

Interdisciplinarity in Governance Research

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ABSTRACT

The term “Governance” found its way to newspapers as well as to nearly all conferences, which focus on overcoming obsolete structures of states, economies, and corporations or deal with reforming world policy. Although the application of the term varies widely, two main disciplinary approaches can be identified: the political science approach and the economic science approach. Hence, interdisciplinary approaches become increasingly important, especially regarding the often cited, far reaching and complex societal, economic and political transformations, which can also be regarded as an initial point for the genesis of the term. In the following article we describe various different application areas, illustrating the origin of the term Governance, as well as disciplinary approaches from political and economic science with specific focus on possible integration. The objective is to highlight similarities and identify first interdisciplinary research approaches.

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INTRODUCTION¹

If there were a "Top Ten" of scientific terms at the beginning of the new millennium, "governance" would certainly take one of the highest positions. It appears in daily and weekly newspapers and has found its way into every conference hall in which the overcoming of traditional structures in the state, the economy and society, the reforms in world politics or far-reaching societal transformation processes are being discussed. Not only the present popularity of the term is surprising, however, but also its disciplinary mobility and the diversity of the areas in which it is applied. The approach is taken notice of in the political and social sciences (often in the form of global governance) and in economics (as economic or corporate governance). It is taken up by jurists in the discussion on the juridicalisation of international relationships, and it is used in state development policy when new forms of international structural policy are being considered. There is no consistency with regard to the meaning of the notion of governance, as the list of its applications would lead us to suspect. Global governance is described by the Enquete Commission "Globalisation of the World Economy" as defined objective, normative concept and project all at the same time (Enquete Commission 2002).

Despite all the intricacy and diversity of the application of the term, however, there are primarily two different scientific disciplines in which governance concepts are being applied with increasing interest: the discipline of political and social science on the one hand and the discipline of economics on the other. Although governance concepts are also used in other disciplines, their theoretical and analytical discussion of governance usually relates to one of the aforementioned disciplines. And with this we have already touched upon the fundamental problem of the research. The analysis of the transformation of societal structures to which the idea of governance refers requires an interdisciplinary approach. Without the latter – and this is our thesis here – the analysis of this transformation and the search for explanations and solutions for complex socio-economic, political and socio-ecological problems is impossible. For this reason we are interested in this paper primarily in the substance and value added of the governance concepts for interdisciplinary research (for a similar approach see Van Kersbergen / Van Waarden 2004).

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In order to be able to identify points of contact and first signs of integration, the concepts from the political and social sciences will be compared with those of economics, so that on this basis first areas of overlap can be identified. The paper is therefore organised as follows. Following a detailed presentation of the diversity of the concept (Part 1) and an explanation of the reasons for the growing importance of governance concepts (Part 2) the different approaches (theoretical and methodical) in the political and social sciences on the one hand and economics on the other hand will be presented (Part 3). In the final Part 4 the disciplinary concepts will be examined from the point of view of their possible integration. The central questions of this approach are: what do the individual disciplinary approaches to the idea of governance and the concepts developed look like? What theoretical approaches and methods have been developed and what are the common issues or points of reference between the concepts from the different disciplines?

1. On the Diversity of the Term

In order to illustrate the variability of the term three fields in which it is applied will be presented in more detail. *First*, there are different specifications of the term "governance" such as *sectoral, good, corporate* or *public/administrative* governance. *Sectoral* governance refers to coherent areas of the economy such as energy and environmental policy, which are influenced by national and international legislation, while *good* governance is a concept which is to be found mainly in development policy. It refers to specific conditions to which international financial and development institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or national ministries tie their development cooperation. *Corporate* governance relates to private and public enterprises and is often translated to mean "good company management". *Public* or *administrative* governance, in contrast, describes the reduction of bureaucratic procedures in the administrations and the adjustment of these procedures to the needs of the "customers".

Second, the term "governance" refers to different political and spatial levels. It must be differentiated between the local, regional, national and international levels,² or the political/administrative levels of the *Länder*, the nation state and international relationships. This

² In this connection attention must be drawn to the lack of clarity of the concept of levels in general and the concept of regions in particular. Spatially a sub-national, territorial unit is often defined which finds itself somewhere between the national and the local level and which has common points of reference (e.g. Elbe valley meadows, Rhone, Ruhr Area). Supranational or functional spaces are also often described as regions, however (e.g. the European Union, southern Africa or the North American Free Trade Agreement NAFTA).

categorisation is interesting, however, not so much for the differentiation between the levels but rather for the interaction, areas of overlap and interdependencies which arise across the levels. Through the overlapping and interlinking of problem levels and levels of action transnational spaces come into being in which new forms of politics are developed and put into practice. Non-hierarchical forms of coordination across levels, such as collective control processes, are then presented as a particular dimension of governance. These interconnections are also meant when *multi-level* governance is talked about.

Third, the political interactions of a multitude of societal actors must be seen as closely connected with such a level-overlapping understanding of the term. Neither purely state forms of cooperation nor purely civil society or private economy ones are expressed in the term "governance" but rather the cooperation of these actors in novel systems of negotiation and political networks. Through networking, participation procedures and stakeholder procedures new political structures emerge, which in the ideal case support collective, horizontal decision-making processes but can also establish new asymmetries of power and forms of domination. Such governance arrangements basically show a certain continuity and contribute to decision-making in the regulation of specific problems. The same actors are not seldom also participants in the implementation of the pertinent measures.

