Developing leadership for sustainable environments: the international, interdisciplinary Master of Science ‘Environmental Governance’ (MEG) at the University of Freiburg, Germany

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Outline

- Why environmental governance?
- Challenges of environmental governance
- MEG’s mission and focus
- Strategic design of the MSc program
- Institutionalization
Career of a term: „governance“

„Environmental governance“ – Hype or innovative concept?

Blurring functional, structural and / or territorial boundaries as main reasons for the career of the term ‘governance’ in environmental policy?

Frequency of the term “governance” in the title of journal articles included in the ISI Web of Knowledge databases

Source: own calculation (2009)
Challenges of Environmental Governance

- **Uncertain facts:**
  complexity; pervasiveness; multiple causations; mutual interdependencies

- **Provisional facts:**
  dynamic change; non-linear threshold effects; catastrophic, irreversible and discontinuous features

- **‘Wicked’ environmental problems**
  - No accepted definition of the problem
  - One problem is interrelated with others
  - Precarious solutions: no right or wrong, only more or less adequate

Source: Memmler et al. (2008)
Sound of clashing certainties

Nature Perverse / Tolerant

Nature Benign

Nature Ephemeral

Nature Capricious

(Following Thompson und Schwarz 1990)
Implications

- Growing awareness of
  - social constructivist perspectives in general
  - ‘skills of governance’ are seen as necessary for the management of problems due to the limitations of natural sciences to provide ‘proof’

- Alternative perspective on environmental knowledge:
  - environmental knowledge is created anew in argumentation processes;
  - sharp distinction between scientific and ordinary knowledge is disappearing
  - communicative action itself informatizes

Source: Memmler et al. (2008)
Requirements for education programme

- Sound knowledge about global environmental and societal changes
- Ability to reflect on societal decision-making processes from different theoretical perspectives
  - Realization of pluralism of science
  - Comparative reflections on various disciplinary approaches
  - Teaching ‘not know-how, but know-why’ (i.e. students themselves draw conclusions)
- Skills to design decision-making processes effectively (reconciliation the manifold chorus of stakeholders’ interpretations of sustainability)

Source: Memmler et al. (2008)
Program Mission

- To train at academic level leaders able to reconcile different social perspectives with regard to the sustainable use of environmental resources as a basis for sustainable development:
  - leaders with grand, innovative ideas about environmental governance arrangements beyond the traditional functional, structural and territorial boundaries (‘sustainability designers’),
  - leaders who embrace and understand these ideas, and are capable of finding ways to implement them in organisations, enterprises and administrations in a context-sensitive manner (‘sustainability facilitators’)
- for any development, at any scale from local to global, and in any context worldwide.
Program Focus

Reconciliation of the manifold stakeholder interpretations of sustainable use of environmental resources.
Strategic design of program

- **Interdisciplinarity**: positioned in the strategic gap between political and natural science-oriented programs.
- **Ability of reflection**: provocative confrontation with different scientific “frames” to arouse ability for reasoned argumentation – “not know-how, but know-why”.
- **Deliberative role**: acquiring argumentative skills in public discourse and learning “soft” skills like moderation, mediation, or facilitation.
- **Context sensitivity**: rejection of any universal templates or blueprints.

→ **Tripartite structure**: realizing – understanding – managing.
Didactic concept

- 3 week bloc modules
- Team teaching with guest lectures and excursions
- Integrated case study modules at the end of each semester
- ‘Student Organized Event’: students conceptualize and realize international event in the first three semesters of the program
Institutionalization

- **Team of lecturers:**
  - from across many different departments at the University of Freiburg
  - as well as from external research institutes
  - and national and international partner universities

- **Program Committee:**
  - Responsibility/tasks: admission, quality assurance, control of content
  - Members: Program Director, faculty, students (elected)

- **Advisory Board:**
  - Responsibility/tasks: feedback, networking
  - Members:
    - Dr. H.J. Elshorst
      - Transparancy Internation
    - Dr. M. Bieberstein Koch-Weser
      - GExSI / Earth 3000
    - Dr. M. Betz
      - BASF Head of Dept. for Environment and Monitoring
    - Ms. B. Unmüssig
      - Heinrich-Böll-Foundation
    - Dr. H.P. Schipulle
      - Congo Basin Forest Partnership
      - Ministry for Cooperation and Development (retired)