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Democracy in the Risk Society?

Learning from the New Politics of Mobility in Munich

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Abstract

It is often assumed that more democratic procedures will help bring about a more sustainable organisation of society. The paper questions the assumption using the case of transport policy in Munich, thus addressing the way in which the key issue of mobility is handled institutionally in a risk society. The importance of new democratic, participatory practices is illuminated as well as the prominent role of new practices on a 'corporatist' footing. The new democratic practices are shown to be less effective than their neo-corporatist counterparts in (a) influencing strategic decisions that bring about a more sustainable mobility; and in (b) influencing related processes of design of new technologies for sustainable mobility. The article suggests that models of democratic decision making in the risk society should come to terms with the fact that new 'interactive' policy making practices come in different types. It is the interrelationship between these practices that need further investigation and conceptualisation.

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1. Democracy in the Risk Society

The realisation that we live in a 'risk society' often leads to a plea for enhanced democratic rights (Beck 1995, 1997). The assumption is that more democratic procedures will help to control risks and achieve environmental goals. This link between democratisation and stronger environmental policies is a general feature of the academic literature on environmental politics. Many a book closes with a chapter on ecological democracy, ecological Enlightenment or on the need for more 'dialogic' development of public policy (e.g. Dryzek 1997, Hayward 1995, Mayerfeld Bell 1998). In 'risk society' theory the call for a less secluded and more democratic political process directly evolves from its analysis of the *causes* of the troublesome ecological record of industrial society. Risk society is characterised as an 'organised irresponsibility' for which existing institutional arrangements are to blame (Beck 1995:58). The idea here is that the ecological problem is not so much environmental, but institutional and embedded in the 'technocratic' institutional practices. The introduction of democratic rights would therefore contribute to solving it. Yet an alternative explanation for the commitment to democratic practices would take into account the historical particularities of environmental discourse itself. It would emphasize the *cultural* dimension interpreting the environmental movement as part of a broader 'counter culture' (Hajer 1995, Fischer & Hajer 1999). The environmental issue is then seen as a component part of a broad ranging social critique. In that interpretation, it makes more sense to speak of a 'green' movement that relates environmental decline to a broader agenda of *political* change. Consequently, democracy is not merely seen as an instrument, but as a goal in itself.

We would argue that this 'double commitment' to both environmental improvement and democratisation is also characteristic of much of the academic literature on environmental politics. The question is, however, whether new democratic practices really are to be seen as building blocks of a new sustainable societal constellation. New democratic practices are here defined as those that give the people that are governed by the power of the state, more authority regarding the exercise of that power. Drawing on an elaborate case study on the 'greening' of mobility in the region of Munich (Germany), the article shows that the introduction of new democratic practices is by no means a guarantee for a better environmental record. 'Good' (i.e. democratic) practices do not automatically produce 'good' (i.e. more sustainable) results. What is more, in some cases enhanced democratic rights are shown to have been directly counterproductive. We suggest that the case study should be interpreted against the emergence of a new culture of 'governance' in which governments intensify the institutional links with societal groups ('stakeholders' in the jargon). This raises the question of the role and function of new participatory practices in present day environmental politics.

2. Reframing mobility in the risk society

The central claim of the risk society argument is that the societal project of 'modernisation' as we have known it for the last hundred and fifty years is no longer viable. It has become 'reflexive', meaning that it erodes from *within*, as the unintended negative effects of modernisation come to occupy centre stage and the production of 'goods' can no longer compensate for the inherent production of 'bads' (see e.g. Beck, Giddens, Lash 1994). Essential here is that there is no clearly defined 'subject': it is the general system that runs into difficulty, not because it fails to deliver its promises, but precisely because of its all too considerable success in living up to expectations (Beck 1994:5 ff.). After all, it is the general

emancipation (new values) combined with scientific and technological advancement that led to the confrontation with the 'bads'. Ill-considered but routinised institutional commitments (*institutionelle Verkrüstung*) feature prominently in this analysis (for more detailed accounts of the theory, cf. Goldblatt 1995 or Hayward 1995). Yet although the theory of risk society clearly inspires many academic authors, it is a primarily theoretical endeavour that lacks empirical input (but cf. Beck, Hajer & Kesselring eds. 1999). To relate risk society theory to concrete case studies we have here singled out the issue of mobility in modern society.

The issue of movement and mobility has recently been rediscovered in social theory. The German philosopher Sloterdijk suggested, for instance, that modernity should be analysed as a 'kinetic' project related to the 'mobilisation' of everything for profit making (Sloterdijk 1986, 1998). Lash & Urry pointed out the essential but under-examined role of 'movement' to modernity in their contribution to the debate on the essence of 'late modern society' (Lash & Urry 1994:252ff.). This article does not seek to contribute to the theoretical understanding of mobility. However, drawing on the awareness that there is more to the organisation of traffic than simply organising it efficiently, we want to examine the discursive dynamics in the field of transport policy. Here we focus on the role and function of particular practices in environmental politics and policy making in changing the discourse and organisation of mobility.

We can apply the Beckian theory of risk society and reflexive modernisation looking at traffic policy. It illustrates modernity becoming 'reflexive': movement erodes from *within* as the production of 'goods' (welfare translated in "getting somewhere in a quick and comfortable way") is endangered by the unintentional production of 'bads' (emissions, accidents, congestion, loss of amenity). The demise of mobility of the 'first modernity' (Beck) comes as (1) economic prosperity produces more and more individualised traffic until we collectively come to a standstill; and (2) general emancipation leads to a new sensibility

towards the (macro) costs of increased individual mobility. Precisely as risk society theory has it, the established institutional response is to ask for new scientific predictions of traffic demand and to search for solutions predominantly in the application of new technologies (cf. Owens 1997). The challenge of the second modernity is in a *reframing* of the problem. This has a clear institutional component: reframing might require new practices that break through the 'institutional irresponsibility' or discursive commitments embedded in existing institutional arrangements.

