

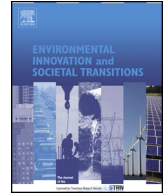


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/eist



Socio-technical transitions and policy change – Advocacy coalitions in Swiss energy policy

Jochen Markard^{a,*}, Marco Suter^a, Karin Ingold^{b,c,d}

^a Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, Department of Management, Technology and Economics, Group for Sustainability and Technology, Weinbergstrasse 56/58, 8092 Zurich, Switzerland

^b Institute of Political Science, University of Bern, Fabrikstrasse 8, Bern 3012, Switzerland

^c Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, EAWAG, Überlandstrasse 133, Dübendorf 8600, Switzerland

^d Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research, University of Bern, Zähringerstrasse 25, Bern 3012, Switzerland

ARTICLE INFO

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Advocacy coalition framework
Energy transition
Policy change
Politics
Socio-technical change

ABSTRACT

Policies and politics are an integral part of socio-technical transitions but have not received much attention in the transitions literature so far. Drawing on the advocacy coalition framework, our paper addresses this gap with a study on actors and coalitions in Swiss energy policy. Our results show that advocacy coalitions in Switzerland have largely remained stable despite the Fukushima shock. However, heterogeneity of beliefs has increased and in 2013, even a majority of actors expressed their support for the energy transition – an indication that major policy change might be ahead. It seems that in socio-technical transitions, changes in the policy issue and in the actor base also work toward policy change, next to changes in core beliefs. We make suggestions how the advocacy coalition framework can inform analysis and theory building in transition studies. We also present first ideas about the interplay of socio-technical systems and policy systems.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +41 44 632 9885; fax: +41 44 632 1045.
E-mail address: jmarkard@ethz.ch (J. Markard).

1. Introduction

Politics and policy change are part and parcel of larger socio-technical transitions, in which established sectors such as energy supply, transport or agriculture undergo fundamental changes (Grin, 2010; Hess, 2014; Kern and Smith, 2008). The energy transition in Germany, for example, is closely linked to a variety of policies, including deployment subsidies for renewable energies or regulations targeting nuclear phase-out (Jacobsson and Lauber, 2006; Strunz, 2014). Understanding the conditions for policy change is therefore a crucial ingredient for a comprehensive theoretical perspective on socio-technical transitions (Meadowcroft, 2011; Smith and Stirling, 2007).

This holds even more for sustainability transitions (Markard et al., 2012), which are fundamental and long-term transformations of large socio-technical systems guided by sustainability goals and policies. Sustainability transitions are not just purposeful but also inherently value laden and political. This means that we can expect actors having different interpretations of sustainability problems and normative struggles unfolding over the pace and directions such transitions should take (Geels and Verhees, 2011; Lawhon and Murphy, 2012; Smith and Stirling, 2010).

Despite the crucial role of politics and policies, transition studies are just beginning to pay more attention to “the political circumstances that make the adoption of such policies likely” (Meadowcroft, 2011, p. 73). With this paper, we respond to recent calls to strengthen research on the ‘politics of transitions’ (Lawhon and Murphy, 2012; Shove and Walker, 2007; Smith et al., 2010). We will explore changes in advocacy coalitions as a precondition for major policy change. As we foreground actors (political parties, associations, environmental NGOs, firms) and coalitions and their role in the policy process, we also contribute to the emerging line of research on actors and agency in transitions (Farla et al., 2012).

We draw on two strands of literature. From policy analysis, we adopt the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), which maintains that actors with similar beliefs form alliances that affect the output of the policy process (Sabatier, 2007). Secondly, we position this study in the literature on sustainability transition studies (Markard et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2010), which is interested in the conditions for and dynamics of far-reaching changes in socio-technical systems (Grin et al., 2010).

Transitions are characterized by fundamental uncertainties, which means that even the formulation of a policy problem is ambiguous and contested, let alone policy goals, strategies and expected outcomes. Policy process theories, which highlight the importance of cognition and framing, therefore seem to be particularly fruitful for transition studies (Kern, 2009). Among the cognitive approaches, we have selected the ACF because of the underlying systems concept, its focus on actors and beliefs, and the emphasis on external shocks as key mechanism for major change, which altogether seem to provide a good match with socio-technical systems approaches in transition studies (e.g. Coenen and Diaz Lopez, 2010).

Our empirical study centers around the transition of the energy sector toward higher shares of renewable energies, increased energy efficiency and lower demand. This ‘energy transition’ has caught political attention in many countries, including Switzerland. In the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear accident, the Swiss government has proposed to phase-out nuclear energy (which currently accounts for up to 40% of the country’s electricity generation) and to launch a fundamental reform of the energy sector. Such a far-reaching transformation requires political support from a broad range of actors over a long period of time. As of 2015 the actual process of policy making is still ongoing. So the question arises, to what extent key actors in Swiss energy policy will support such a fundamental policy change.

In the following, we study which coalitions of actors characterize the Swiss energy policy sub-system, whether and how they have changed over time and whether there are indications for policy change. Our paper is based on the analysis of consultation documents of three major energy policy processes at different points in time (2001, 2007 and 2013). We identify relevant political actors and systematically analyze their policy beliefs.

The paper is structured as follows. Next we introduce socio-technical transitions and the ACF and develop first conceptual ideas on the interplay of policy systems and socio-technical systems. Section 3 then introduces the empirical setting and briefly reviews prior work. Section 4 presents the methods and Section 5 the results. In Section 6 we discuss our findings and methods. Section 7 concludes.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6559284>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6559284>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)