This three-dimensionality of the term "governance" is enough to illustrate that interdisciplinary research faces a huge challenge. If only very specific aspects which have been listed above, or quite different aspects which have not been mentioned here, are interpreted as forms of governance, this can quickly lead to considerable difficulties in understanding between the disciplines.³ The clarification of the terms used and an agreement with regard to common approaches is therefore the fundamental precondition for interdisciplinary work. Such an interdisciplinary process of clarification has not yet even begun, however. In other words, until now interdisciplinary governance research is just as little established as empirical research on governance questions in general (Mayntz 2004b, Messner 2003). In this situation interdisciplinary research must first examine the different disciplinary concepts, (ideological) definitions and areas of application of the term Only on that basis can common ground be

³ It should not be neglected in this connection that the scientific discourse on governance is also shaped by interests (strengthening of one's own discipline, competition in the acquisition of funds etc.) Governance is therefore also an exciting subject for research in the fields of discourse theory, the theory of science and power theory (Beisheim / Brunnengräber 2003). For a summary of the formation process and the political science debate on governance cf. Brand et al. 2000.

established and interdisciplinary concepts developed. We therefore find ourselves in a field of research with a highly explorative character.

2. The Attractiveness of the Governance Concepts – Causes and Background

In the political and social sciences good reasons can be named for the attractiveness of the idea of governance at both the international and national levels as well as at the local level. At the international level a *transformation of international relationships* and a reorientation of international politics is taking place due to far-reaching political changes in the world, such as the end of bloc confrontation and the establishment throughout the world of the neoliberal paradigm. Global problems such as financial crises, the loss of biological diversity and climate change or the processes of deregulation and privatisation lead to the emergence of new patterns in the lines of conflict and to the need for new, cooperative approaches to regulative policy. Referring to these international dimensions, the UN Commission on Global Governance (CGG) made the term known in its publication "Our Global Neighbourhood". The much-quoted definition is: "Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest." (<http://www.itcilo.it/actrav/actrav-english/telearn/global/ilo/globe/gove.htm#The%20Concept%20of%20Global%20Governance>).

At the *national* level, political science since the early 1990s has been pointing out structural and historical changes in the western industrial nation-states. These reach from the development of the "strong state" of the decades following the second world war through the crisis of the welfare state (Mayntz 1993) to the emergence of the "cooperative state" and recently of the "moderating state" (Messner 1998). These changes, the result of the privatisation of public responsibilities, of a changed taxation policy and monetaristic economic policies (Pierre / Peters 2000) are interpreted less as the result of neoliberal policies and more as state failure.⁴ Because the withdrawal of political and administrative control in specific areas of state activity – such as

⁴ Quite a range of problem areas fall under the concept of *governing failures* according to Renate Mayntz and Philipp Steinberg: the *problem of implementation*, i.e. the inability to establish rules, the *problem of motivation*, i.e. the questioning of the legitimacy of the rules, the *problem of knowledge*, i.e. inadequate knowledge about the complexity of society and effective governing, and finally the *problem of the ability to govern*, i.e. the inappropriateness of the existing regulation structures and instruments (Mayntz 1993, Steinberg 1999).

in the social or health sectors – is often accompanied by the appearance of new (international) regulation and control mechanisms, however, other authors refer, in contrast, to the political constitution of the market. They point to the "national competition state" (Hirsch 1995), which provides control services (re-regulation) to the advantage of economic interests (with reference to the European Union cf. for example Röttger 1997). From this point of view there is a mutual dependence between economic and political globalisation and the emergence of new state and non-state forms of interaction and control.

At the *local* level, new forms of participation (*participative* governance) are required, since participation in large political organisations is declining while at the same time the project or issue oriented, temporary involvement of citizens is increasing. The concept of *participative governance* proceeds from the idea that those affected by a political measure should be involved in the planing and decision-making process.⁵ This point of view presupposes continuing negotiations among the actors involved on the relevant objectives, however, as well as their cooperation and the provision of varying resources for the achievement of the objectives. For Fritz Scharpf structural democracy deficits can only be compensated for if adequate participation by the actors is guaranteed (Scharpf 1998).

Even within economics there are quite varying explanations for the emergence and development of governance concepts. They can roughly be divided into "pure" economic approaches and approaches influenced by the political and social sciences. Leon Lindberg et al. provide an overview of the variety of economic interpretations and the changes in governance mechanisms and patterns (*transformations in governance*). The authors divide the different theoretical explanations into four categories (Lindberg et al. 1991: 3f.) The *first* of these they call *utilitarian* viewpoints, which are based on neoclassical economics and explain the appearance of governance with the action of rationally calculating actors. These actors look for new, profitable forms of cooperation (e.g. Oliver E. Williamson 1975). *Second*, this viewpoint is differentiated from that of *organisational* approaches. Objectives such as solidarity or the appreciation of cooperative interrelations (reciprocity) are regarded as the central factors of influence (e.g. Gramovetter 1985). In approaches characterised by *evolution theory*, thirdly, the focus is on governance as a selection process. According to this approach, those institutional forms establish themselves which can best adapt to the conditions of the environment (e.g. Hannan /

⁵ This takes up ideas which characterised the discussion on more participation by citizens and political participation even before the emergence of the debate on governance.

Freeman 1977, Nelson / Winter 1985). The *fourth* category listed by Lindberg et al. is that of *political economy*, which sees an important reason for the emergence of governance concepts primarily in the struggle for power (e.g. Schmitter / Lembruch 1979).

Although this depiction of the explanations offered cannot be regarded as final, it indicates that the term "governance" is used both by the supporters and by the critics of neoclassical economics and neoliberalism. Consequently, economic governance can be understood as the neoliberal good governance concept of the World Bank, but equally as "non-market" forms of control which emerge due to market failure and thus go beyond the boundaries of the neoclassical explanatory model. Historically, governance in economics from the latter perspective is closely connected with the new institutional economics, which focuses its attention on the role and meaning of cooperation and institutions.

