

Compte rendu de l'ouvrage "Innovative Governance in
the European Union. The Politics of Multilevel
Policymaking"

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Tömmel, Ingeborg and Amy Verdun. *Innovative Governance in the European Union. The Politics of Multilevel Policymaking.* Boulder, Co and London: Lynne Rienner, 2009.

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE NOW European studies has experienced an intense flourishing of academic and expert publications on the development of what is usually labelled “the new modes of European governance.” Some authors have referred to a “governance turn,” and one can even consider that the analysis of the nature, the meaning and the potential impact of this “new” governance has given birth to a scientific industry – with its “stars,” its language, its reviews and its research programmes. These publications have even been categorised according to their point of view on the phenomenon of “new modes of governance,” ie. whether they adopt a theoretical, a normative, an empirical or a critical approach to this subject .

The good news regarding this book edited by Ingeborg Tömmel and Amy Verdun is that it is not just another collection of case studies on the emergence and development of forms of governance in the EU which depart from the “traditional” Community method. Instead, *Innovative Governance in the European Union. The Politics of Multilevel Policymaking* asks “what the specific characteristics of European modes of governance across policy areas are and how EU governance and policymaking differ from those at the national level” (p. vii). Indeed, it provides here some extremely precious clarification. This coherent volume – including its three precise and sharp introductory and concluding chapters, but also a very rich collection of high-quality sector chapters -which each meet the challenge of tracing the evolution of the modes of governance without forgetting substance – is both dense and analytical enough to help students as well as specialists find their way into a complex area of publications and, in so doing, prevent them from being drowned by multiple and contradictory categories and binary oppositions (such as constraint vs voluntarism, top-down vs bottom-up, uniformity vs diversity, rigidity vs flexibility, closed processes vs openness, hierarchy vs transversality, majoritarian ruling vs deliberation etc.).

The editors first provide a useful recapitulative typology of the modes of governance in the EU through which they distinguish the process dimension of governance and policymaking, from the structural dimension of governance, i.e. “the institutions and actors involved in the process that form its basic constituents” (p. 13). According to this analysis, the basic modes of governance exercised in the EU are: hierarchy (implementation of legislation); negotiation (linked to consensus-building); competition (linked to pressure) and cooperation (linked to coordination and voluntarism). In essence, the au-

thors claim, these modes of governance do not significantly differ from those practised at the national level. However, they do still differ, first, in their impact, since the multilevel system of the EU offers more resources and opportunities to the actors (including an exit option), and second, in their relation to the institutional structure of the system since the nature of the EU implies “on the one hand, a comparatively higher demand for negotiation, cooperation, and competition and, on the other, a higher degree of constraints for taking recourse to hierarchy as a mode of governance” (p. 22-23).

The analysis made on the basis of this approach shows that, contrary to what is commonly agreed, the EU is not only driving towards ever softer modes of governance (such as in environment policy), but that some case studies (eg. monetary policy) provide examples of movement in the opposite direction, ie with hierarchy acting as a catalyst for the emergence of other modes of governance (such as sport policy or competition policy); with voluntary cooperation used to reinforce the impact of hierarchy and the transposition of legislation (such as social policy). The main change is thus to be found in convergence around hybrid forms of governance (harder and softer, traditional and more recent) and an increasing variety of stakeholders. However, according to this book the innovative character of EU governance –seen as the combination of complementary modes of governance – is not to be mistaken with temporal “newness”. Indeed, the thesis of innovation is not necessarily supported by a historical perspective in many policy areas.

If one was to regret something concerning this book, it would be that when dealing with “the politics of multilevel policymaking” it remains focused on the policymaking and institutional dimensions of EU governance. The question of the reasons for the recourse to innovative and combined modes of governance is not fully addressed. In particular, the EU’s dual legitimacy crisis -distrust from European citizens; and the unwillingness of the Member States to delegate power– and their feedback effects on the equilibriums of the EU political system remains outside the “picture” examined in this publication. However, the exploration it presents of the relationships between change in the steering modes of EU public action and broader shifts in the political system of the EU do begin to shed light upon a two-sided mode of transformation: incremental change in process governance but also transformative change when it comes to “the state of the Union” – especially the weakening of supranational against intergovernmental modes of integration.

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