Trust in Transition: Looking for Policy Learning

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Energy positive

Why policy learning?

- To induce and stimulate the constant adaptability of the energy system, to promote sustained economic growth, to strengthen public confidence and trust

- Because « **Energy is a long game** » (Cleland) and to avoid improvisation, back-forward initiatives and radical changes in link notably with political tensions, changes of government or crises

- Policy learning to develop a vision built on experiences (policies, process, projects) from here and elsewhere: briefly to propose an informed and credible energy transition

- Learning is the heart of a **co-construction** policy model: learning on stakeholders' interests, values and information/knowledge

- Co-construction as an ideal-type perspective:

  "When a plurality of actors are implicated in the production of a policy, a project, a technical or knowledge dispositive (...) the believe in a relative continuity in the expertise and role of implicated actors to articulate the different dimensions of projects and to specify the possibilities. It implies **types of engagement sensibly stronger that those associated to concertation or consultation**" (Akrich, 2013).

What is policy learning?

"Policy learning refers to the **specific process** in which knowledge is used in the concrete development of policy formulation and implementation" (Borràs, 2011: 727).

"The commonly described tendency for some policy decisions to be made on the **basis of knowledge and past experiences** and knowledge-based judgments as to future expectations" (Bennett and Howlett, 1992: 278).

"A consequence of a specific **intentionality** towards problem-solving (…) embedded in **complex** settings characterized by specific conflict of interests, **changing power relations** and legitimacy condition" (Borràs, 2011:727; Radaelli, 1995)

Learning is concretely translated in specific **structures, tools, practices and attitudes and** implies **adaptation**: best practices and success stories need to be adapted to the context

Challenges for policy learning

**Some ambiguities and obstacles in learning** (March and Olsen, 1976)

1. New convictions are not translated in actions

2. Individual or collective behaviors are not translated in organizational changes (undiffused and unformulated learning)

3. Actions and context reactions are not always in direct link

4. Context perception and interpretation stay plural

Some specific challenges with energy system

- Multiple organizations (public, private, large/small) and a federal/provincial responsibilities

- International influence

- Rapidity of changes (technological innovations)

