

Climate change as a transformative governance challenge: preliminary theoretical reflections and insights from Italy and South Tyrol

Abstract

Acknowledging the emerging paradigm of climate change as a transformation challenge in scientific and policy discourses, especially post-COP21 in Paris in 2015, which frames the climate debate as a much broader social, political and cultural and especially normative challenge, this article offers another lens through which to analyze multilevel governance processes.

Climate policy is a problem of collective action par excellence, which necessitates government responses from the local to the super-national levels. Moreover, climate policy is linked to a number of other policy areas where political attention and priorities may differ, all adding to the creation of challenges for policy integration and coordination (Biesbroek 2021).

Building on these governance challenges, this article further explores what theoretical approaches to transformation governance have emerged in the scientific literature. Aiming at understanding what are the challenges, hindrances and opportunities a multi-layered system encounters in this transformative process, the case of Italy is presented. Italy is an EU Member State that holds the status of a regional state and faces the urgent need to respond to the current climate and energy crises. Within the Italian regional structure, South Tyrol is an autonomous Province holding special powers and aiming at becoming climate neutral by 2040 according to the recently approved Climate Plan. Thus, the case of the autonomous Province is further investigated to test whether and how this transformative governance process is taking place in concrete.

Keywords

Multilevel governance; Climate change governance; Transformative Governance; Climate policy integration; Local governments; Intergovernmental relations; Autonomy; Governance for Transformation, Governance of transformation, Transformation of governance

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