

Diffusion and Policy Learning in Nanotechnology Policy.

Movement Actors and Public Engagement in
Germany and France.

Franz Seifert

Austrian Science Fund FWF

fseifert@gmx.at

- Observation: global prevalence of “public dialogue” activities in nanotech field
 - **Policy convergence** at national, supranational and international level
- Assumption: prevalence of public dialogue **learning effect** from previous controversy over agro-food biotechnology
 - “It could happen again”
- Exploration of established concepts
 - Diffusion
 - Policy learning
- How and what has been learned?
 - Interaction of oppositional groups and public dialogues in national arenas
 - Mass publics are national publics

- Global Nanotech Policy Field and Public dialogue
- Public dialogue
 - Critical opposition
- Diffusion
- Policy Learning
- Empirical Part
 - Is there an oppositional movement?
 - Diversity in national arenas
 - Germany, France
- Conclusions

Nanotechnology and public dialogue

Public Dialogues on nanotechnology, countrywise, till 2008

Country	Public dialogue events
U.S.	12
European Union (financial support)	17
Belgium	1
Denmark	2
Germany	3
France	7
UK	6
Netherlands	2
Austria	2
Spain	1
Norway	1
Switzerland	4
Australia/New Zealand	2
Brazil	2

Baya-Laffite, Nicolas/Pierre-Benoît Joly (2008). Nanotechnology and Society: Where do we stand in the ladder of citizen participation? CIPAST Newsletter Nanotechnology (March 08)

Public dialogues and social movements

- **Ambiguity & ambivalence** of a desideratum
 - Democratization vs “acceptance politics” (Barben)
 - “Uninvited publics” (Wynne)
- **Interaction**
 - Do they pd defuse conflict potentials?
 - ... channel them into constructive policies?
 - ... even trigger controversies?

Policy Learning

- Heterogeneous approaches
- Sabatier
 - “...relatively stable changes of ways of thinking and behavioral intentions that result from experiences”
- Types of learning
 - Instrumental learning vs. learning for change
 - Core vs. secondary aspects
 - Sabatier Advocacy Coalition approach
 - Coalitions and belief systems
 - Learning across and within policy elites