A further reason for the interest in economic governance concepts is seen in the increasing globalisation of the economy. The latter is associated with sharper competitive conditions and the crisis of the financial markets and their negative socio-economic and socio-ecological consequences. Consumption and the privatisation of global public goods and the problems which arise from them (external effects such as air pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity etc.) are described as further reasons why governance concepts are gaining in importance in economics. They promise new explanations for the crisis of the world economy and discuss new measures and forms of regulation (for example, see the recommendations for action by the Enquete Commission 2002).

Recently, particularly the concept of *corporate governance* has awakened interest among economists but also among political and social scientists. It focuses on the responsible management and control of companies and – through the separation of investors and management – above all on the transparency towards the shareholders. This concept is now to be found in virtually every company report of international enterprises. Closely connected with this concept are, finally, the concepts of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) and *corporate social accountability* (CSA). Companies hope to improve their image by taking on (the demanded) social responsibility.

Table: Reasons for the Emergence of Governance Concepts

Political Science	Economics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structural changes in world politics - transnational arenas of activity - privatisation and informalisation - changes in the form of "statehood" - extension of the spectrum of actors - demands for more participation - deficits in the legitimation of international politics and its institutions - global problem constellations: increase in complexity, interdependencies, uncertainties - need for new systems of rules and forms of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crisis of neoclassical economics - global (financial) crises, problem of social and ecological externalities - efficient and profitable forms of cooperation - market-conform frameworks for activity (institutions) - social responsibility of companies - sharper competitive conditions - negative image of transnational concerns

3. Disciplinary Governance Concepts

In the political and social science concepts of governance on the one hand, and in the economic concepts on the other, different weightings are made, the former placing the state and society at the centre of their research interest while the latter focuses on the market. Whereas the political science discussion concentrates on the changed forms of interaction and coordination mechanisms between the state and society, political economy examines the institutional control of occurrences in the market and the social embedding of economic activities (Lütz 2003). In the following section the central common ground of these two approaches and the differences between them will be elaborated. In the fourth and final part the resulting conclusions for interdisciplinary governance research will be drawn.

3.1 Governance in Political and Social Science

Governance concepts are widely used in political and social science. Governance is used there as a descriptive term which refers to social transformation and to changed social mechanisms of regulation, as a political-strategic concept which provides the reason for certain necessities to act, and as an analytical instrument for systematically understanding societal forms of integration and interaction. The different approaches do not seldom set completely different normative accents. Whereas in the case of the political-strategic concepts the target to be aimed for (more participation, forms of global democracy, a new world environmental organisation, new pillars of world policy) is in the foreground, the analytical approach emphasises the "objectivity" of the method of examination and the interest in obtaining knowledge about the transformation. Governance in all three cases is used in demarcation to, or as an extension of, government. Although many authors often locate governance activities in the neighbourhood of governmental actions and clearly focus on the state as the central actor, the prevailing claim to interpretation and the authority of established institutions and their political forms are questioned (Rosenau 1992, Rosenau 1995, Pierre / Peters 2000: 4).

3.1.1 From the Analysis of Control to the Analysis of Governance

In the German-speaking world the concept of governance is in the process of replacing the concept of control which was dominant until the end of the 1990s (Benz 2000). This will certainly make it easier for the German debate on control to link up to international research. It has not yet been clarified, however, whether the term is used synonymously or whether it refers to new control characteristics and processes. Renate Mayntz assumes that the change in the semantics is a sign of a profound change in control theories, which is connected at least partly to real changes in institutions and processes (Mayntz 2004b: 66). By far the larger share of the political science literature, however, is still concerned today with questions of "effective" control, which is examined in particular in connection with multi-level governance in the context of the cross-level policies of the European Union (Benz 2000; Grande 2000).

In control theory, which uncoupled itself from democracy theory in Germany in the 1970s, politics is regarded not as a specific form of domination or as the exercising of power by an interest group, but as political action in the public interest. Hans-Peter Bürth and Axel Görlitz define control as "the technical specification of state intervention in society" (Bürth / Görlitz

2001: 8). These control theory approaches were extended by the examination both of the objects of control and of the self-dynamism of the social actors. Subsequently, the opportunities to participate of all actors who are affected by an action or who represent a public interest by their actions, were to be included in the development and implementation of policies. With this shift towards questions concerning the different forms of regulation the terminology also changed from control to governance and from objects of control to subjects of control.

In the more normative political science research, governance is increasingly used as a counter-concept to hierarchical control. It relates to both the structure and the process of regulation. Arthur Benz defines governance as the sum of "all of the in parallel existing forms of collective regulation of societal circumstances" (Benz 2003: 21, our translation). A changed understanding of the responsibilities of the state is inherent in the concept here – the analyses of governance nevertheless not seldom speak of the cooperative and moderating state although this changed understanding of the state's role has not really been empirically proven (Benz 2001). According to this understanding, the social state of the old type is changing in the direction of a market-conform service state: Bob Jessop identifies governance in this context as a "reflexive type of control", which is characterised by the following features: " ... governance ... has a substantive, procedural rationality that is concerned with solving specific co-ordination problems on the basis of a commitment to a continuing dialogue to establish the grounds for negotiated consent, resource sharing, and concerted action. As such it is a form of self-organisation that in contrast to the anarchy of exchange, depends not on a purely formal, ex post, and impersonal procedures but on substantive, continuing, and reflexive procedures" (Jessop 2002: 39f.)