3. Operationalisation: an institutional-constructivist analysis of 'sustainable mobility'

A problem with operationalising risk society theory is in the fact that it is not always clear whether risk society refers to 'real' changes in the environment or to our new – welfare induced - sensibility to risk society themes. The secondary literature on risk society shows a rift between two groups. The realists who argue that risk society emerges as the consequence of the fact that the bads are now of a different magnitude (the 'new risk' thesis, cf. e.g. Lau 1991) and those that would suggest that it is the new *perception* of these bads that causes the difficulties (e.g. the thesis of the 'paradox of catastrophes', cf. Von Prittwitz 1990). Instead of reinforcing this dichotomy between what can broadly be seen as a 'realist' and a 'social-constructivist' position, this paper approaches the analysis of the political dynamics of the risk society from an *institutional-constructivist* perspective (cf. Beck 1996, Hajer 1995, 1997). The focus of this pragmatic third route is on the analysis of the way in which themes of the risk society are handled institutionally. This can be done by analysing the role of *discourses* and *discourse-coalitions* that play a key role in the proliferation of particular new understandings of what the problem 'really' is and how it is to be approached (for earlier attempts, see Hajer 1995, Kesselring 1997b). A discourse-analytical approach does not simply focus on what is being said (and by whom). Essential

part of the approach is to see *where* (i.e. in what sort of discursive practices) certain new ideas about a given problem are uttered and to what effect. It is this 'career' of discursive constructs that becomes the object of research.

Here the notion of 'sustainable development' emerges as one of the key themes for research. What was the impact of this new discursive construct? The notion of sustainable development fulfils a key role in the broader political endorsement of the need for a general reorientation in the project of modernisation (cf. also Fischer & Hajer eds. 1999). Yet rather than criticising it for its shallowness (which would be missing the point), the institutional-constructivist perspective aims to examine the way in which this notion is drawn upon institutionally in the post-Rio era. It examines to what extent and how established institutions rethink their own role and function in light of this notion. Likewise it would investigate whether it leads to the emergence of new institutional arrangements. Subsequently, it seeks to understand what processes of policy change these institutional innovations actually bring about. In this vein, we can examine the discourse on 'sustainable mobility', i.e. the effect of the emergence of the discourse of sustainable development on the rethinking of transport policy and spatial organisation in the Munich region.

In the light of the questions raised in the beginning of this paper regarding the relationship of democratisation and enhancing sustainability, we pay special attention to the role and character of newly introduced practices in the debate on mobility. The mobility issue may be seen as a cornerstone in the analysis of how modern society deals with the challenge inherent in the environmental issue. It is precisely the sort of environmental issue where actors either act upon the new 'risk society' awareness or choose not to. People drive as consumers but demand policy change as citizens. This puts the institutional practices to the test: are they capable of bringing about a policy change towards sustainable mobility in a democratic way? In what way do actors discuss traffic policy and sustainable development

in various practices? How do these discourses relate to one another and how do they influence the policy making process?

4. Understanding contemporary discourse on democracy

The experiments with allegedly more democratic institutional practices historically coincide with the emergence of sustainable development as a new principle to structure policy making. The host of initiatives to renew existing democratic practices includes discursive design, 'reg-neg' (regulatory negotiation), environmental mediation, technology assessment, constructive technology assessment, risk communication, round tables, science courts, parliamentary inquiries, consensus-building, and dialogues on the future of the chemical industry (Germany) or of air traffic (Netherlands). There really is no shortage of experiments with more open procedures in the sphere of environmental and technological decision making. This reflects the widespread consensus that society needs new practices of governance (see e.g. Healey 1997). But what can we realistically expect from initiatives for enhanced participation in policy deliberation? What are the present functions of these practices, and how do these functions compare to the noble intentions of those who came up with the ideas?

There seem to be at least three different arguments for a democratisation of policy making in the current debate.¹ The first argument suggests that *democracy is a goal in itself*. This we find in the familiar and highly influential call for a 'deliberative democracy' (Habermas 1992) or a 'strong democracy' (Barber 1984). The argument is that the present representative democratic institutions cannot be seen as truly democratic since they do not produce a sufficient level of public deliberation. What is more, in actual fact they keep a

gross inequality in political decision making in place (interest groups dominating the discourse on problem perception and in the conceptualisation of solutions). A second argument suggests that *new social circumstances* call for a renewal of democratic practices. This is the case with 'discursive designs' (Dryzek 1993) or the plea for a 'technological citizenship' (Frankenfeld 1992, Laird 1993, Zimmerman 1995). John Dryzek relates his ideas for discursive designs to the inability of instrumental rationality to deal with newly emerging complex social problems, the debate on technological citizenship relates to the 'new' challenge of a politics of technology that so far has not been met (cf. also Dobson 1996). A third argument suggests that new institutional arrangements *facilitate effective governance*. We live in a 'post-corporatist' era (Eder 1995) and the established corporatist practices designed to produce consensus are no longer effective in securing legitimacy. What is needed is 'network management' (Kickert, Klijn, Koppejan, eds., 1997), interactive decision making with 'target groups' or 'co-production' of policies with involvement of 'stakeholders'.

Each of the three arguments comes with its own bias in conceptualising the new practices. This bias can often be traced back to particular disciplinary backgrounds. The first argument emphasises the quality of 'deliberation' and tends to be supported by political theoretical notions (cf. also Benhabib 1996). The second argument focuses on the importance of new practices as knowledge-generating devices and is sociological in nature. Here the issue is how new practices can help bring in new insights (cf. also Wynne 1996, Schwarz & Thompson 1990). The third argument approaches the issue primarily as an issue of management, suggesting, for instance, that you need to involve certain –powerful– stakeholders because they are key to successful implementation. This argument is often found in contributions coming from public administration and the policy sciences.

