

RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2015, Exeter;  
*Session 18: Mobility, mutation and translation processes of EU renewable energy policies*

# **Bioenergy development, spatial design & policy mobility from Brussels' offices to local sites of materialization:**

*Loosing the other end out of sight?*

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# Mobility of the renewable energy policy of the EU

- **Policy mobility & mutation**

- process that transports and translates particular policy programs and ideas developed in one spatial context to other places in geographically variable ways.

- **Spatial design of policy**

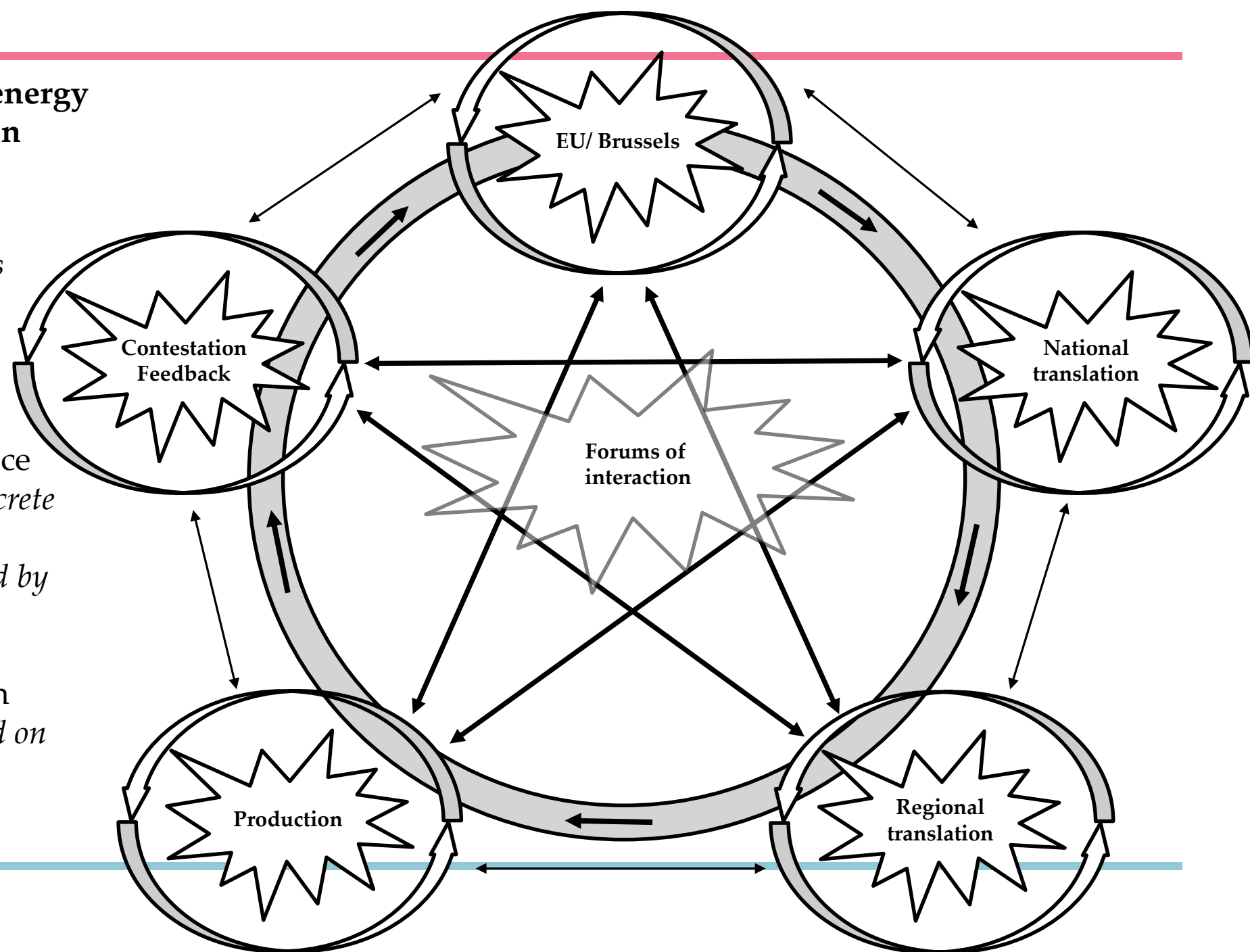
- a purposeful activity which aims to make a policy a coherent but mutable whole and thus transportable and implementable in various contexts.

- **EU policy design as a local process**

- What kind of spatial context (Brussels & national contexts)?
- How is the renewable energy policy designed to be transportable to various parts of Europe?

## Translation loops of bioenergy policy and materialization

- Coercive governance
  - *Rules and standards*
- Voluntary governance
  - *Soft incentives*
- Empty governance space
  - *Policy empty of concrete measures*
  - *“Filling in” required by various loops*
- Translation & Mutation
  - *Domestication based on national/local problematizations*

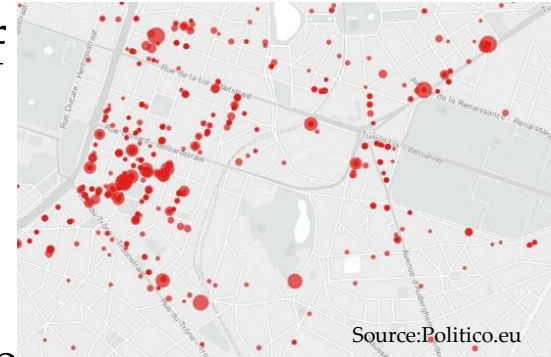


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# Mobility & translation from the streets of Brussels to....

