

## Publication

### Sustainability impacts of governance modes: insights from Swiss energy policy

#### **JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)**

**ID** 4501463

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**Year** 2019

**Title** Sustainability impacts of governance modes: insights from Swiss energy policy

**Journal** Journal of environmental policy & planning

**Volume** 21

**Number** 2

**Pages / Article-Number** 174-187

Governance is commonly regarded as pivotal for promoting sustainable development. However, there is a lively debate on the merits of different modes of governance in this respect, especially on the relevance of new, non-hierarchical modes. Adding to this debate, this paper explores the sustainability impacts of the range of governance modes from a comparative perspective. It investigates the relation between modes and induced societal changes and elucidates the role of the mode for promoting sustainability. Guided by a theoretical framework for both the conceptualization of governance modes and their sustainability impacts, five governance arrangements in Swiss energy policy are examined, representing different modes (from hierarchically centralized and decentralized governance to public-private and interactive modes to self-governance). The results do not support the claim that new modes are generally superior to traditional hierarchical ones in terms of promoting sustainability. Rather, the potential of new modes can best be realized in combination with hierarchical governance. Other factors such as the embedding context or the attributes of involved actors are also important for the transformative potential of governance. In view of the findings, future sustainability governance research should increasingly focus on the contextual interplay of governance modes and their meta-governing.

**Publisher** John Wiley

**ISSN/ISBN** 1523-908X ; 1522-7200

**edoc-URL** <https://edoc.unibas.ch/70398/>

**Full Text on edoc** No;

**Digital Object Identifier DOI** 10.1080/1523908X.2019.1566062

**ISI-Number** WOS:000459159800004

**Document type (ISI)** Article