At the same time the control analyses have been influenced by the discussions on global governance, on new forms of governing at the international level and on the change in the form of statehood through globalisation processes (Hirsch 2001; Czempiel 2002). The central focus is now the structure of regulation, which is shaped by international regimes and by the cooperation of state and non-state actors (Rosenau 1992). Although the nation-states continue to be regarded as the main actors in international politics, the state shows itself to be open in many fields to cooperation with groups from civil society. At the same time transnational political networks and forms of public-private partnership emerge in which the state is only one actor *inter pares* (Brunnengräber 2003b). The shifting of political decisions out of the institutions of nation-state politics into the international arena and the resulting democracy deficits lead in turn to inquiries

concerning the reorganisation of the international institutions, participative governance in these institutions and the foundations of their legitimacy (Brand 2000; Brunnengräber et al. 2001).

From another perspective, global governance is interpreted as a new instrument of domination which goes beyond the state and its institutions. In the new forms of informal politics a central role is played at the global political level by bodies such as the World Economic Forum, political networks such as the Global Commission on Dams, the lobby associations of transnational concerns, transnational social movements and other networks of civil society. The forms of cooperation and the political instruments are becoming more and more varied (soft law, self-regulation mechanisms, new forms of protest) because many different interests find expression in the governance processes. The term global governance expresses something different from the term regime or the term international relationships. Political articulation and regulation shift in the process of globalisation towards non-state forms of politics (Altwater / Mahnkopf 1999: 510). Through informalisation non-hierarchical approaches to politics, i.e. new forms of control (see above) can emerge. The intrinsic power of the new bodies can also increase, however, because these are now dominated by influential institutions and their apparatuses, and weak, non-organised actors lose their influence. In this sense governance is regarded as a discursive instrument of domination which has already taken on a hegemonial form (Brand 2003, for criticism see Weller 2003 and Beisheim / Brunnengräber 2003).⁶

3.1.2 The Term as an Analytical Instrument

In addition to the control-theoretical, normative use of the term, governance is increasingly understood as an instrument for the analysis of social transformations and changed regulation mechanisms. We shall take recourse here to the example of Jan Kooiman's approach, which is being applied increasingly in political and social science governance research. As a further analysis instrumentarium for examining current societal transformation processes we make use of Michel Foucault's concept of "gouvernementalité", which found its analogy and extension above all in the 1990s in the "governmentality studies" and which forms the foundation for critical political and social science analyses (cf. Bröckling et al. 2000).

⁶ The shift in responsibilities to other arenas of action makes it easier for the state, because of its changed role, to make enormous cuts in the social and ecological fields. Pierre and Peters point out that " .. this new image of the government and the public sector helped give the state a partially new and more contemporary image at the same time as it provided some degree of support and legitimacy to further cut-backs in public expenditures" (Pierre / Peters 2000: 6).

Jan Kooiman identifies three central elements of governance: *first*, rules and characteristics of systems (structures), *second*, cooperation for the promotion of legitimacy and effectiveness and *third*, new processes, arrangements and methods (Kooiman 2002: 72f.) According to him, all the members of a society (public and private, organised and unorganised, formal and informal) are responsible in the sense of the shaping of these structures and processes. By structures he understands all "material, social-structural and cultural frames and contexts in which the interaction comes about and into effect. This structural level can be considered as those circumstances that are limiting, broadening and at the same time conditional for the action level." (Kooiman 2002: 77). Processes, in contrast, are related to the "action aspect of interactions ... processes are the outcome of the capacity of social actors to act. In their actions they structure and restructure the (exchange between) systems and in doing so, social developments as well" (Kooiman 1999: 6f.)

With this division into structures and processes Kooiman places the interaction itself at the centre of the analysis. In other words, the actors and structures are continually affected by the interactions, which place them both in relationship to one another. This draws attention to the uniqueness of each individual governance arrangement and requires that each individual interaction is examined more closely. In addition to the central focus on the interactions Kooiman points out the superordinate dimensions of the governance regulations. Here, he differentiates between the generation of general norms and values, and the formulation and implementation of policies: *meta-order* governance relates to the development of values and models. The public debate, the argumentative exchange and the ethical norms of the actors are in the foreground. *First-order* governance relates to activities and measures which can be implemented within limited institutionally defined possibilities. This primarily concerns the conveyance of administrative interests. *Second-order* governance aims at the creation of institutions, instruments and programmes. The *output-legitimacy* of decisions is in the foreground of these regulations. The categories are intended to facilitate a differentiated perspective on the different levels and systems of proceedings.

In addition to this categorial approach, Michel Foucault's socio-critical ideas on, and analyses of, the transformation of management and control instruments possess a high degree of connectability to the governance debates. The concept of government is the focal point of his analyses. With his coining of the term *gouvernementalité*, which combines government with mentality, Foucault attempts to give expression to the complexity of societal management and

control: "By *gouvernementalité* I understand the totality, formed from the institutions, the procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and the tactics, which allow this quite specific and also complex form of power to be exercised, which has as its main target the population, as its main form of knowledge political economy and as an essential technical instrument the security dispositive" (Foucault 2000: 64, our translation). Government is therefore the connecting of a multitude of forms of action and practices, which aim at the managing and controlling of individuals and communities. "This totality of procedures, techniques, methods, which guarantees the control of people among themselves, appears to me today to have reached a crisis ... " (ibid. 1996: 118-120, quoted in Lemke et al. 2000:7).

Thus, both mechanisms and techniques of self-management and third-party management play a role (Lemke et al. 2000: 10). In this way Foucault develops an understanding of politics beyond that of a hierarchical, repressive state which acts from top to bottom, and which enables the subjects (population) to be included in the transformation of the state (cf. Buckel / Kannankulam 2002). It is the relationship between "technologies of domination" (measures aimed at subjecting the behaviour of individuals for purposes of domination) and "technologies of the self" (measures which allow the individuals to effect changes to their bodies, souls and life-styles using their own means, so that they can transform and modify themselves and achieve a certain condition), which determines the societal relationships of power and strength. Governing, in contrast to domination, which is imparted for example through the judiciary, the police and the military, is defined as a process of multi-faceted interrelationships between politics and society and cannot be reduced to a strict division into the governing and the governed. A parallel to the Commission on Global Governance's definition of governance becomes apparent here, but at the same time also a possible, and an analytically further-reaching, statement of reasons for the emergence, and the aims, of today's forms of governance is supplied.