## Brussels (*Design/translations*):

- “our bible is the directive” DG ENER officer: allow national translation of targets/approach
- Bidirectional “powers of reach”
  - *From Brussels*: EU’s powerful presence felt in all parts of Europe
  - *To Brussels*: Member states, regions and non-governmental actors make their presence felt in Brussels.
- Policy design is combination of official and unofficial involvement of specific stakeholders depending on the policy in question
- Brussels as meeting place of power relations (translating spatial experiences)



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# Mobility & translation from the streets of Brussels to....

## National (*design/translations*):

- Focus on own industries/strengths/resources/legislation
- Own resource vs. import oriented (externalization vs. internalization)
- Ministry responsibilities/priorities: *key clientele variations!*



## Regional (*translations/ design*):

- Regional boosterism, local economy first approach, strong economical reasoning
- local, added regional value: sustainability/environmental impacts as side issue



*“the topic regional added value [...], and that the money/investment stays in the region [...], this is the topic you can convince people to join in” (German Bioenergy Region official)*

# Mobility & translation from the streets of Brussels to....

## Production/market translations:

- Feasibility, market gap, pragmatism, competition with fossil fuels
- consumer argument: cheaper (pay back time) & local value

*“most people would like to tell you a story about that [ . . . ] they would like to support the climate issue, but when it comes down to the end of the day people are counting their kroners”*

(Norwegian local energy agency official)

## Contestation/Feedback translations:

- Best practice examples towards policy alterations (economic/Co2 success)
- Arising conflicts: result in contestation/prevention of development
- Economic (industry/entrepreneurs) vs. environmental (NGO) critique

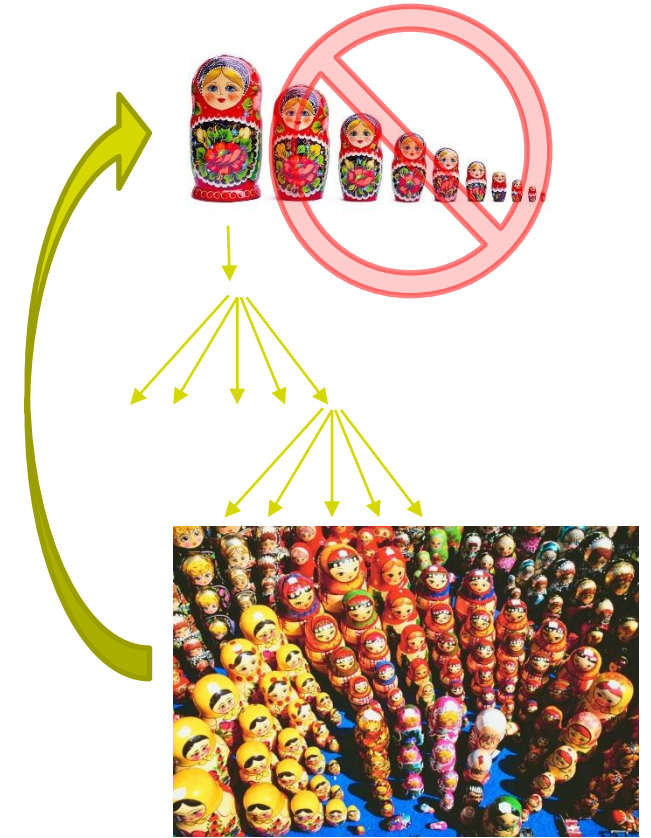
*“hard to get common position paper with other NGOs”* (NGO official)





# Mobility, translation, mutation: *towards a common approach to develop bioenergy in the EU or loosing (parts of) the other end out of sight?*

- *“It's bit like a Russian doll here because, maybe we're adding shells to the Russian doll rather than pulling them off”* (DG CLIMATE officer)
- *“What is decided in Brussels might be acknowledged but in the end it is waited upon how these things get translated into national legislation”* (German Bioenergy Region official)
- interregional exchange *“...is rather limited [...] as every region has its specific focus”* (German Bioenergy Region official)
- Best practice/critical feed-back to EU design level (delineation of best-practice priorities & policy aims)



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## Some lessons learned and what could be next...

- Concept of translation loops enables to better understand the transnational policy & materialization processes
- Thorough evaluation of translation loops and their interlinkages require in-depth qualitative and multiscalar analysis
- EU regulation as a balancing act between stabilization for common approach and the need to create mobile policy able to be translated & filled-in to suit national/local context
- Problematization of best-practice feed-back for policy adjustment (priorities, marginalization of certain approaches,...)

### *Next?!*

- Role of spatial context on policy translation processes
- Use of conflict database to study materialization & contestation of processes in relation to feedback and EU/national scale policy design (e.g integration, neglect,..)



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