

Joachim Blatter

Political Science Perspectives: Sovereignty, Games, Networks and Symbols

Overview

1. Sovereignty
2. Games
3. Epistemic Communities
4. Advocacy-Coalitions
5. Symbols
6. Political Sustainability

Presentation at the IÖW - Autumn Academy
„Sustainability in River Basins – A Question of Governance“
Berlin, 6-8. December 2004

Sovereignty

- Water as a security issue in existential power battles between sovereign states in an anarchic international sphere
 - Watercourses are seen as lines of defence or as economic lifelines
 - States as the only actors
 - Competitive Interaction Orientation; Logic of “relative gains”
 - Cooperation and joint management almost impossible
 - “Water wars”?
- => Sustainable water management fully dependent on political change

Games

- Water as a property of territorial states, democratic governments try to maximize water usage for their constituency
 - States (dep. of foreign affairs) as the dominant actors, but acting as agents of domestic socio-economic interests
 - Individualistic Interaction Orientation; Logic of “absolute gains”
 - Cooperation and joint management depending on the “interest constellation”: symmetric versus asymmetric constellations
 - Financial compensations? Side-payments? Package deals?
- ⇒ Cross-border water management dependent on the extend of general socio-economic integration

Epistemic Communities

- Water (problems) as cognitive construction of experts
 - Specialized bureaucrats and scientists as the dominant actors
 - Arguing as Modus of Interaction
 - Problem of implementation; success depends on the “standing” of the epistemic community within the political system
 - Information-Systems, Monitoring
- ⇒ Cross-border water management depends on the functional authority and coherence of the epistemic community

Advocacy Coalitions

- Water (problems) as normative-cognitive perceptions of groups
 - Interest groups, social movements, specialized bureaucrats and the media as important actors
 - Usually two competing coalitions: user-interests versus protection interests
 - Communicative framing as the dominant modus of interaction
 - What framing of the issue receives the most recognition in the public discourse
 - Agenda-setting, campaigning
- ⇒ Cross-border water management depends on the communicative power of the advocacy coalitions

Constitutive Symbol for Political Regimes

- Water as a symbolic marker
- Aesthetic and emotional quality of water
- Watercourses as “spaces of flows” in a world of “spaces of place”
- Water management as the vanguard in regional cooperation and integration

1815: Central Com. for Navigation on the Rhine River

1956: D-F: Joint Usage of the Rhine River

1990s: Joint Water Management as a central element for legitimating Euro-region building

2000: International River basin management a central element of the EU Water Framework Directive creating trans-national spaces of governance

=> Cross-border water management depends on the waves (ups and downs) of political integration

Conclusions

- Cross-border water management is strongly connected with the general political environment
- Water management has to adapt to this political environment but can also shape this political environment
- Adaptation: Timing
 - > surfing on the waves of integration
- Steering: Framing
 - > using the symbolic power of water to shape the public discourse

=> “Think holistically –
act opportunistically”