



Transformative Experiments as Strategic Tools in Climate Governance - Case Studies from Finland

Annikka Berg, Mikael Hildén & Jukka Similä, Environmental Policy Centre and Climate Change Programme, Finnish Environment Institute, Finland.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of experiments in efforts to mitigate climate change. Transformative experiments can be defined as 1) making something new and concrete that is 2) restricted in terms of time, space, scope and/or actors but that 3) aims at having wider societal relevance through various up-scaling mechanisms. Experimenting, taking place at different levels and contexts of society, can be seen as an alternative to policy development based on traditional planning (cf. Lindblom 1959; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 1998). Both planning and experimenting can be applied at an early stage of the policy process (Sutton 1999) with restricted resources and political support. And both are ways to approach a relatively unknown field with the aim to increase understanding, boost discussion and find solutions for challenges at hand. However, they differ fundamentally from one another in that planning aims at systematic progress towards a goal, whereas experimenting is about probing in an uncharted terrain.

This study presents the first results of a research project that draws lessons from transformative experiments conducted by public and/or private actors in the context of climate governance in Finland. We discuss how experiments can open new ways to deal with some “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber 1973) of climate policy development. We specifically explore the role of experiments in policy development processes. Do they change the framing of issues at hand and in this way support the adoption of climate-friendly policies and practices? Are they able to promote public deliberation and provide specific suggestions on how policies and policy instruments need to be changed in order to transform locked-in regimes? By addressing these questions the paper contributes to in-depth understanding about the potential of transformative experiments in addressing complex challenges such as climate change.

REFERENCES

- Lindblom, Charles E. 1959. The Science of “Muddling Through”. *Administration review* 19(2):79 - 88.
- Mintzberg, Henry, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel. 1998. *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Rittel, Horst W J., and Melvin M Webber. 1973. Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences* 4(2):155-69.
- Sutton, Rebecca. 1999. *The Policy Process: An Overview*. London: Overseas Development Institute.