¹ This is an analytical distinction. If we look at the various contributions, we see that the arguments are often

The variety of arguments illuminates a slumbering problem with the new democratic practices that has not been fully addressed so far (but cf. Lafferty & Meadowcroft (eds.) 1996). New policy making practices might be born out of the need to enhance the legitimacy the policy making process, not out of the wish to strengthen the quality of the policy-oriented deliberation. Moreover, those arguing in favour of renewal for *normative* reasons seek to achieve a specific set of goals (such as bringing in all people with a 'stake', even calling for assistance in formulating missing arguments). This implies that they may have different institutional preferences than those who argue for renewal for *functional* reasons (such as creating optimal support from those who might have the power to cause trouble if they are not heard, hence limiting participation to the key stakeholders). This problem is rarely a topic for discussion. Instead it is often argued (or simply assumed) that the normative ideal of new democratic practices and the functionalist ideal of new democratic practices are mutually supportive.

In sum, the institutional dynamics of new democratic practices in the context of the commitment to sustainable development is to be seen against the background of a wider search for new practices of governance in a 'post-corporatist' society. New channels of communication with societal groups are sought, not simply out of the normative commitment to a democratisation of policy making and politics but as often because of a need to guarantee a smooth implementation of policies. Consequently, the new institutional practices stand in the crossfire of normative and functional criteria (cf. Schmalz-Bruns 1995). This helps understand the institutional dynamics emerging in the aftermath of the political endorsement of the notion of sustainable development. This can be shown using the example of transport or mobility policy in Munich.

5. Transport Innovation in European Urban Regions: the Case of Munich²

Munich is one of the largest and most mobile German cities. It has 1.3 million inhabitants 730,000 of whom own a car. In 1970 there were 300 cars to every 1000 inhabitants; now there are 530. A total of 290,000 people commute into the city every day. The target of most of their movements is the city centre. Those coming by car use seven motor ways and six federal roads that bring the commuters straight and directly into the heart of the city. This basic organisation of mobility was the historical result of the leading conception of the 'Autogerechte Stadt' (car-friendly city) in traffic management that dominated the post war era until the mid 1960s. At that time this conception was replaced by what is effectively a 'double track' strategy: the city of Munich invests both in public transport infrastructure as well as in extension of the system of ring roads, multi-storey car parks and radial roads. The most stunning achievement of this double track strategy was the construction of a metro and light rail network. The basic structure of this network was realised in only seven years (!) to be completed just in time for the 1972 Olympic games. The unequivocal focal point of the structure is the city centre. A ring line for the metro was never constructed. Here two (heavily congested – and not fully complete) ring roads facilitate car traffic. Another element of the double track strategy is the constant attempt of local government to maximise the accessibility of the pedestrianised city centre for cars.

During the 1980s the effort to maximise mobility slowly transformed into the issue of coping with 'congestion' and restoring urban amenity. In the course of the decade the debate became much more politicised.³ Two distinct discourses can be reconstructed: 'traffic calming' and 'the management of flows'.

² This section draws on several research projects done at the University of Munich (cf. Hajer & Kesselring 1996, Beck & Kesselring 1998).

³ This is also reflected in several opinion polls. The Munich based institute *Sozialdata* found that traffic was seen as the prime communal problem both among the local citizenry as among politicians (Socialdata 1992:1). A poll by *Der Spiegel* showed in general that 70 percent of the Germans agreed

Traffic calming was a typical Green Party initiative for taming traffic by slowing it down. It was developed when the Green Party was still in the opposition during the 1980s, but as soon as the Green Party entered the 'Red-Green' coalition in 1994, it actively re-engineered the organisation of traffic. It creating a network of bicycle lanes, introducing 'tempo 30 zones' (30 kph) and road blocks to deter through traffic in residential neighbourhoods. The argument for traffic calming was combined with the call for a radical change in the 'modal split' i.e. a shift away from the car and towards the so called 'Green Alliance' (the 'Umweltverbund'). The introduction of the notion 'Green Alliance' was an act of active reframing of traffic discourse. 'Green Alliance' referred not to a coalition of actors but discursively related several modes of mobility and the respective infrastructures. It thus conceived of the combined existing infrastructure for cycles, walking and public transport in terms of a *coherent alternative* to the car. In so doing, it became possible to illuminate the 'missing links' in the Green Alliance and to show what needed to be done to create a coherent alternative system of sustainable mobility. These new initiatives could not stop the increase in the overall intensity of local traffic. Both the numbers of cars and the numbers of journeys in the city rose steadily. In 1970 120,000 commuters came by private car. In 1990 this had risen to 290,000. In all, cross boundary traffic (in and out of the city) rose 1.5 times and the number of commuters who travelled more than 35 Kilometres on a daily basis rose by 160 per cent between 1970 and 1987 (Landeshauptstadt München (LHM) 1995: 6).

The second discourse, *the management of flows*, became influential as the City of Munich joined the EU PROMETHEUS project in 1986. PROMETHEUS was a research initiative investigating the possible application of 'telematic' technology (the combination of telecommunication and computer technology) to traffic management. Originally, an initiative of a coalition of the eight biggest European car producers, BMW played an active part. The

that air pollution due to car emissions is unbearable. 61 percent thought that the innercities were less

idea was picked up by the European Commission and became an official EU initiative in 1986.⁴ Munich participated in a PROMETHEUS experiment with the application of telematic technology in traffic management together with the cities of London, Lyon, Amsterdam, Munich and Dublin (hence LLAMD). In Munich, it took the form of a large scale experiment with traffic management equipment of BMW, Siemens and Signal Huber (all Munich based technology firms). In actual fact it not only meant the management of the flow of car traffic but also included the investigation of the potential transfer between different mobility technologies, e.g. from car to public transport and vice versa. The goal of the experiments (locally known as Munich COMFORT) was to make a feasibility study of the role of new technologies. The first results of Munich COMFORT were a 30 per cent decrease in the accident rate and a reduction of congestion on the northern motor ways in the region.⁵ Discursively we see how the management of flows did not search for an alternative to the car but for new technological futures *for* the car.