The work of Michel Foucault is now a quarter of a century old. Security policy following 11 September 2001 and the establishment of neoliberal forms of government, which leads to social insecurity, supports private enterprise, increases competition with one another and increases both individual and common risks, has certainly contributed to the topicality, and above all to the discussion, of Foucault's hypotheses. He himself spoke – with reference to Germany – of the possibilities of a "neoliberal *gouvernementalité*". Foucault's much quoted "productivity of power" avoids – as is illustrated here – the dominant dualism between politics and economics. He is interested in how the separation into different functional systems arose historically. The

governmentality studies are based on these considerations and examine the shift of the responsibility for actions which was previously in the hands of the state to civil society and private actors, which is regarded not as the result of economic laws or inherent political necessities but as the consequence of changed societal relationships of power (Thomas Lemke, Frankfurter Rundschau 29.08.2004, cf. also Mitchell 1999). The perspective of governmentality also makes it possible not to attribute societal transformations in the era of neoliberalism fatefully to the withdrawal of the state or the dominance of the market but to understand these processes themselves as a political programme in which the societal relationships of power and the "topology of the social" (Lemke et al. 2000: 25) undergo appreciable changes.

3.1.3 *Interim Summary and Criticism*

It has been illustrated that governance concepts are used differently in the field of collective, horizontal or power-forming regulations: *objective* governance research aims to describe and analyse the (re-)structuring of the social order, and in the sense of a transparent and participative shaping of the political process the term serves as a *normative model*. With the changed understanding of the responsibilities of the state or the internationalisation of statehood, finally, new forms of participation and regulation become more important. In an interdisciplinary context there is therefore considerable heterogeneity in the understanding of the term.

Governance concepts are to be found in analyses of international relationships, in debates on control, in examinations of political networks, in the analysis of the multi-level politics of the European Union (Grande 2000, Gote / Gbikpi 2002) and in sustainability research (Rosenau 2003). Even although these multitudinous concepts and applications do not at all indicate the existence of a developed instrument of analysis or a completed theory (the lack of empirical studies is enough not to allow this), the establishment of the term is taking place within the different sub-disciplines without attention being paid to the differences and contradictions we have named or to the different interests which are connected with the use of the term.

Finally, the over-complexity of the concepts and their political-strategic over-shaping do not make scientific-analytical reference to the term easy. One early point of criticism was the lack of a discussion of questions of democracy theory by the governance approaches (Brunnengräber / Stock 1999), and another is the lack of attention paid to structures of power and domination (Jessop 2002, Mayntz 2004a: 74f.) Issues concerning the value added, weaknesses and problems

which the governance concepts bring with them into practice and science thus remain unresolved.

3.2 *Governance in Economics*

Although the term governance was used early on in economics (e.g. by Williamson 1979) the debate on governance and the use of the term – with the exception of corporate governance – is less popular than in the social and political sciences. The debate has its roots in the new institutional economics which is closely connected with Oliver E. Williamson and is also increasingly discussed today in political economy. These two theoretical and conceptual "homes" of the economic governance debate will be presented here in more detail in two separate sub-chapters. Another major difference in the use of governance is the question which level of study or aggregation is examined.

In macro and meso examinations the issue in the foreground is that of the control or regulation of modern capitalist economic systems. The national and sectoral level is important here, and must increasingly be seen in an international context. We denote this perspective *economic governance*. At the micro level questions concerning the interactions of private firms with the environment and concerning their internal structure are formulated (corporate governance). This branch of economic governance research, which is now the most popular, will be presented in conclusion.

3.2.1 *Governance in the New Institutional Economics*

The early use of the term governance in economics is connected with the new institutional economics, which with its focus on institutions (rules and arrangements which influence human activity)⁷ and transaction costs differs from the dominant economic theory, neoclassical economics. This branch of economics was moulded by Oliver E. Williamson, who already in 1979 gave one of his works the title "Transaction cost economics: The governance of contractual relations" (Williamson 1979). According to Sigurt Vitolis the economic governance

⁷ Institutions can be understood as permanent agreements which have an influence on the shape of the behaviour of economic subjects. According to Elinor Ostrom these are not organisations in the narrow sense but rules, norms and strategies (Ostrom 1999). Wenke (2004) defines as permanent agreements: decision-making systems (directive and hierarchical systems of bureaucracies, rules of political systems), behavioural structures (legal and social norms) and finally organisations (organs of the state, state authorities, parties, associations etc.)

perspective focuses on "the institutional environment that constrains and coordinates economic action" (Vitolis 1995: 3).

In addition to the emphasis on the importance of institutions and institutional arrangements (as the *environment* of economic transactions and production contexts) for the success of economic systems, a central difference to neoclassical economics lies in the rescinding of the assumption of absolute *rational choice*, which is modified to *bounded rationality*: behaviour is intended to be rational but due to missing preconditions (e.g. information) the result is not (cf. Williamson 1975). The neoclassical concept of a free and perfect market is thus extended, but the search for the (economically) most efficient solution remains the same. Against this background Oliver E. Williamson developed the hierarchy of the firm as a model of economic order differing from pure market coordination (cf. also Williamson 1975, 1979, 1985), in which firms attempt to reduce uncertainties in their relationships to suppliers or caused by outsourced production steps.⁸ "Put pointedly, the visible hand of the management replaces the invisible hand of the market here" (Lütz 2003: 5, our translation).

