



The Party Politics of Participatory Governance: EU Environmental Policy and the Domestic Management of Water and Marine Sustainability

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Abstract

The regulation of water and marine resources is undergoing profound structural transformations under the conceptual influence of policy integration and community-based approaches. Including environmental considerations at the early stages of policy-making, as well as acknowledging usage inter-dependencies and their impact on ecosystems, has led to the multiplication of localised participatory policies and multi-stakeholder platforms. In that context, the objective of the PhD is twofold. It aims to analyse how local politics, through political parties, influences those new participatory forms of management, especially in the implementation of EU environmental directives. On the other hand, it explores how the diffusion of participatory norms of governance affects the strategies of political parties.

The results show that electoral position and territorial levels strongly condition the local politics of participatory governance. It also provides evidence that collaborative management reduces formal accountability and parties' political discretion. In that sense, it confirms the cartelisation hypothesis: parties' governing functions are strengthened, while participatory provisions have relocated the representation of interests outside the party system.

The thesis highlights the positive effects of participation and holistic environmental approaches in terms of social regulation and transparency, especially in long-established national administrations. Yet, it questions its environmental strength, namely its capacity to solve deeply entrenched distributive dilemmas and the exclusiveness of social groups' stakes. Even if multi-stakeholder participation must be appreciated as an empowering and more sustainable process, it is essential that practitioners and academics alike deal with its limitations and political ambiguities.



Jury: Claudio Radaelli (University of Exeter), Peter Mair (EUI, Supervisor), Alexander Trechsel (Co-Supervisor), Andrea Lenschow (University of Osnabrück).

Sylvain Gambert's research focuses on the implementation of EU's environmental directives. In the last 7 years, he has researched and published on the Habitats, Water Framework and Marine Strategy Framework directives. Especially, he has worked on collaborative mechanisms that support integrated environmental management, and on their links with local politics and contestation.

In 2006, Sylvain won a Lavoisier grant from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embarked on his doctoral studies at the European University Institute. During his PhD, he was a visiting researcher at the Centre for European Governance of the University of Exeter, and at the Environmental Policy Research Centre of the Freie Universität Berlin. He also holds a BA degree in Political Science from Science Po Rennes (2005), an MA degree in European Politics from the University of Exeter (2006) and an MRes degree in Political Science from the European University Institute (2007).

From July 2010, Sylvain will be employed as a Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, in the Maritime Policy Development and Coordination unit. His work will focus on the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy.