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### Abstract

This chapter briefly outlines the theoretical framework of Evolutionary Governance Theory. It presents its architecture as well as the most important concepts and their relations. We emphasize the concepts of contingency and co-evolution, which serve as the base of an analysis of co-evolving configurations: actor/institutions, formal/informal, and power/knowledge. We discuss the three dependencies: path dependence, interdependence, and goal dependence and reflect on governance techniques and steering options. For a more detailed overview of EGT we refer to the book: 'Evolutionary Governance Theory, an introduction' (Van Assche et al. (Evolutionary governance theory: an introduction. Springer, 2014a)). For a further elaboration on the relations between concepts we also refer to the Glossary chapter at the end of this book.

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## 2.1 Introduction

EGT starts with a broad definition of governance that allows addressing the huge variety in governing practices that can be found all over the world and that have emerged and disappeared in history. Governance is the taking of collectively binding decisions for a community in a community, by governmental and other actors. Governance is thus not reduced to one way of governing, not to a prescriptive formula, and not to something supposedly new. Our definition includes a myriad of state forms, diverse models of democracy and markets, and many possible linkages between public and private parties. Governance includes many actors in shifting relationships. It also includes a great variety of institutions, both formal and informal, that coordinate interactions, transactions and the distribution and use of resources. And it includes the various forms of knowledge and expertise upon which governance practices are based.

EGT draws on an ontology that acknowledges the anti-essentialist and contingent nature of governance. This implies that governance and its elements are mutually defining, while the elements shape each other, in the course of governance histories. Elements and structures are considered to be constituted in governance paths. These paths can be studied from different angles, using concepts such as discourse, narrative, social system, or institution. EGT offers a new way to connect these concepts in a consistent manner, through the binding to a shared goal: the analysis of governance. Governance is about any coordinated attempt to govern a reality, but also about the way in which societies makes sense of reality (Duineveld et al. 2009).

In a more radical constructivist vein, we can say that governance also constructs the reality it governs, although never precisely in the way it intends to: governance has effects it cannot fully grasp or predict. In the following chapters, we will see many examples of this. Many objects and subjects of governance are constituted in the act of governance and vice versa. The way the world and its socio-environmental issues are observed and understood is inextricably related to the way these are governed. Knowledge in such perspective does not mirror a preexisting order or an external reality, but it is always an active discursive construction of that reality. It cannot be detached from the historical and cultural contexts in which it is produced and performed. This also implies that there are multiple constructed realities that interact in governance and that governance paths are histories of confrontations between these different versions of the world and different attempts to steer, govern, and coordinate. A common good and a common understanding of the world can never be assumed in the analysis of and recommendations for governance.

## 2.2 Contingency, Knowledge and Evolution

EGT conceptualizes governance as radically evolutionary. All elements of governance are contingent, since they are subject to evolution. They could have been different; their structure, components, and functioning reflect an evolution in a specific environment. The elements of governance include actors, institutions, knowledge, objects, subjects, organizations, and more (as the reader will discover in the following chapters). Also the relations between these elements are evolving. The elements co-evolve and so does their relation. Change in one element can trigger change in another, while at the same time their relation might alter. Both elements and their relations are constituted by various processes, some related to shared understandings, others to actor strategies and to the set of rules and roles currently in place. Actor strategies and the more latent and embedded mechanisms influence the construction of problems, the development of solutions, the places where decisions are taken, the coalitions that are build, et cetera. Furthermore, governance produces many of the elements and structures that, conversely, will influence its evolution. Governance is self-referential in the sense that decisions always refer to previous decisions and to the presence of a certain set of actors and a certain set of institutions, as the rules of the game. Within such evolutionary conceptualization of governance, governing is an act of management and a barely manageable process of emergence in which elements and structures are in a synchronic and diachronic relation. They are interdependent and co-evolve. Hence they are contingent, in the old Aristotelean sense: possible, but not necessary. What makes actors and institutions possible is the governance path, while the unpredictable nature of that path makes them not necessary. Over time, any element can be replaced, despite the tendency of actors, institutions, of ideas, narratives and ideologies to stay in place and to present themselves as timeless.

Governance and all its elements and structures are discursively constructed. It is through meaning that an understanding of the external world is constructed. Such a perspective does not represent a denial of the existence of an external reality or an environment. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that all observations, communications and actions are structured by people; people living together in communities and trying to make sense of themselves and the world. Systems theorist Niklas Luhmann speaks of social systems, philosopher Michel Foucault of discourses and sociologist Stephan Fuchs (2001) of recursive networks of communication. In an EGT perspective these terms are used as more or less alike, unless or until they are specified in a particular context or application, where the associated refined distinctions of one concept proves more helpful. Each theory has its own background, its own strengths and weaknesses, and its own focus points. From an EGT perspective, they all refer to observers who construct the outside world based on their own distinctions. Social system, discourse, network, narrative are all concepts which elucidate aspects of on-going processes of interpretation and reinterpretation of the world, of internal communications and external environments. In line with its constructivists nature, EGT considers every communication, every observation or interpretation a

contingent construct of the observer (Luhmann 2012; Fuchs 2001). Observers are part of communities, of cultures, and construction by observers does not relegate us to the domain of the uniquely personal and subjective.

From social systems theory, we borrow the idea that human communication, and decision-making as a specialized form of communication, is self-referential. Each object, subject, action or narrative, is observed and interpreted according to the logic of the observer, relying on shared schemes of interpretation. Understanding is mediated via concepts, which refer to other concepts. Decisions refer to previous decisions. Plans refer to previous plans, and their interpretation requires concepts which were gradually included in governance. Interpretive schemes are themselves a product of evolution. In systems terms: they recursively produce their communications from their own communications, by means of and in reference to earlier concepts, distinctions, and procedures (Teubner 1989). In post-structuralist terms: new discourses can only emerge through the presence and reflection upon earlier discourses. In network terms: transformation of the network starts from the network, its elements, relations and operations. In management language: what can be managed, and how it can be managed, emerges in the history of the organization, and by means of reference to that history.

Transformation of governance is thus always self-transformation, and the products of governance, as in policies, plans, laws, rules, can only make sense for the audience, for the community, if it took into account the existing context of policies, plans, laws, etc. Only when they make sense, they can have coordinative power, and only when this is the case, governance can transform itself in the direction envisioned by the governance product. If this is not the case, governance can either collapse, move to different arenas, or it can reproduce itself for a while on the existing set of rules and roles (Van Assche et al. 2012b). This goes on until these do not perform well anymore. We come across such situations of decreasing fit between governance arena and community in several chapters.

If we say that governance has 'elements', it may sound as if governance is closed, a closed process in a closed society. An elite? Elite governance certainly exists, but even there, and certainly in our theoretical universe, governance takes place in society and exerts an influence on society. Governance processes indeed refer to themselves, and are in this sense to be studied as environments with their own identity. Pretending that society simply governs itself, without paying specific attention to the context of governance itself, to the influence of governance on governance, makes it harder to understand many of the perceived failures of governance, as well as the latent possibilities. EGT understands governance as a universe in and by itself. It distinguishes governance configurations that can only be understood by reference to unique governance paths.

But governance paths are tied to communities, to groups and territories amenable to the making of collectively binding decisions. Indeed, governance takes place in society. Communities govern themselves, and the community is understood as the most relevant environment for a governance configuration. The environment is not unified, not marked by a single rationality or identity, and not always capable of seeing itself as one, of knowing its own desires and its own assumptions. Within the

community there are always multiple common goods and shared values and these are not always clear. In governance, confronted with the need to take decisions, there is usually pressure to reflect on identity, values, goods, and they might crystallize in the process of reflection, but this is not necessarily the case, and it does not necessarily arise without conflict (Van Assche et al. 2008, 2009).

Communities, and society at large, are thus conceptualized in EGT as multiplicities (in Deleuzian terms), as conglomerates with a unity which cannot be translated into one unifying principle. It takes a narrative, the creation of a narrative, to see the unity of a community. But understanding the initial multiplicity is important, in analytic sense and in a political sense: seeing unity while forgetting it is constructed is imposing unity, and imposing identity. A community is always marked by different constructions of reality. If governance is somehow democratic, then governance arenas bring out the diversity in understandings and interests. What happens to these understandings and interests, will be molded by the environment of governance itself.

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### 2.3 Power and Knowledge

For EGT, here following Foucault, knowledge of the world is produced in discourses which evolve, compete, and transform. The choice for a certain construction of reality simultaneously veils alternative constructions, with different delineations of objects and subjects and their relations. Actors in governance interact in and through discourse. Actors structure their own identities and those of others through discourse. In line with Foucault we consider a discourse a structured set of concepts that enables access to a certain part of aspect of reality, while simultaneously veiling other parts or aspects. The Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse draws attention to the fact that knowledge of the world is always embedded in power relations. Power generates discursive processes, knowledge creates power, and knowledge is a product of power relations (Foucault 1979). Power is not necessarily tied to individual or group action, desire, and intentionality. Rather it is a web of forces at micro-level that make things at the same time possible and understandable and that allows for aggregations of power at higher levels of understanding and authority.

What is recognized as relevant knowledge in governance is shaped in a history of shifting power relations (Van Assche et al. 2011, 2013; Beunen and Opdam 2011; Duineveld et al. 2009). Those power relations partly spring from access to, use of, and privileging of certain types of knowledge about self and environment. The way humans understand their environment is based on a selection of knowledge which partly reflects histories of power relations, of domination and marginalization, but also of mutual benefit, shared understanding and synergies.

Power relations can codify and entrench certain forms of knowledge, in their truth claims, and in their impact on the community. They can underpin and stabilize rules, policies, and plans directly. They can also support, and be supported by, the narratives, and more broadly ideologies, that circulate in a community. Especially

narratives addressing identity, history and future are important here. Each of them presumably linked to a set of values, to ascriptions of good and bad, of drama, of significant change and significant environments. Some of these narratives can directly address good governance, and produce narratives of governance, while others leave space for interpretation and can generate competing governance perspectives. Narratives can stabilize power relations, and the governance configuration that suits those who benefit. This, however, is only the case when the narratives circulating in governance, sometimes produced by governance, have resonance in the community and if they are somehow persuasive. Communities can reproduce narratives and ideologies obligingly, without believing in them, yet in that case, the actual coordinating power of formal rules derived from the narratives is likely to be slight.

Knowledge and power not only serve and mark actors, they also create them. Discourses create objects and subjects at the same time, and the subjects in one discourse are actors in another one. What is recognized as an actor, or a potential actor, in governance, hinges on the discourse of existing actors, already in a position of power, and on the stories these actors use to see themselves and the community at large.

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## 2.4 Actors and Institutions

A focus on the discursive character of governance does not deny the presence of actors, or the effects of their intentions and their agency. Individuals, groups and organizations can all become actors by participating in governance or by being observed as such. A wide variety of actors can play a role in governance, each with their own perspective and interests. Coordination of actors is coordination of interests and of perspectives. The embedding discursive configurations of actors make some discursive coalitions more likely than others and some conflicts more likely than others. Yet the recognition as actor in governance can also change things: narratives in the community can alter, and the narratives deployed by the actor herself can change, through interactions with other actors, in a process of learning and of confrontation.

Understanding the interactions between actors is important for understanding the evolutionary pathways of governance. The interactions between actors create power relations, institutions, or more general discourse which can influence the behavior of actors.

For EGT, actors in governance, in their observations of the world and in their agency can never escape the power and the autonomy of discourse. Interpretations, communications and strategizing are all embedded in and molded by discourse. As soon as something is observed or said it is subject to the mechanics of discourse. This relates to the perception of the self, the understanding of other actors and their actions, or of the governance arena. EGT therefore considers actors nor institutions as independent variables, but as discursive structures in a dialectical relation. Actors become actors when this makes sense in stories of self and community

and these stories are more likely and more influential (e.g. allowing for the creation of actors) when they are compatible with existing power relations.

We defined governance as the coordination of collectively binding decisions for a community. This coordination always implies institutions, since coordination is done through institutions. Institutions are defined as the rules of the game, as coordinative tools. Institutions should be understood in their interrelations with other institutions and actors. The effects of institutions always depends on their embedding in a web of other institutions and actors. To specify the role of institutions a distinction can be made between formal and informal institutions. Formal and informal are alternative coordination in which formal institutions refers to the ones expected to govern the interaction; an expectation drawing on an authority near or far, real or imagined (Van Assche et al. 2014b). Formal institutions can emerge out of informal institutions and vice versa. In governance there is always a role for informal institutions in the functioning of formal ones, while formal institutions can affect informal ones. EGT introduced a third type of institutions, dead institutions. In modern societies, societies with developed bureaucracies, paper institutions and institutional memories, dead institutions are more likely to occur: they are formerly formal institutions, such as rules, policies, or plans which lost de facto coordinative power, but are still on the books, never officially revoked. Dead institutions can be revived.

Formal institutions carry the shadow of alternative coordination options. Formality is the result of a decision made again in each situation where there are alternative coordination options. In such situation one option is generally known to be the formal option. Formality then is a labeling that takes place in each decision-making situation. In modern states this labeling is often linked with state institutions and with rules written down on paper, but this is not necessarily always the case. Resorting to an alternative rule is resorting to informal institutions. An institution can thus sometimes be formal, in other cases informal. When it functions as informal rule, it is not necessarily recognized even as a rule. Informal institutions often function implicitly and they can often only be observed with hindsight or they become explicit due to confrontations or a trespassing. What is perceived then by the players is a resorting to common sense, not recognized as a construction of alternative coordination options. Not all implicit rules (e.g. cultural rules) are informal in our sense; they can be as formally exacting as the law and can be turned into law when conditions are right.

Formal, informal and dead institutions play a role in the evolution of governance. Dead institutions are important for the evolution of governance as they can re-create lost couplings between actors, between different institutions, or give existing actors, objects and subjects new meaning and render other ones more relevance.

Formal and informal institutions form each other, cannot be understood without reference to each other. Formality leaves and creates spaces for informality. It creates functions for informality, and the conditions for rules to shift from formal to informal. Formality in fact cannot exist without informality, for its genesis and its implementation, and for the flexibility coming with coordination options. For that

reason we ought not to speak of the effects of informality or formality separately, but think of configurations of formal and informal institutions which have to be assessed as a whole. The configurations of formal, informal and dead institutions is always evolving. Both the particular institutions as well as their interrelations with other institutions is shifting. They co-evolution with other institutions and with other actors. That different institutions co-evolve, implies that the idea of the existence of fixed institutions is a myth, as Machiavelli already showed long ago: governance can never rely on a stable set of rules. Institutions are always opposed, ignored, reinterpreted and used differently in different sites and in different stages of the path. Actors adapt to rules, which in return can lose their coordinative power. Every rule, every institution can come under scrutiny, can be disputed, and this source of instability joins the source of seeping in of alternative visions, valuations and desires. The interplay between different institutions can create stability and instability. It creates rigidities that delimit shifts in governance and it creates space for change. The performance of these configurations is not always entirely visible or immediately visible.

Similarly, in a governance path we cannot speak of actors and institutions separately, as they shape each other in co-evolution. They depend on each other for their survival and continuous transformation. As Douglass North, Avner Greiff and other institutional economists have pointed out, actors and institutions are each other's catalysts (North 2005; Greif 2006). Once actors are in place, playing a role, then they will guide the formation and transformation of specialized institutions, while the existence of institutions influences the formation and transformation of actors. We therefore speak of actor/institution configurations. Each governance path is marked by such configuration. The concept of actor/institution configuration in and by itself already undermines many common notions regarding governance, planning, development. We refer to the chapters in this book and to the first EGT book for further articulation, but can mention here that it multiplies and renders adaptive the notion of the 'rule of law' and that it reduces the impact of social engineering attempts: no new formality can emerge, have effects, and desirable effects, without adaptation to the reigning informal institutions, and to the set of actors, their power relations, and their use of knowledge.

Indeed, the machinery of governance becomes more transparent if we also understand power and knowledge as a configuration. In the previous section we emphasized their entwining, their co-evolution, their mutual effects. Now we can label this state as a configuration, and can link this configuration to the others introduced: formal/informal institutions and actor/institution configuration. Actors depend on knowledge in their strategizing and their understanding of states of affairs. They require power in governance to exert power outside the governance circles. Knowledge broadly understood, as discourse, and specifically as narrative and ideology. It can delineate actors, their roles, and institutions.



## 2.5 Meta Configurations

Governance evolves in the interplay between the configurations of power/knowledge and of actors/institutions. These two configurations mutually constitute each other. Their co-evolution can be understood as a meta configuration that identifies a certain governance path.

For participants in governance, the configurations seem to appear and disappear. Patterns of rules and roles do not invite reflection when things work smoothly. When there are conflicts, when a narrative or ideology loses its persuasive character, when power relations shift, or when actors lose legitimacy, the configurations assert themselves more fully. They become more observable, as resistance and pressure for change in certain manners and not others. For outside observers, e.g. analysts using an EGT perspective, the configurations are always there, yet always changing, in a process of emergence and recursive reconstruction. The configurations of actors and institutions and the related power/knowledge configuration can shape the functioning of both actors and institutions, while their coming into existence changes the logic of governance, its complexity and its potential impact on society. Institutional frameworks and the configuration of actors effect the inclusion and exclusion of certain forms of knowledge and expertise. Actors in turn will transform in governance, as a result of the manner in which they are coordinated and the manner in which they coordinate, and as a result of ongoing confrontations with power/knowledge configurations. The interaction with other actors, their strategies and ideas, will inevitably change an actor. An actor's identity can change as can its role or its position versus other actors. Redefined actors will handle institutions differently and participate differently in the production of new institutions. These changes are likely to introduce shifts in the institutional configuration, which subsequently pressures actors into a new phase of reinvention.

The nature of the actor becomes slowly more clear. The actor is not the person at the table, but the role she plays, as representative of something and someone. The reference to the something and someone changes in governance, as a result of the interplay between the configurations. The nature of the reference has to make sense for the actor herself. That sense making can only happen in terms of narratives which fit knowledge/power configurations, while the actor can only be successful, in her own eyes and of those who feel represented, if she can discern and navigate the several configurations. The identity of an actor thus has several aspects: the image of self and/in environment, the image other actors have, and the actual role in governance, the actual position in and influence on the evolving configurations.

The interplay between power/knowledge and actors/institutions is a meta configuration that serves as a conceptual keystone in a framework which helps us to deepen our understanding of evolving governance. It helps to understand governance as a process in which discourses compete and transform, partly as a result of the stratagems by actors, partly because of the unique reproductive logic of the reigning actors/institution configuration. Governance paths are therefore paved with sites of conflict in which power/knowledge is transformed more intensely in and by the conflict.

The evolution of governance never stops since the on-going competition between discourses will never lead to a unifying discourse that fully represents the whole community and that is capable of addressing the key issues in manners acceptable to all actors. Institutions, such as policies, laws and plans, appear as temporary conceptual structures that not only coordinate actors, but also the configuration of power/knowledge. This implies that discursive shifts can alter the actors, the institutional framework, and their interplay. Shifting goals of governance lead to new institutions, which in turn influence the position of actors and can lead to discursive shifts. Everything is interconnected and co-evolving. These insights add to the understanding of uncertainty and unpredictability in governance and the way in which these are reflected in discourses and in the ways things are rendered or considered governable. The nature of this interconnectedness is structured, however. Not in the nature of a Deleuzian rhizome, producing the most unexpected realities in chance meetings between the most diverse conceptual and material entities, but by a logic inherent to the governance path and its co-evolving configurations.

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## 2.6 Path-, Inter- and Goal Dependencies

As we mentioned in the introductory chapter: context matters for EGT. Governance does not occur in a void, never starts with a *tabula rasa*, so an evolutionary perspective on governance pays attention to the mechanisms and processes that influence the reproduction of governance. It implies that the elements and structures produced in governance do form preconditions for the further reproduction of governance. These preconditions explain why one cannot simply jump from each branch in the evolutionary tree to each imaginable other branch. They help to explain the many examples from all over the world showing that existing forms of governance cannot simply be transformed, neither by policy nor by rockets, into a capitalist democracy, nor any other regime. The evolution of governance is marked by different dependencies. Three different sets of dependencies can be distinguished: path dependencies, interdependencies and goal dependencies (Van Assche et al. 2014a, c).

A simplified comparison with biological evolution might make the limitations these dependencies create for the evolution of governance a bit easier to grasp. Just like a mouse cannot abruptly evolve into something like an elephant, a certain form of governance cannot suddenly change into any other form. As with the evolution of species the internal structure that emerged over time will only allow a certain degree of change. The concept of path dependency can be used to understand how these legacies from the past shape future options. Governance, in one way or another, always builds upon that what was before. That past, the path taken, the previous forms of governance, its elements, its structures, and its organization, can seep through in many ways and have a wide range of effects. Path-dependencies are legacies that can refer to everything, both the presence and form of certain elements as well as their interrelations in the configurations that constitute governance.

Another set of limitations in governance evolution is created in the interactions with the external environment and between elements in the governance path. In both cases we speak of the interdependencies of governance systems. Internally, actors depend on other actors and on institutions at one point in time, while institutions depend on actors for their production and reproduction. Actors are hemmed in and enabled by power/knowledge configurations. Discourses, in power/knowledge or organizations, in actor/institution, cannot survive without their respective environments and their evolution is constrained by the structure of these environments. In biological terms one could think for example of the co-evolution between mice, the plants they eat, their competitors, and presence or absence of owls that prey on them. In terms of governance evolution, the interrelations between actors, between actors and institutions, between discourses and physical realities, or between different function systems such as politics and economics (Beunen and van Assche 2013), can all be conceptualized and understood as interdependencies. Interdependency also relates to the way in which different governance paths are linked, to other paths at the same level, to other scales or levels, to physical and social environments always imperfectly grasped and controlled by governance.

The concept of goal dependency is used to describe the way in which shared visions of the future have effects on decisions made in the present. Goal dependency occurs when these visions, in the form of narratives, ideologies or discourses, codified in policies, plans or laws, affect the co-evolution of actors and institutions. The more shared the vision, the more impact on power/knowledge and hence actor/institution. If powerful actors embrace the vision, goal dependency can intensify. Goal dependency is explicitly different from concepts of conformity with plans or implementation of policies. In an EGT perspective, and in empirical observation, it rarely happens that plans, policies or laws are perfectly implemented, and if so, if accurately followed, it rarely happens that they bring the envisioned reality entirely into being. This is only natural, given the variety of dependencies and productive effects of decisions in unexpected places, reverberating through the interconnected configurations. Much more likely is that plans and policies have effects on the present, either by inspiring coordination around them, by causing opposition, by creating linkages with other institutions, through the reinterpretations of other plans and policies and the potential for new coalitions, or via the need for new narratives to identify, to oppose, or embrace existing institutions. The effects of visions for the future on the present do alter the future, only rarely in the sense envisioned.

Goal dependency can include performative effects of policies and plans. They can become reality or shape reality in certain regards. If performative effects are observed, actors in governance will quickly ascribe these to the institution having 'worked', to the correctness of embedded predictions, assumptions, core concepts, narratives, steering mechanisms and management techniques. While sometimes, in some ways, this might indeed be the case, there are also many other reasons why institutions can have performative effects and EGT can shed a light on this multiplicity. In certain governance paths, reality can become more and more interpreted through the lens of the policy, and thus look closer to it. In others,

entrenched interests identify with a plan for reasons having nothing to do with the declared goals of the plan, but nevertheless bringing some of these goals closer. Unobserved similarities between narratives in the policy and the community can bring the two closer to each other. Steering could have taken place, but by different, often informal institutions. The criteria for success could have been defined within governance, thus leading to easy ascriptions of success, and quick observations of performativity (Van Assche et al. 2012a). Etcetera ad infinitum.

Whether in time these visions of the future are debunked as utopian, destructive or dangerous ideologies does not undermine the enormous effects they can have in shaping and limiting governance.

Together the different sets of dependencies create rigidities in governance paths. This does not imply that the dependencies determine what will happen, or that they can only be used to explain the lack of change, a common critique of the notion of path dependency. These different dependencies are as productive as they are limiting, and they can be used just as well to explain the process and direction of change. Think for example of the presence of certain actors and their position versus others, which enables them to overrule these others and initiate institutional change. Certain practices of institutional reform are only possible because of the prior history of those places, often characterized by weak institutions and powerful elites (Verdery 2003; Klein 2008). Governance path analysis can also elucidate in those cases when those elites might overstretch their ambitions, e.g. by overlooking their dependency on other actors, on assets, or on an at least marginal persuasiveness of certain narratives. One could also think of political leaders, managers, or experts who, in their attempt to perform innovation and demonstrate leadership want to get rid of anything reminding of their predecessors. Those legacies then become a motivation for change that simply tries to be different; new goal dependencies will be created that rest on this negative path dependence, and such type of management tends to miss lingering path and interdependencies.