The credibility of the discourse of management of flow received a severe setback as BMW, one of the prime protagonists in this discourse-coalition, too explicitly challenged the authority of the City Council. In 1989, BMW published a comprehensive strategy - the 'blue zone'. The plan combined a full inner city pedestrianisation with the introduction of a comprehensive reorganisation of traffic in the rest of the city. The key idea was the introduction of a string of ten multi-storey car parks with a capacity of 6,000 cars each at the edge of the inner city (the inner city being 'the blue zone', cf. Frank 1994, Schlüter & Schwerdtfeger 1993). BMW envisaged 'a fully automatic, computer-guided parking system' (Frank 1994: 90) which, for reasons of amenity, should be located underground. Outside

amenable to pedestrians as before (Der Spiegel 1993:92).

4. PROMETHEUS was itself part of the Eureka initiative of the late Francois Mitterand. For the history of PROMETHEUS, cf. Prätorius (1993).

5. The research into a possible application of telematic technology will now be continued under the TABASCO scheme.

the blue zone, the City Council should install new electronic systems to guarantee the continuous flow of traffic.

Initially the impact of this discourse of the management of flows was hampered by the fact that the City Council took offence as the car producer essentially meddled with strategic planning – a key government concern. However, with hindsight we can see that the initiative nevertheless set the discursive markers for the way of thinking about transport in the city of Munich, in particular within the circles of government in the 1990s.

We found that the content analysis of the media did not show the shift in thinking about mobility and traffic. There is a clear discrepancy between the traffic problem as debated in the media during the 1990s and in other – less visible but more influential – policy-oriented practices. A content analysis of local newspapers shows a framing of the issue between those favouring ‘facilitating car traffic’ against the archetypical greens arguing for traffic calming and a pro-bike policy⁶. However, the analysis of the discourse in other policy relevant practices indicates that this reproduction of a cliché representation of the positions on the future of traffic – the suggestion of a deadlock on issues of traffic policy in the local media - *co-existed* with a highly dynamic debate in circles more directly related to policy making. A new discourse-coalitions emerged already while the media still staged the ‘old’ conflict.

⁶ A discourse analysis of the reports on the mobility issue in the Munich media showed the key newspapers (*die Tageszeitung, die Süddeutsche, Münchner Merkur* und *Münchner Abendzeitung*) to report on the issue in a very confrontational manner. The car is seen as a key element of modern life and those who criticize the further extension of roads and traffic-related technology are labelled ‘anti-modern’. Mobility is conflated with automobility. (cf. Brüggem 1997, Kesselring 1997a).

6. Four institutional practices in the politics of sustainable mobility in Munich

Here we first present four selected institutional practices that together set the markers for the policy-oriented discourse on mobility in Munich during the 1990s.

- *The Munich Local Agenda 21* The 1995 initiative for a German Local Agenda 21 process came from the Organisation for German Cities ('Deutsche Städtetag') in 1995 (cf. Deutsche Städtetag 1995) that suggested that cities should become pro-active to make sure that the Federal Republic would indeed achieve the goals it had committed itself to at the Rio conference of 1992. In Munich the initiative was taken by the 'Volkshochschule' (College for Adult Education). Later the City Council decided to assist with (some) money and professional manpower. The new Local Agenda 21 Office ('Agendabüro') organised a range of public meetings on selected topics one of which was mobility. Subsequently fora for expert deliberation ('Fachforen') were installed to produce several scenarios of how Munich could change its routines so as to achieve a reduction of CO₂ emissions.⁷ The first target of the Local Agenda 21 process was explicitly to achieve an overview of policy initiatives in order to facilitate an ecological turn in local policies. The second goal was to increase public participation and grassroots involvement. Thirdly, it sought to facilitate and stimulate independent initiatives concerned with the policy target of greening the city.
- *'Perspektive München'*. This was an attempt to prepare a new urban development plan for the City of Munich in an 'open planning process'. A position paper, published in 1995, introduced the concept 'Compact, Urban, Green' and put forward an argument for a general strengthening of the urban characteristics of the city. The strategic targets

⁷ Here some arbitrary choices were made, such as by separating the discussion of life style issues from the discussion of organizing 'mobility' thus preclosing new ways of thinking about mobility/transport.

were a combination of furthering economic viability and a choice for explicitly urban life styles. The 'Perspektive München' initiative was also meant to introduce a new way of conducting urban planning. The plan was, above all, meant to develop a shared perspective on urban development which, through intensive communication, should be brought to life in the heads of citizens, policy makers as well as economic entrepreneurs. The functioning of the plan was thought to be primarily discursive: through debate and exchange of ideas it sought to produce a *shared perspective* on the possibilities of the city, its desired future as well as the key initiatives that should be the material translation of this perspective. It also would have to result in an integrative planning document: it would not discuss traffic, environment, construction or urban design as separate things but sought to provide a unifying frame within which such elements could be usefully related to one another. The 'Perspektive München' had its own public office for information and debate and regularly organised public meetings.