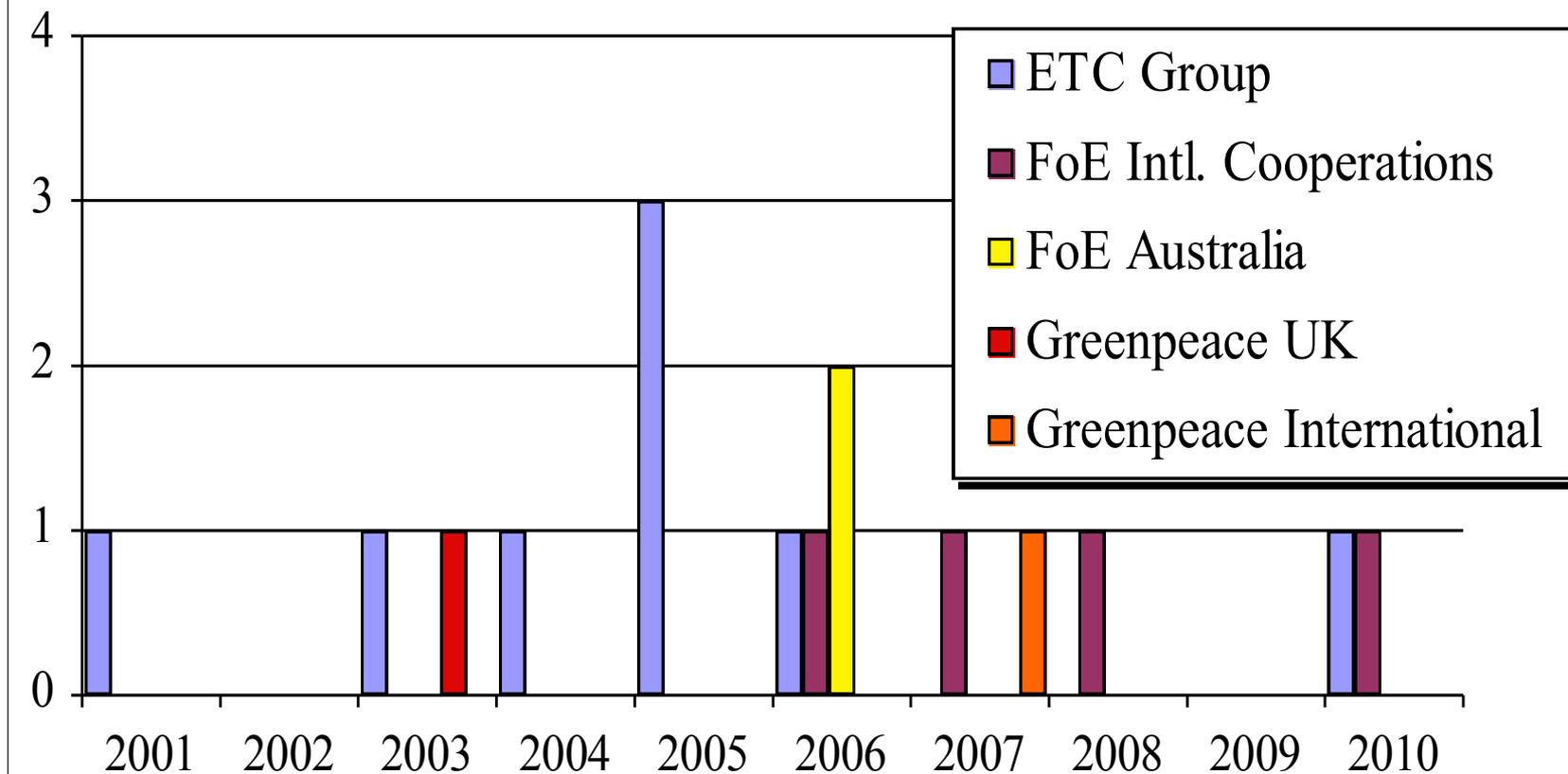
Diffusion

- Deliberate adoption of external policies by States through transnational communication and policy learning
- One - among other - explanations for policy convergence
 - E.g. external pressure; economic or political conditionality
- Nano funding: mechanisms (mainly discursive) at work
 - Common imperative to compete in the international high tech race/ profits for industry/ “quality jobs” (for us)
 - US leadership, nano’s appeal as funding category
 - Political steering: EU 6th framework program, nano focus
- Public dialogue
 - No intl. legal obligation, pressure, conditionality, problem
 - Supranational regimes as facilitators

Is there an anti-nanotech movement?

- International “nano-watch” movement
- ETC Group, FoE
- Focus on expertise (reports), international petitions, interaction with policy elites
- Spin off from the GM debate
- Little (if any) public resonance

Activity of International NGOs: Reports



National comparison

- Commonality: massive State support for nanotech
- Germany
 - Top position
 - Half of nano-companies in W-Europ, # 3 in patents (U.S., Jap.)
 - Massive State support: 2005 - 2010 1,93 Billion €
 - National orchestration
- France
 - Regional cluster Grenoble: *pôle d'innovation en micro- et nanotechnologies, Minatec* (193 Mill. €)
 - 2008: 560 Mill. €

Germany: concertation and inclusion

- Nano-Dialog/Nano-Kommission
 - Since 2006
 - Inclusive stake-holder model (concertation)
 - Coordinative and consultative approach
 - Continuity with former GM dialogue (Catenhusen)
 - Asymmetries in resources, diverging interests, yet cooperative atmosphere
- BUND as central movement actor
 - Federation of environmental groups since 1970s, FoE Ger
 - Mainstream, professional expert staff
 - Biggest member base in FoE federation (350.000)
 - Long-standing anti-GMO group
 - Central arena: Nano-Kommission (since 2006)