The three dependencies as defined in EGT are concepts that can be used to gain a more thorough understanding of the evolutionary character of governance where “the new” is always, in one way or another, connected to the past, the future and the environment. In analytical terms the different sets of dependencies can help to grasp the logic of governance evolutions. In a more applied sense the concepts can be useful to delineate the spaces for change and to make more elaborate and refined ex-ante assessments of planned and unplanned interventions. In doing so, one of course has to be aware that since these dependencies do not determine the future, they cannot be used to predict that future and one can add that ex-ante assessments can also create new goal dependencies, since the assessment is an observation which cannot be isolated from what was observed.

## 2.7 Governance Techniques

The techniques (technologies or mechanisms) of governance that are distinguished in EGT (see the other chapters, the Glossary, and the first EGT book) by no means represent a technocratic or deterministic word view. They are theoretical constructs useful for the analysis of governance and its elements. They help to understand the evolution of governance, the complex interrelated changes in its elements. Concepts like objectification, subjectification, delineation, buffering, or commodification are more useful for some sub-topics of EGT than for others, more helpful in the application of EGT to this domain of governance than to others. Each of these concepts has a different provenance, all of them are reinterpreted in an EGT frame, and some of them have been more developed than others. For starting definitions, we refer to the Glossary, and for more elaborate analysis, we refer to the developing EGT literature.

We do want to single out one important set of techniques to present in this introduction: those related to the formation of objects and subjects in governance (Van Assche et al. 2011; Duineveld and Van Assche 2011; Duineveld et al. 2013; Kooij 2014; Felder et al. 2014). Object and subject formation analysis can refine the insight in the entwining of dependencies and the linkage of configurations. Objects and subjects in EGT are the product of discursive evolutions. For EGT, object formation combines the techniques of reification, solidification and codification. Reification entails the recognition of the object as a unity, separated from its environment, more than a loose assemblage of parts. Solidification refers to the tightening of internal connections in the concept, an increasingly sharp delineation of the emerging discursive object. Codification is the simplification of the object boundaries. A specific phase of object formation is object stabilization. As techniques of object stabilization, we distinguish objectification, naturalization, and institutionalization. Objectification is the acknowledgment of the object as part of the objective truth, established by scientific means. Naturalization is the strengthening of discourse that the object is part of the order of things, part of nature. It is the process that veils contingency, blinds the awareness that things could have been different, that objects could have been constructed differently. Institutionalization is the codification of discourse, including its objects, in organizations and institutions, such as policies, laws, and plans.

Making such additional distinctions in object formation and stabilization can shed a light on the simultaneous production and reproduction of subjectivities in the same discursive histories. Objects and subjects move together in the continuous reconstruction of discourse that is governance. New narratives can reconstruct objects, and new objects or subjects can produce new narratives. Broader discursive configurations can be altered in and through governance, through the reconstruction of objects and subjects, and the persuasiveness of institutions, the relations between actors, the relations between power and knowledge can all shift in the process.

In the end, what matters most is performativity, the idea that coordinated decision-making has desirable effects, however defined. A notion of performativity needs to be engrained with the actors, otherwise engaging in tough decision-making

procedures seems superfluous. More than notions of legitimacy, of right and wrong, of deliberation or even democracy, performativity seems the basic concept to understand participation in governance. We already mentioned that the sources of performativity are manifold, and that EGT can be useful in discerning and distinguishing those sources and in analyzing the reasons to ignore or simplify performativity by the actors in a governance path. The notions on object formation quickly introduced here serve to illustrate how the analysis of performativity can be furthered when EGT itself can develop further, adding new notions and expanding the theoretical framework. The construction of things in governance seeps into the identification of actors, can affect the impact of institutions, their coordinative power, and thus highlights another aspect of the dialectics between the different configurations. These notions illustrate the potential of EGT to further develop.

A deeper insight into performativity, combined with the insights already stemming from the concepts of configurations and dependencies, can further delineate the options for steering and the functions of steering mythologies in governance (Beunen et al. 2013). In the following chapters, these interwoven challenges of debunking of performance and delineating actual steering options in governance, of exploring the myriad ways in which actors delude themselves regarding their influence, and exploring the spaces for actual influence of decisions, and for actually new decisions, will be highlighted in a variety of cases, each contributing in a unique manner to the further development of EGT, each in turn an argument for such development.

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