- '*Bürgerbegehren*' ('citizens vote'). In a referendum held on 23 June 1996 the citizens of Munich could give their opinion on two proposals both, directly or indirectly, concerned with traffic, transport and mobility. One proposal argued for the construction of three new tunnels in the 1960s ring road, the other was a reaction to this proposal and called for extra investment in 'better' projects, such as public transport, child care and schools. Whereas the first proposal sought to optimise physical mobility, the latter proposal aimed at making urban quality of life into the counter theme. Interestingly, the referendum showed a clear majority for *both* proposals. A third question, asking the voter for an 'either / or' decision between the two schemes, brought a majority for the tunnel scheme. An analysis of the voting behaviour showed, perhaps not surprisingly, that in all districts *within* the ring road a majority was *against* new tunnels while the suburban districts indicated a majority in *favour* of new tunnels. The 'Tunnel referendum'

caused an intense public debate on the future of traffic but resulted in a setback for the creation of more sustainable mobility in the region.

- *'Inzell Treffen'* (meeting at Inzell). On the 28 and 29 September 1995 senior officials and top politicians of the City of Munich met with representatives from BMW and leaders of various interest groups in the Bavarian skiing resort of Inzell. The purpose of this first - secret – 'round table' was to investigate whether a 'win-win' discourse on the development of the Munich region in general, and more particularly, of the organisation of transport, could be found. The Inzell meeting was meant to bring back to life the co-operation between the city and the car producer and to integrate other participants into this new discourse on the future of mobility in Munich after the ill fated "blue zone for Munich" initiative. The initiative for the Inzell meeting was the product of an exchange of letters between Mayor Christian Ude and Bernd Pischetsrieder, the chairman of the Board of Directors of BMW⁸. The meeting indicated many points of agreement and led to the formation of standing working groups on themes such as 'reinventing the station', 'the railway vehicle of the future', regional co-ordination of settlement development and infrastructure, parking management, changing the modal split, and the 'orange zone' (a concrete experiment with parking management in the north of the city).⁹ The Inzell group met for a second time on 30 October 1996 to discuss progress and agree on further initiatives. Among experts the meetings at Inzell are regarded as a major success. Never before did Munich achieve a similarly broad co-operation involving actors from such a variety of backgrounds and dealing with highly contentious political issues as traffic. What is more, the co-operative effort allowed for a conceptual renewal in a very short period of time. The Inzell process gave rise to a new discourse-coalition: it cut

⁸ The initiative for this exchange of letters came from the previous chairman of the Board of Directors, Eberhard von Kuenheim. He suggested a possible future cooperation to the Mayor, Christian Ude at the ceremony at which he was honoured with the Citizens Medal of the City of Munich in 1992. (source: interview with Christian Ude, 23/6/97).

through the existing formations of interest and problem perception. The redefinition of the problems involved, and the accompanying creation of new perspectives for the various interested parties, were seen as a turn for the better by most participants. In this sense the Inzell meeting gave way to new networks that cut across the various municipal departments and included various groups from business and industry as well as experts from the university (Kesselring 1997a).

7. Interpreting the Munich case

The Munich case first of all illustrates the awareness among policy makers and politicians of the need to develop new and more open practices of governance. The principal question here is to what extent the more democratic practices facilitated a more sustainable organisation of mobility. Three out of the four practices discussed above can be seen as experiments with new, more democratic practices giving the residents of Munich more of a say in the exercise of power: Local Agenda 21, the open planning process in the context of 'Perspektive München', and the use of a referendum on major issues in local politics. The fourth, the Inzell process, does not qualify as a new form of democratic practice as participation to this round table was not open to the public.

The Local Agenda 21 process in Munich succeeded in institutionalising a participatory practice, in which local groups considered what they could do to fight global environmental problems. It is in this sense an achievement that institutionalised the story line of 'think globally, act locally' (see also Mehta 1996). Potentially, the Local Agenda 21 process provided the floor for the development of a new discourse outside the existing institutional formats and also allowed for other voices to contribute to the thinking about new

⁹ Cf. *Verkehrsprobleme gemeinsam lösen*, Proceedings of the Inzell workshop September 1995 and

orientations for local government. Yet the co-ordinating 'Agendabüro' had difficulty relating the 'free' Agenda discourse on the future of the city to the more focused and policy-oriented ways of talking that pre-existed in the various departments of local government. Over time the frustration with the lack of institutional resonance resulted in the adoption of discursive formats that were closer to the existing ways of thinking and in bringing experts back in. Yet the way in which the various fora for expert deliberation ('Fachforen') were drawn up conformed to the *sectoral categorizations* and, predictably, failed to break through the existing institutional dead lock. For instance, the forum discussing new urban life styles was separated from the forum discussing 'mobility'. It is of course precisely new connections of cultural ideals and technical possibilities that might result in interesting new ways of conceptualising the challenge of transport policy. Taking mobility out of the sphere of 'technological fixes' and unpacking the cultural political forces implicit transport systems (e.g. favouring one life style at the cost of others) would have been a very worthwhile cognitive contribution of a new and 'open' Agenda process. In the Munich case the contribution of the Local Agenda 21 process focused on the identification and conceptualisation of specific individual projects but did not target a rethinking of sustainable mobility. Furthermore, it has not found ways to correct or re-direct investment strategies. This is partly due to the fact that the practice of Local Agenda 21 was unable to mobilise a broader coalition of forces: key stakeholders refrained from participation. This problem of integration has been noticed in the British context as well (see Carter & Darlow 1997).

The second democratic practice, 'Perspektive München', was a typical exercise in 'communicative planning' and represents an example of a wider institutional trend that has been observed in strategic land use planning all through the western world (e.g. Healey 1992, Innes 1995). Perspektive München was modelled according to the ideal of a 'deliberative democracy'. In terms of increasing citizen participation it had ambitious targets

that were shared by both the planner community and the leading politicians. Indicative is the statement of the Mayor of Munich, Christian Ude, who confirmed that the City had tried to reach 'the whole population' with *Perspektive München*. He complained that they had not achieved that goal and had, in the end, only reached about 1 to 2 percent of the population.¹⁰ Although this is hardly unusual, in Munich reaching up to 26,000 people was seen as a failure. With *Perspektive München* the ambition clearly was to take the deliberation *beyond* the ring of government-oriented interest groups.

