

Evaluations and Regional Governance: Functions of Evaluations of and in Regional Steering Structures – Three Examples

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Abstract

According to the increasing importance of regions as arenas of action, the question of evaluation of and in regional governance-structures gains significance. In the article three processes of evaluations of regional governance on different spatial levels – a town-region, a metropolitan region and a transnational region – are compared. The focus is put on the role of the central paradigm of the evaluation: does it follow the function of understanding, dialogue, learning, controlling or legitimation? The examples show that the dominant paradigm of the evaluation determines the processes, results and consequences of evaluations of and in regional governance. If the control-paradigm dominates, the conflict-level of evaluation is the highest and – not least caused by the high grade of politicization – the demands for a transparent structuring of the evaluation are the highest. Which paradigms are dominating is connected to the system of incentives of the regional governance: if decisions on high financial benefits for projects are to be made, an ex-ante-evaluation is almost indispensable and in the evaluation-process the control-paradigm probably will be dominating. But also in the cases that financial benefits are not in focus, the evaluation can have important functions: As well – and predominantly – ‚soft‘ formative evaluation leads to a self-examination of the regional governance with its projects and therefore to collective processes of dialogue and learning; it strengthens the common identity. In all of the examined cases, results and effects of the evaluations are in appropriate relation to the expenses.



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