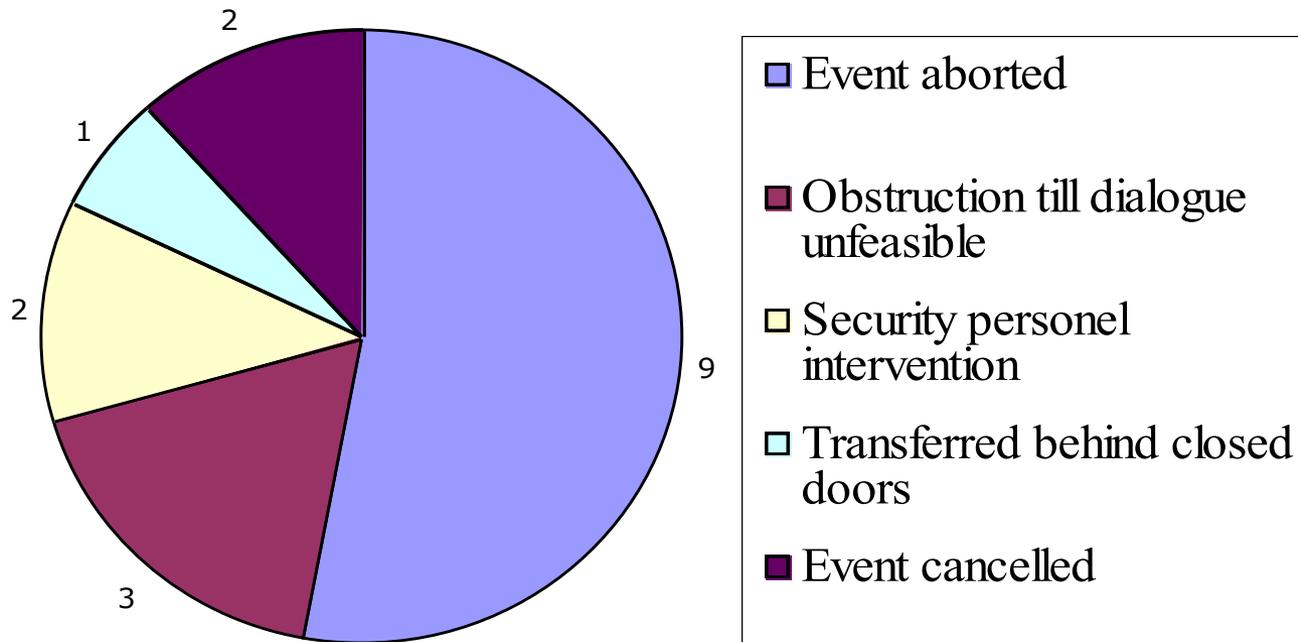
France: top down debate - radical obstruction

- Great number of public dialogue activities
- *Pièces et main d'oeuvre* (PMO)
 - Grenoble area
 - Radical criticism of technology
 - Totalitarian nature of technology (Ellul, Illich)
 - Wide action repertoire
 - Research, books, satire, information guerilla, direct action..
 - Distinct from “mainstream organisations”
 - Avoid personalization
 - Submerged network, variable participation
 - *Opposition Grenobloise aux Nérotechnologies*
 - Yet master mind
 - Continuity with anti-nuclear

- Since 2003: PMO begins polarizing polemic
 - *Nécrotechnologies, techno-gratin...*
 - Denounce mainstream organisations (*Amis de la terre, ATTAC*) engaging in “constructive dialogue”
- Since 2005: Criticise local public dialogues
 - “Talk shows” after the fact
- The *Débat Public* Fiasco
 - *Commission Nationale du Débat Public (CNDP)*
 - *Je m’informe, je m’exprime 2009-2010*
 - 17 large French cities, premiere
 - Participation far behind expected
 - Persistent obstruction, dialogue usurpation

The *Débat Publicque* Fiasco

- Strasbourg; Toulouse; Orleans; Bordeaux; Clermont-Ferrand; Lille; Besancon; Grenoble; Caen; Metz; Rennes; Lyon; Marseille; Orsay; Montpellier; Nantes; Paris



Tentative Conclusions/Outlook

- Transnational policy diffusion accounts for global build-up of nano policy field
- Hand in hand: policy learning - past experience and public dialogues
 - Merely rudimentary nano-watch movement/low public responsiveness
- National adoption
 - Variation
 - E.g. vanguards and laggards, strategies
 - Mixed accounts as to impact
 - Germany +
 - France -

- Public dialogue and movement/contentious politics
 - Explained by “context”, previous history (and coincidence)
 - Corporatist vs elitist system
 - Policy learning
 - Instrumentalist view: German success story, whereas French elitism and public dialogue at odds
 - Reflexive view... ?
- Public dialogues mostly remain at surface
 - New element in eclectic mix of PR measures addressing potentially threatening public
 - Rather change in style than substance
 - Rather instrumental learning than learning for change
- Empirical Outlook: Advocacy Coalition approach
 - Public dialogue illustrates learning within and between advocacy coalitions
 - Allowed for common ground between rival coalitions
 - Learning rather in secondary than in core aspects