Analytically, the *Perspektive München* is in many regards the appropriate place to discuss the issue of sustainable mobility. First of all, the regional level is where the problem can be meaningfully addressed. What is more, strategic planning characteristically seeks conceptually to combine the development of infrastructure and land use planning. In this context one could, for instance, legitimately broaden the conceptual definition of technology to refer to 'urban technologies', so as not only to include the means of transport but technologies of spatial organisation as well (Graham and Marvin 1996). However, the discussion of the abstract issues of strategic planning of *Perspektive München* did not generate great interest not from business and industry and not from the public.

The third democratic practice, the referendum, did arouse great interest. The fact that it did not relate to an abstract planning issue but to a very concrete project, and indeed to the threat that a particular project would be executed most certainly contributed to the attention for this practice. Whereas structure planning uses the 'elaborated' code of abstract issues and context-independence, the discourse of the referendum is conducted in the 'restricted' code of concrete expressions. Yet as Burke points out, this restricted code tends to leave meanings and repercussions implicit (Burke 1993:14). In the event the referendum showed

¹⁰ "Of course, we increased the involvement of the professional architects and urban planners, the students of architecture, urban planning or perhaps even sociology, the community groups and the

the perverse effect that plain referenda conducted in this restricted code may have in a repositioning of policy strategies. In this respect the Munich practice of 'Bürgerbegehren' has about all the features that political science literature would list¹¹ as arguments *against* equality oriented forms of 'direct democracy':

- the definition of the questions is left outside the debate: criteria to define which are the appropriate questions (the most relevant, the most distinct, etc.) have simply not been drawn up;
- voting is not the result of a priori deliberation and does not rest on a confrontation with the political and societal repercussions;
- the referendum does not allow for compromise and therefore maximises conflict;
- the adding up of individual votes may lead to results that do not correspond with the intentions of the individuals.

Precisely these characteristics might have contributed to the - from an ecological point of view - questionable effect of the 'Bürgerbegehren'. It forced the City Council to build three new tunnels to facilitate car traffic at extraordinary cost. What some perceived to be the most democratic of practices produced a considerable set back in strategic planning towards a more sustainable organisation of mobility. Furthermore, its concreteness frustrated any imaginative thinking about what sort of technology or social arrangements would be preferable if one wants to rethink the way in which we organise the city in light of increased awareness of risk society themes. The fact that both proposals were in the first instance actually supported by a majority, indicates that the practice of referenda may be dysfunctional in a society of reflexive citizens. Of course, there is an important value to referenda but this is often the wider *discussion* that – suddenly -- takes place in the period before the vote. Yet, in the present conceptualisation it is impossible to draw on that

neighbourhood committees. Yet we did not get beyond this 1 to 2 % of the population." Oberbürgermeister Christian Ude, interview.

¹¹ These arguments can all be found in Giovanni Sartori's often reiterated critiques of direct democracy. However, we have left out the more controversial arguments that Sartori also brings. Cf. Sartori 1962.

deliberation and, for instance, rephrase the questions for the referendum or develop or consider new options that emerged in that discussion.

Concluding the discussion so far, we see that the three new democratic practices only made a limited contribution to creating an understanding of what a more sustainable mobility in Munich would look like, let alone to bringing that new organisation of mobility about. In some regards it was the fourth practice, the Inzell process, that proved to be both more powerful and more promising in setting the markers for a sustainable mobility. However, the Inzell process can hardly be conceived of as a new democratic practice. Of course, it pays lip-service to the new democracy, being constructed in public discourse as a 'round table', just as it is promoted as an 'open' dialogue between the city and industry. Yet in actual fact this round table looked remarkably similar to the well known two-sided tables of corporatist practices which allowed industry prioritised access to government. In the case of Inzell industry is in a position to exert considerable influence, not only in terms of framing the issue of mobility but also in suggesting strategic solutions to the 'problems'. Most important confinements of the discourse on sustainable mobility that emerges from the Inzell process is that it brackets the demand for mobility (seeing it as given) and seeks to solve the environmental issue by technological means. Above we already indicated that this approach very much conforms to the preferred EU strategy. The Inzell process thus represents a neo-corporatist practice of policy making that makes sustainable mobility very much an issue of the introduction of new technologies.

The new practices of open government allowed for a discussion of various aspects of the broadly conceived problem of sustainable mobility. Yet these practices at best co-existed without much inter-discursive exchange. In this respect it is tempting to see the Inzell process simply as the latest example of the techno-corporatist pact in which the discourse of 'ecological modernisation' (e.g. Dryzek 1997) is employed, but where the traditional

prioritising of technological solutions over other, more cultural approaches to the issue of mobility dominate the debate and monopolize policy making. In fact the issue is not so clear cut. In order to appreciate the role and function of various practices in bringing about more sustainable mobility, we must take into consideration the ways in which the problem definition and the solutions that are proposed will have a broader *cultural* effect (cf. Hajer 1996). This would imply taking into account the way in which technological decisions affect particular ways of life and enable or constrain people in moving about. Democracy is not simply to be seen as an instrument of sustainability but democracy and sustainability are rather to be seen as two distinct goals in a broader project of 'greening society' (cf. section 1).

