

Instrument constituencies and the supply side of policy innovation: the social life of emissions trading

Jan-Peter Voß and Arno Simons

Department of Sociology, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany

Corresponding author: jan-peter.voss@tu-berlin.de

We offer a perspective on the making of policy instruments over time. This sheds light on the work that goes into articulating and maintaining instruments as both models and implemented policies, and the social formations that arise therefrom. Drawing on a brief case study of the innovation of emissions trading, we show the role of both functional promises to deliver public-policy outcomes and structural promises concerning new positions for the actors involved. We show how the making of instruments can coincide with the formation of ‘instrument constituencies’, which consist of entangled practices that cultivate an instrument. Constituencies sustain the instrument and are themselves sustained by the instrument as it persists and expands its realm of validity. We conclude that policy instruments can develop social lives of their own with dynamics that should be taken into account by scholars of innovation in governance.