The theory of transaction costs asks what form of transactions can be conducted most efficiently in what institutional arrangements and when the cumulative transaction and production costs are lowest. Since transaction costs include production costs as well as investments in human capital and the safeguarding against uncertainties, transaction cost theory and institutional economics attempt to broaden their horizon compared to neoclassical economics but retain the economic efficiency paradigm.

3.2.2 *Governance in Political Economy*

According to Susanne Lütz (2004) "the debate on 'governance in political economy' ... [deals with] functional elements of the modern market economy and institutional forms for controlling it" (ibid.: 164, our translation). Political economy is a social science which conducts a social scientific analysis of capitalism by examining the power fields of politics and economics in an integrated fashion. Due to this approach political economy demonstrates a unifying moment in the governance debate. Both political science approaches and institutional economics

⁸ Contrary to these ideas of Williamson, which favour vertical integration (in-house production), within the framework of current liberalisation policies in the public services primarily processes of vertical dis-integration are demanded and supported (cf. Dickhaus / Dietz 2004). In the same way, the production strategies of transnational concerns today are directed less towards the reduction of uncertainties than towards the level of wage costs and taxes and to the lowest possible environmental and social restrictions.

approaches to governance are to be found in it. With its focus on the institutional control of the economy, however, political economy at the same time differentiates itself from the governance discourse of political science and state or control theory, which is concerned with forms of coordination between the state and society. As a result, an extensive discourse on the different or common understandings of governance cannot be ascertained.

In addition to the division in the new institutional economics into the market and the hierarchy of the firm, political economy examines the non-market elements (institutions) of an economic system which exist beyond the boundaries of firms:⁹

- the *market* as guarantor of an efficient allocation of goods, services and capital (the original category of classical and neoclassical economics)
- (*firm*) *hierarchies* as a vertical economic model for the reduction of uncertainty, the raising of synergy effects and the lowering of transaction costs (cf. 3.2.1)
- *networks* (cf. e.g. Hollingsworth et al. 1994a) as a horizontal, longer-term cooperation model (below the contract level), from which the network partners expect to gain advantages (research partnerships, strategic alliances etc.)
- *associations* (cf. e.g. Streek / Schmitter 1985) as hierarchical forms of organisation (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI, The Umbrella Organisation of German Industry), Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA, The Confederation of German Employers' Associations) trade unions)
- *forms of state intervention* in the market, in which the state is seen not only as defining general conditions but also as an economic actor.

The combined and hybrid appearance of these categories is constitutive for an economic system. This differentiated perspective and the emphasis on the state as an important actor beyond its function as the definer of the general framework represent an important difference to institutional economics.

⁹ Susanne Lütz calls these basic types of institutional control "governance types of the economy" (cf. Lütz 2004, on the different types cf. e.g. Hollinsworth et al. 1994a).

3.2.3 Sectors and Levels of Economic Governance

Economic approaches to governance can relate to regional, national or international configurations of market economies, to different sectors, branches or relatively closely tied economic units and to individual firms with their internal structures and transactions. In the following we look in more detail at examples from first sectoral, second national and thirdly and finally firm-related areas of application. *First*, an important level of economic governance analyses is the meso-level of economic sectors (*sectoral governance*). Since the beginning of the 1990s this level has come to the attention in particular of American economic sociologists such as Campbell, Lindberg and Hollingsworth (see above). Leon Lindberg et al. state: "Governance is a phenomenon that is best conceptualized at the level of industries and industrial sectors" (Lindberg et al. 1991: 5). Roger Hollingsworth et al. define a sector as the totality of firms which produce competing products (Hollingsworth et al. 1994b). According to Peter Czada a theory of sectoral governance mechanisms appears suited to combine the three factors which characterise "policy-making" – actors, systems of rules and problem environments – in one explanatory approach (Czada 1997).

The dominance of specific control elements (market, firm hierarchy etc.) in the different sectors depends to a considerable degree on their relationship to the public and to the state as well as on their concrete form: whether they are labour or capital intensive, require highly skilled or low skilled labour, produce products for short or long-term requirements, have a high share of services etc. "Regimes of economic governance differ in the way in which market and corporate hierarchy relations are embedded in community structures, moderated by associational bargains, and conceded, protected, facilitated, promoted, privileged, prescribed, or, for that matter, outlawed by the state." (Hollingsworth et al. 1994b: 270f.) The authors of *sectoral governance* analyses often combine different theoretical approaches and in doing so, as distinguished from neoclassical theory *and* from transaction cost theory, question the primacy of economic efficiency as a general explanatory context. They extend their horizon to historical contexts and path dependencies and place the observation of processes in the foreground. They thus not only integrate different economic governance concepts but also create a bridge to large areas of innovation research and to the political and social sciences.¹⁰

¹⁰ Exemplary sectoral studies are presented by, among others, the work of Hollingsworth et al. (e.g. Hollingsworth et al. 1994b). Czada has examined specific sectoral occurrences within the framework of the process of German unification.