In this sense one must credit the Inzell process for producing some of the more interesting ideas about rethinking mobility in the Munich region. Ironically, it was BMW that suggested Munich should start rethinking its style and patterns of mobility. In particular, BMW argued for a rethinking of the predominant role of the car. Instead, mobility should be seen as a more encompassing set of 'services'. This led BMW to suggest at Inzell that new 'reinvented' railway- and light rail stations should become the backbone of the new mobility strategy. Stations should become more than merely 'transfer points' but should become public spaces in their own right. In short, the station should be conceived of as an open-minded urban sphere rather than as a functional place for changing vehicles.¹² What is more, BMW emphasised the need for renewed investment in and extension of the pedestrianised zone in the inner city. The very fact that car producer BMW came up with these ideas, and did so in a direct exchange with the ruling politicians of the Town Hall, enhanced the effects of these new strategic ideas. New working groups were set up to develop this idea of the 'multi-mobility' solution as part of the Inzell process.

¹² For the concept of open-minded space, cf. Walzer 1986.

So what sort of assessment should be made of the Inzell process? First of all, it is of course a typical example of the win-win format typical of ecological modernisation (cf. Hajer 1995, Von Prittwitz 1996). Precisely this idea of co-operation and thinking beyond the traditional antagonisms seems to characterise many of the more interesting present day experiments in greening society. Second, it is clear that the Inzell process lacks proper democratic legitimation. The Inzell process set the discursive markers and had major implications for strategic thinking about the socio-spatial reorganisation of the city. Yet the fact that this Inzell process runs side by side with the 'official' planning practice of 'Perspektive München' damages the democratic quality of the decision making process. Third, it shows the continued appeal of (large) technological solutions to policy problems. After all, at the heart of the Inzell practice is new technological innovation as key to making mobility more sustainable.

The Inzell process provides us with a negative example of a non-democratic practice contributing to a powerful strategy for sustainable mobility. Of course, it does not aim to phase out the car altogether, but it promotes a solution that comprises many ideas of those arguing for a greening of socio-spatial arrangements (commitment to the inner cities, innovation for public transport, the attempt to change the cultural image of public transport, etc.). Although one might question the strong orientation towards a systemic technological solution, it is clear that the Inzell process is innovative in creating and diffusing new ways of thinking about sustainable mobility as well as in building a coalition that can actually bring that change about.

BMW argued that one should preserve and extend the attractiveness of the inner city both for economic reasons as well as for reasons of securing quality of life. At the same time the optimal access of the car parks at the edge of the inner city should be guaranteed. That required, above all, the application of state-of-the-art techniques of traffic management

(telematics). Apart from that, public transport should be designed and managed as a superior means of transport in its own right so as to facilitate the *transfer* of passengers. Hence, it is a two-tier strategy: public transport should not *replace* car traffic but should be regarded as a part of a complementary strategy. Behind this is the conviction on the part of BMW that cities like Munich are close to their maximum capacity in terms of car traffic. In their thinking, trespassing beyond this limit might have at least three negative effects for them as car producers:

- if car traffic is primarily associated with congestion, car traffic might lose its attractiveness as the optimal means of mobility altogether;
- the attractiveness of European cities might diminish as locations for economic activity in the global market and
- the business costs of mobility might increase if congestion is not overcome.¹³

Although all participants have their own reasons for contributing to the Inzell discourse we can see that it brought out some new features that transcended the old categories of transport policy discourse. For instance, 'transport policy' was about the modal split, about emission reduction and investment in 'road versus rail'. The new discourse brings in issues of life style and cultural politics and talks about the cultural dimension of mobility and 'multi mobility' solutions. It relates the debate on sustainable mobility to issues such as the new meaning of a railway station, the city centre or the relationship between physical movement and social activity. This constitutes a radical break with functionalistic reasoning that would conceive of transport as a primarily logistical matter. In that case the emphasis would be on speed and facilitation of movement. In the new discourse the design of a railway station is not merely a matter of its capacity to allow the optimal flow of 'passengers' but would require a redefinition of the railway station as 'place' or 'sphere' in its own right. Here issues of ecology (expressed in the need for low emission alternatives to car traffic), life style

(concerned with issues of a culture of mobility or the way in which people feel comfortable and safe while using means of transport, bringing life to the suburb by making regional rail stations into a urban sphere in their own right) and technological design (multi-mobility as the coupling of mobility technologies) are brought together.

Ironically it is the Inzell process that breaks with the institutional and discursive order of the 'first industrial modernity' and that shows that it could make sense to speak about the discourse of the politics of 'mobility' *as a sequence* to 'transport policy'. Indeed, it is precisely in the additional meanings of the concept of mobility that we get an idea of the agenda that was left unaddressed in the discourses of former times (also cf. Lash & Urry 1994).

8. Conclusion: building stones for an agenda of institutional design

The case study on transport policy in Munich shows that the introduction of new democratic practices by no means immediately facilitates a move to more sustainability. Moreover, the case of the *Bürgerbegehren* – the local referendum – indicates that democratic practices can be directly counterproductive in this regard. Of course, one may turn this latter suggestion around, and argue, based on the theoretical critique of the referendum as a democratic practice as presented in section 5, that the referendum did not produce results precisely because of the *lack* of democracy. The conclusion remains, however, that easy enthusiasm for participatory democracy as *instrument* for sustainable development is misplaced (cf. also Schmalz-Bruns 1996).

¹³ The economic costs of congestion on the roads were estimated to be 200 thousand million marks per year (BMW 1994).