- Pressure from the civil society and the media: very strong political issues

- Political dimension: elections cycle, partisanship and party line

Degrees of learning

- Different kinds of learning: Simple and double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1976)
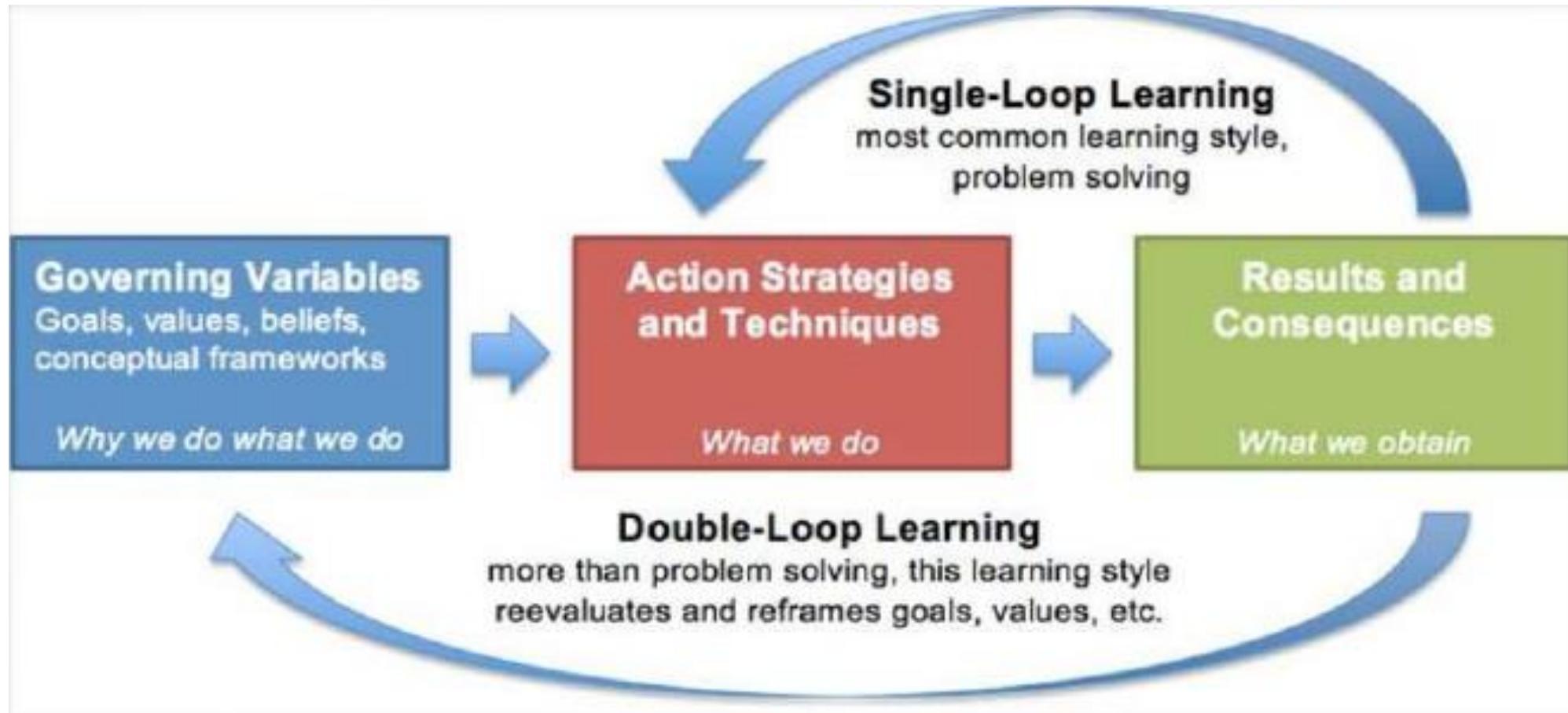
Levels of Policy learning (Borràs, 2011; Bennett and Howlett, 1992)

Levels of policy learning	Who learns	Learning about what	Organizational capacity	Policy changes
Government learning	Government and public related organizations in the energy system	Organisational practices/processes (administrative, management failures)	Administrative capacity	Energy policy management change
Policy network learning	Networks of stakeholders in energy policy	Energy system (identifying systemic Failures)	Analytical capacity	Energy policy programme change
Social (governance) learning	Socio-economic actors in the political system	State–economy–civil society relations related to energy processes (energy systems' overall governance failures)	Major reflexive and institutional capacity	Energy policy paradigm shift

The Quebec's experience

- **Some specific characteristics based on +/- 10 years cycle for energy policy** (1995-2005, 2006-2016, 2017-2030)

- A structured and open consultation process across the province (network and social learning)
  - Based on an informative document
  - Concluded by a public and accessible report

- A independent, open and credible agency for public hearings of projects and policies (Generic or SEA): the BAPE (network policy and social learning)

- A major stakeholder: Hydro-Québec (organizational learning – structures, tools, practices)

- Important agreements with some indigenous communities (organizational and network leaning)

- **Some examples of policy learning outcomes**
  - *Transition énergétique Québec*: a dedicated organization
  - Transition plan : evaluation and fallow-up by the Régie de l'énergie
  - Shared objectives and targets and simplification of the decisional process for energy projects
  - Green book on social acceptability

Conclusion

Opportunities

- Important reforms under way (*Generation energy*, NEB modernization, Review of Environmental Assessment Processes): interesting issues and tools identified
- Political intention and timing: strong potential

Challenges

- Scope of change: double loop learning / long term and resources
- Importance of social acceptability criteria trough the process

Concrete steps to start

- Organizational capacity – a national, independent, hybrid and open expert body

- Creation of dialog and research / analysis spaces at the network policy level with all kind of stakeholders (*Positive Energy*)

- Integration of energy issues in existing tools (regional land planning, provincial and federal policies (Fast), *Federation Council* meetings)