Secondly, studies on economic governance relating to the nation-state (*national governance*) examine the institutional set-up and the economic performance of national economic systems. These studies often deal with the situation in developing and newly industrialised countries and are linked to "good governance" (see above). A large number of them examine countries comparing the influence of institutions on economic growth and on financial and social development (Ahrens 2002).¹¹ Sigurt Vitols, on the other hand, examines the influence of a broad institutional environment on the decisions of actors (in this case investment by banks) and refers explicitly in this context to the situation in the industrial nations (Vitols 1995).¹² Susanne Lütz denotes comparative capitalism research as an example of national governance research, which she judges, however, to be too static and simplistic for a comprehensive presentation of the variety and transformation of governance (Lütz 2003, 2004):

Third, the firm-related concept of corporate governance has gained increasingly in importance since the production of first Reports and Codes of Best Practice at the beginning of the 1990s in the UK. Once these Codes and Reports had been taken up in other countries and firms, the OECD took up the theme and in 1999 published its first basic principles of "good corporate governance".¹³ Corporate governance describes, first, the inwardly directed responsibility of a firm's management and sets up rules based on the separation of company management and capital investors (primarily in the case of companies quoted on the stock exchange), which are intended to increase confidence and transparency vis-à-vis investors. The original corporate governance approach thus relates essentially to the *shareholder* but not to other "affected" actors or to sustainability aspects (cf. OECD 1999).

Although the current revision of the OECD principles (OECD 2004) emphasises, in contrast, the role of stakeholders and thus aims at worker participation, the "official" corporate governance framework remains separate from direct ecological and social demands. Only with the emergence of the concepts of *corporate social responsibility* and *corporate social accountability* does the approach acquire an extension directed outwards in which private companies commit themselves within the framework of voluntary commitments to a social and ecological

¹¹ A good overview of comparative country studies is provided by Joachim Ahrens (2002). He analyses diverse indicators such as the corruption index, the existence of a legal framework, infrastructure etc., but also many qualitative aspects.

¹² Vitols examined comparative case studies in the steel industry in a country with a corporatist, coordinated model (Germany) and one with an uncoordinated model (USA) (Vitols 1995).

¹³ The principles developed by the OECD provide an internationally widespread framework, which has been adopted by many countries and formulated into national codes on the basis of their individual national situation (OECD 2004).

responsibility towards society.¹⁴ This and similar concepts have been paid increased attention not least due to the many social and ecological scandals involving large transnational concerns (Nike, adidas etc., examples in Schwalbach 2002) and to corruption (Enron, WorldCom etc.) and are now also being discussed in connection with corporate governance (Loew et al. 2004). Although a recent economic debate on the relationship between corporate social responsibility and corporate governance exists (for example Sacconi 2004), we cannot in any way speak of an "anchoring" of these concepts in economics. Also, the discussion on such *soft-law* regulations (voluntary self-commitments) in connection with the increasing privatisation of world politics by "global players" has until now primarily taken place in political science.

3.2.4 *Interim Summary and Criticism*

As in political science, in economics there is no uniform basic understanding of governance. Here as a whole, however, the debate is less intense and less linked to existing concepts and theories. In addition, the proximity of political economy to political science means that the boundaries between the disciplines is already becoming blurred. Economic governance research is often (and originally) connected with institutional economics analyses on the basis of transaction costs. A central problem of the transaction cost approach, however, lies in the fact that many transactions are difficult to evaluate in a monetary sense and therefore the negative external effects of an ecological and social nature are as a rule only inadequately represented.¹⁵ This approach ignores factors such as values, power, culture, trust etc. Rudolf Richter demands in this connection that the new institutional economics should converge towards the social sciences, and explicitly that it should take account of network structures, path dependencies, power, culture and "fairness" (Richter 2001: 32).

The focus on the "institutional control of the economy" (Kenis / Schneider 1996: 11) can be regarded as the common denominator of economic governance research, on the basis of which analyses related to firms or economic systems are conducted. The question of the efficiency of control is often in the foreground here, which means that other aspects and success factors are

¹⁴ The EU Commission defines corporate social responsibility as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (EU Commission 2002). Following the WSSD in Johannesburg a further-reaching concept was propagated in which these voluntary commitments were to be transformed into legally binding accountabilities.

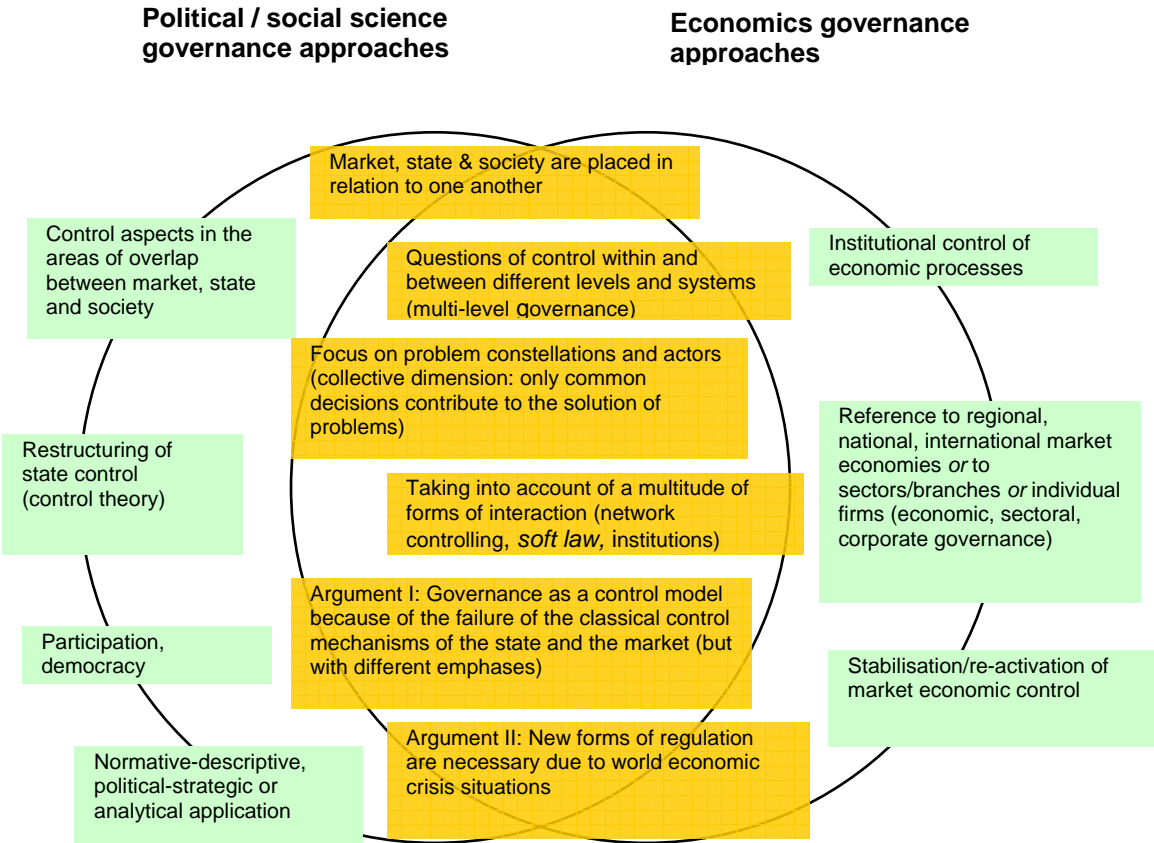
¹⁵ The problem of externalities and social costs was already tackled by William Kapp in the 1950s (cf. e.g. Kapp 1979). Representatives of thermodynamic economics also devoted themselves to this question (e.g. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, Hermann Daly), in which the transformation of materials takes the place of the examination of transactions and in addition the concept of institutions is extended in a process oriented fashion by time, space and history. In particular the latter approach could be used fruitfully for governance approaches.

