Political advisory committees: their role and legitimacy

Ad-hoc political advisory committees are appointed to solve political problems and they can have a relatively large impact on the policy-process. The legitimacy of these committees is contested because they can form a closed venue for interactive governance or interest representation by their constitution, working process, access or use of knowledge. Although political advisory committees are rather common in Dutch politics nearly no insights exist on their functioning and impact. These committees are installed for certain societal or political arguments in reaction to specific circumstances. So the reasons why they are appointed and the context differ, hence they play different roles and produce different outputs (facts, agenda, advice next step). This diversity will be described by a typology based on the type of issue and task. In policy-processes in which advisory committees come into play three decision phases exist with different arenas and processes. Committees have an intermediate role between societal stakeholders, science and politics. In different committees the interest representation have a different priority and form. In the three phases different mechanisms are effective as influence strategies for interest representation. An overview will be presented of all committees appointed in The Netherlands the last two decades for rural affairs and fisheries: the policy issue, reasons for appointing them, chair and constitution, task, working mode, output and impact. More specific the process of interest representation is analysed for four committees, each representing a committee-type. It turns out that the type of issue the committee is appointed for, the type of network used and the access for interest groups is stipulated by the tradition already present in the policy field. Based on this the legitimacy of these committees is discussed. These findings are relevant for other interactive governance processes where political entrepreneurs try to influence the outcome of a policy process.