

## **Does transition management travel? Two case studies from Finland (Paper proposal for the theme Institutions & Change (C))**

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Technological transitions theory and the related approach to managing technological transitions originated in the Netherlands, but have since attracted attention in other parts of Europe and beyond. Transition management refers to an attempt to redirect the existing dynamics of technological change toward societal goals. It is a long-term process involving interventions at different levels of the technological system. These include building up support at the policy level through visions and goals and promoting concrete pathways to these goals by supporting and expanding radical innovations at the micro level (e.g., Voss et al. 2006). This approach could certainly support innovation managers and policy makers in various countries. Yet, considering the local origins of transition management, it is also valid to question whether its assumptions concerning the governance of technological transitions ‘travel well’.

Many theoretical approaches lend themselves to the analysis of the travel of management approaches from one context to another. New institutional organization theory has focused for years on how organizations adopt similar management practices in spite of their unique circumstances. Actor-network theory has analysed the emergence of “immutable mobiles”, i.e., concepts and tools that can move from one context to another without changing, and has considered the problems of their local application. The Scandinavian version of neo-institutionalism has combined these traditions to examine the “travel of ideas” among countries, particularly in public administration (Czarniawska & Sevón 2005). On this basis, it has been suggested that management approaches travel best when they are capable of accomplishing local ‘translations’ that maintain both integrity and diversity (Heiskanen 2000).

In this paper, we make a theoretically informed and reflective analysis of attempts by the authors to apply transition management in a new context, i.e., Finland. We examine two cases of its local application: one a bottom-up extension of “societal embedding” (Kivisaari et al. 2004), an approach that is very similar to strategic niche management, to grasp the broader, multi-level challenges of socio-technical innovation in public healthcare. The other case analyses a series of attempts to introduce transition management into national-level environmental policy making on the basis of interview and documentary data. Through these case studies, we identify features of transition management that are more and less ‘mobile’. We also identify established features of local institutions that facilitate and constrain the adoption of innovative approaches to the reflexive governance of socio-technical system innovations (Mickwitz 2006). Finally, we suggest some processes of successful ‘translation’ and ‘localization’ that are necessary for the widespread adoption of transition management.

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