If sustainable mobility requires a fundamental *reframing* of transport then the Munich case study the least democratic practice actually proved most relevant. The way in which the footing of mobility policy was changed in the Inzell process comes closest to the way in which sociologists tend to rethink mobility in light of theories of reflexive modernisation. Interestingly, in institutional terms the Inzell process fits the model of the 'co-operative management regimes' that Lafferty and Meadowcroft infer from their case studies (1996). It refers to a collaborative type of formation in which different actors recognise one another as legitimate participants in a consensus-oriented endeavour to resolve specific environmental difficulties and all accept their responsibilities (1996:257). The establishment of such a consensual regime is of course what generated considerable enthusiasm on part of both the City governors and the protagonists from industry. Yet the empirical case shows that one may question the effects of such co-operative management regimes on democratic policy deliberation. The Munich case illustrates this on three separate dimensions: concerning (1) the restricted participation of actors; (2) the effects in terms of the framing of policy issues (co-operative management regimes might easily function as 'consensus corridors' in which the selected players all orient themselves on finding solutions acceptable to the small group of participants); and (3) the unclear relationship of such 'round tables' to the 'official', legally embedded participatory practices. In Munich this official circuit was present in the practices related to strategic planning of land use and infrastructure.

We would argue that the Munich case and the co-operative management regimes that Lafferty & Meadowcroft define in environmental politics are to be understood an element a much more general shift towards a new culture of 'governance'. The era of hierarchical and sectorialised and departmentalised 'government' makes way for a new period with new institutional practices. The new philosophy is one in which society is not seen as an organisation that can be steered from the centre (i.e. the state). Instead governance is reconceptualised in terms of 'networks' and 'associations' with which the state has to

negotiate in order to be effective (Scharpf 1997, Kohler-Koch 1996). This is not the place to elaborate on the complex factors that may explain the emergence of practices that bring in 'target groups', intermediary organisations, NGOs, businesses or expert groups (but cf. Beck 1995, WRR 1999). Yet this new culture of governance provides essential background knowledge to understand the role and function of new democratic practices in environmental policy making.

The case study suggests that the introduction of new 'add on' interactive practices might have eroded the power of the 'official' practices of participation. Societal actors have a range of practices from which to choose if they want to influence governmental policy making. If they are not conceived of as part of a broader policy oriented discourse, these practices do not necessarily add to the level of democratisation. Indeed, the motive for the introduction of new participatory practices is just as likely to enhancing the effectiveness or *institutional capacity* of government as it is about a democratisation of policy making.

When it comes to the assessment of the role and function of participatory practices in a risk society actually requires, we need to consider carefully the way in which the new practices of governance *relate to one another*. The Munich case illustrates how new democratic practices may have an institutional life *alongside* a new co-operative management regime that actually thrives on a separate set of practices. The result is effectively a double circuit with quite distinct discourses. It then adds to the two-tier policy deliberation, it fails to impact on the frames that determine policy and it reduces democratic accountability rather than enhancing it.

This finding does not, we would argue, provide the basis to move away from experiments with new democratic practices. The three arguments in favour of new, more democratic practices of governance mentioned above (democracy as a goal in itself, the need to

integrate new players, the capacity to generate new sorts of knowledge), all suggest that there are strong reasons to continue with exploring new institutional designs. Rather than suggesting that the new democratic practices have no role to play, the challenge seems to be to analyse the way in which different experimental practices could be meaningfully related to one another. More concretely, how could one further the democratisation of government in the context of the emergence of these co-operative management regimes?

Here there are two quite distinct answers. One could argue with John Dryzek (1996) that, if the conditions are not right, an oppositional civil society may be the better focus for democratisation than is the state. Hence one could problematize new co-operative management regimes. Such practices are *by nature* taking place in secluded settings and will always pose a threat to democratic policy deliberation. New democratic practices should be conceived in civil society without suggesting that they are then less effective. Indeed, such practices could be defended referring to the fact that they do not exert their influence immediately but are influential (1) over time and (2) in a more indirect way. Deliberative practices will produce the 'discourse', the new way of thinking, the policy-frames, the cognitive maps that will exert an influence in a much larger setting. There is, so the argument would run, a 'time lag' but eventually decision makers will think in the terms invented in those deliberative practices. The Munich case shows some of the problems with this argument. Despite other offers, it was the Inzell process that was most effective in determining the *frames* in which the future of mobility was conceived. The ideas from other, more democratic, practices did not exert influence on this *constitutive discourse*.

The alternative direction for designs for democratic decision making in the risk society would argue that the smaller co-operative management regimes will not go away but need to be put in a structure of democratic accountability. It would acknowledge that such regimes do not lend themselves for the inclusion of all sorts of stakeholders (since they thrive on

informality, interpersonal trust and direct face-to-face interaction of top officials, they would seize to be effective if the practice would be opened up for others). One could therefore argue that democratic governance is in the invention of ways to give such co-operative management regimes a clear *political brief*. For instance, in the context of the Munich case the City could have focused its democratic deliberation on the development of an innovative *design brief* that new technologies would have had to meet. Inzell would then have had to take that brief (which would have included a vision for the city, with a certain prioritisation in terms of policy goals) as its starting point.

In the present situation the old structures with a proper democratic accountability requirement are informally shifted aside while new practices set the markers for policy making and investment programmes. Enhanced democracy would have to recapture the definition of goals as well as the control over the way in which these goals are interpreted by relevant agencies, both within and outside government. Ironically, in a period in which governments complain about the lack of 'steering power' they can be seen handing over some the devices to which they actually hold the monopoly: the development of infrastructure. In the case of sustainable regional transport it seems as if local governments are unaware of their potential to co-determine the sort of technologies that are to be developed in order to meet the challenge of making transport more sustainable. The research on the development of mobility technologies shows that cities are relatively passive 'buyers' on a market. Although cities provide the 'real life laboratories' where new technologies are experimented with, they do fail to provide a clear 'design brief' *explicating the outcomes they want the technologies to achieve*. All too often the 'technology push' ends up in applications that do not actually function particularly well in solving concretely perceived local problems. In risk society the democratisation of the introduction of new technologies stands out as a key concern.

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