universität Berlin](#), with Dr. Klaus Jacob as the main coordinator. Other projects and institutions that assisted in organising the conference were the German Association for Ecological Economic Research and the Global Governance Project ([glogov.org](http://glogov.org)) of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

“*Governance for Industrial Transformation*” was the theme of this third “Berlin Conference”. The previous two conferences have had themes covering other aspects of the human dimensions of global environmental change, comprising:

- [“Global Environmental Change and the Nation State”](#) (Berlin Conference 2001)
- [“Knowledge for the Sustainability Transition: The Challenge for Social Science”](#) (Berlin Conference 2002)

## Some general remarks about the conference

The conference programme over the two days consisted of several plenary sessions and 19 parallel sessions where papers were presented. All in all there were [14 plenary presentations](#) and more than [50 papers](#) were presented in the parallel sessions that were organised around five themes: multi-actor and multi-level governance; transition strategies; sustainable business; technologies for a sustainability transformation; and new generation of instruments.

The conference was characterised by a very good atmosphere. Political scientists, economists, lawyers and natural scientists were debating without the all too common division to “us” and “them”. Present in the conference was a general recognition that many disciplines are important in addressing these complex issues. Having said that, it should also be mentioned that there were intense debates on many topics (see the section on issues debated), but the conflicting views were on the issues at hand and

not on the disciplinary approaches as such. Another demonstration of the good atmosphere was that the discussions continued as intense during the breaks and evenings as they did during the sessions.

Although the title of the conference was “Governance for Industrial Transformation”, the focus of most presentations was clearly on industrial transformation and rather little was said about governance.

Many of the issues discussed at the conference were similar to the topics frequently talked about within the [Research Programme for Environmental Policy](#) at SYKE as well as at the meetings organised by the [Research Programme for Advanced Technology Policy \(ProACT\)](#). Such words as networks, liability, regulations, proactive policies, knowledge production and policy integration are just a few examples of the words heard a lot both at the conference and in our daily communications with our colleagues.

### **Our presentations**



Per Mickwitz making the presentation  
(photo by Cornelia Wolter)

On Friday the 5th of December Per Mickwitz presented the paper "[Eco-efficiency in Finnish EMAS Reports: All Talk No Action or Just Action without Talk](#)" by Sanna Erkko, Per Mickwitz and Matti Melanen.

There were 18 listeners to the presentation. While there were several questions after the presentation the most interesting discussion was about the degree to which the difference in indicators at the site level compared to indicators for the whole company is due to different needs and to which degree it is caused by the willingness of the firms to disclose different information for sites compared to the aggregate (i.e. not to present financial information for separate units).

On Saturday 6th December Paula Kivimaa presented the paper written jointly with Per Mickwitz "[Driving forces for environmentally sounder innovations: the case of Finnish pulp and paper industry](#)". This was part of a panel session titled "Industries" under the theme of sustainable business. There were 17 people in the audience and questions were expressed e.g. regarding the changes in Finnish environmental policy over time and the effects of economic policy instruments on innovation. The other two presentations in the session, after one cancellation, covered the issues of 'learning processes towards sustainable consumption and production' (Bernd Siebenhüner) and 'governance of transformation in utility systems' (Jan-Peter Voss). These presentations differed greatly from our empirical examination of the pulp and paper industry by being on a fairly conceptual and theoretical level.

### **Interesting issues that were debated**

Below a small section of the interesting issues that were discussed during and after several presentations at the conference, will be presented.

### **The role of consumers versus producers for innovations**

An issue that was lively debated based on several presentations was whether the consumers (or users) have or could have any role for the emergence of innovations that would take us towards sustainability. Joseph Huber provocatively stated that one should not be concerned with user behaviour or consumer demand because the processes that need to be changed are too far from these groups, implicating that the groups could not affect them even if they wanted to. Many objected this view (e.g. Ken Green, Bernd Siebenhüner and Philip Vergragt). They argued, among other things, that the role of policies affecting users/consumers could be crucial. For example forbidding the driving of cars operating on gas in city centres would affect what types of cars are produced. As a comparison, we had a related discussion in the ProACT meeting on 2nd December.

### **Visions or problems**

With Frans Berkhout's plenary presentation as a starting point, several persons addressed the question of whether change was driven by visions or problems. While Berkhout got support for his view that visions urge change, others such as Nicholas Ashford and Martin Jänicke argued that problems are much more important drivers for political change than visions. Jänicke made a case that the economy is driven by visions, while the political and media systems are steered by problems.



The audience listening to a comment by Nicholas Ashford (photo by Cornelia Wolter)

### **Transition management**

The concept "*transition management*", that has especially been used in the Netherlands, was presented in several talks (e.g. René Kemp and Jan Rotmans). The concept has also been used by a ProACT project (Sirku Kivisaari et al.). Rotmans defined transition management as adaptive and anticipative, multistage and multilevel governance, in practice including four main tasks: organising and developing innovation networks, developing long-term sustainability visions, executing transition experiments, and monitoring and evaluating transition process. Both during the sessions and the breaks, transition management clearly divided the audience. While some saw it as a useful concept others were very sceptical. ("Very Dutch" was an often used phrase.) Of the doubters, some argued that the concept did not actually have much substance compared to other similar concepts used already

earlier, i.e. they considered it merely a buzzword. Others doubted that system changes or transitions could be managed at all.

### **Policy integration**

Many people stressed the role of explicit or implicit policy integration. Nicholas Ashford emphasised the importance of integrating employment concerns when considering environmental policies. In his views employment is going to be the politically most important issue during the next decade, and only by being linked to it can environmental issues stay in the top of the political agenda. Discussion on this issue will continue, since the 2004 Berlin Conference will have policy integration as its key theme. The link to our research is incredibly close in this case – after the ProAct meeting 2nd December we decided that our next focus should be to deepen our analysis on the interaction between technological and environmental policies.

### **Further action**

At the conference we met a lot of people that are doing research highly relevant from our perspective. Most importantly we felt that in addition to our already strong links to colleagues from the U.S., the U.K. and the Nordic countries, we should work more closely with teams from other European countries as well. It seems that especially in Germany there are many projects that are closely related to the activities at the [Research Programme for Environmental Policy](#) at SYKE. From our point of view it seems more important to build connections to groups at universities (e.g. [Environmental Policy Research Centre of the Freie Universität Berlin](#)) and research centres where there are genuine shared interests in the same questions than work through the institutionalised [PEER network](#).

### **Distribution**

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