ignored. One example is the role of stability-creating organisational forms for capitalist economic processes, such as are elucidated in regulation theory.¹⁶ With regard to the lack of inclusion of social and (external) ecological effects the lack of attention paid to sustainability aspects must also be criticised; these are at present neither integrated not established in the economic governance debate, neither in theory nor in practice, e.g. in the OECD Principles for Corporate Governance.

4. Results

The starting-point of this study was the question of a cross-disciplinary understanding of governance and of interdisciplinary research approaches to the analysis of governance structures and governance processes.

Diagram: Integration of the Disciplinary Governance Approaches



¹⁶ This refers to the ability of the economy to establish itself vis-à-vis other areas of society and to react to crisis tendencies (on the debate within the regulation school cf. e.g. Brand / Raza 2003).

The exposition on the disciplinary points of view has shown three things: *first*, that both between and within the disciplines there is no uniform understanding of governance, *second*, that it is generally accepted as given that there are already the beginnings of larger (thematic) areas of overlap between the political and social sciences and economics, and *third*, that within the disciplines today there is already a partial 'practice' of interdisciplinarity.¹⁷

On the *first* result: the focal points of governance research in the political and social sciences and in economics are just as manifold as the research backgrounds, intentions and questions. Within the political and social sciences, first, the extension, readjustment and (perhaps also) rejuvenation of the control debate and control theory is taking place. But the theories dealing with international relationships have also been dealing with the phenomenon of global governance for some time now. Finally, it is power and discourse theoretical concepts – such as in the theoretical school of international political economy – which refer to governance concepts (Bieling 2003).

Within the framework of the economic debates both individual firms (corporate governance) and macroeconomic connections (depicted here as economic governance) are discussed. With its sectoral and institutional perspective, economic governance research shows a close proximity to new institutional economics and is concerned with questions relating to the institutional control of the economy, while the political and social sciences deal with socio-political regulative structures and processes at different, increasingly interdependent levels.

On the *second* result: the governance concepts in both disciplines often differ with relation to their theoretical, normative or methodical approaches, which lead to correspondingly different results and recommendations. For example, specific governance arrangements can be judged successful if efficiency criteria are applied but inadequate from the point of view of democratic and participative criteria. This does not necessarily differentiate the political and social sciences from economics, however, and the differences within the disciplines can be greater than those between them.

At the same time there are a number of things in common which can serve as the basis for interdisciplinary approaches. In the political and social sciences and in economic concepts the

¹⁷ Fourthly, it could be added that interdisciplinarity in an institutional sense scarcely exists any more. We have not checked this empirically, however.

market, the state and society are increasingly being placed in relationship to one another. In addition the different levels of action (multi-level governance), different actors and forms of interaction are discussed by all of them, as are the globally emerging problem constellations. In this situation an interdisciplinary research approach requires the identification of common problems and questions, the formulation of shared assumptions and the development of integrative methods.

One possibility is presented by analyses referring to actors and problems, which regarding *common goods* (Mosse 1997; Mehta et al. 1999; Cleaver 2000) point out above all the social and historical dimensions of social interactions, and power relationships as determinants of social relationships. The analysis of the relationships between individuals and institutions, and family and social structures, presents a clear view of the regulations of everyday life, and gender and social differences. This approach could, however, be extended by the concept of global public goods (Brunnengräber 2003a) or concepts of socio-ecological transformation.

On the *third* result: just as interdisciplinary research is already taking place in sustainability and environmental research, so now for example within the framework of the new institutional economics there is a discussion on the consideration of further-reaching social, psychological and ecological aspects. The 'traditional' separation of the disciplines is becoming blurred to the extent that the division into political and economic subsystems can hardly continue to be maintained.

Economics such as that represented by neoclassical theory, which is neither political nor international but which appears as the self-certainty of Modernity, corresponds less than ever to social, political, economic and ecological reality. Politics is becoming more economic and economics more political. As a result, in our study the relationship of the social and political sciences to economics has been illustrated, just as the relationship of economics to political studies. The borrowing of approaches from the respective other disciplines indicates a possible function of the concept of governance: as a bonding agent between the disciplines.

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