

Challenges of long-term orientation in sustainability governance

Short description: Sustainability challenges regularly show properties of so-called ‘wicked problems’, largely because of their inherent risks and various types of uncertainty, ranging from technical in-measurability, methodological unreliability, epistemological indeterminacy to social ambiguity. All that puts classical managerial and planning approaches strongly in question. Nevertheless, sustainability governance is still asked to provide orientation towards the long-term and guidance for present decisions in face of multiple, often contested futures. In a socio-constructivist understanding, the ‘future’ has to be seen as a discursive field in which expectations and hopes are raised, as are fears that can persuade actors to follow certain actions and others not.

Research at the chair group of Sustainability Governance is focusing on the question of how anticipatory knowledge is produced and made policy-relevant. Master theses could focus, *inter alia*, on the following questions:

- Which *images of the future* are evoked in sustainability debates?
- How is the future framed in *media* reporting?
- Who are the relevant *actors* shaping the debates on the future?
- What role do *uncertainty* and *ignorance* play in processes of anticipation?
- How are extrapolative trends and normative visions, factual knowledge, political interests and social values constructively brought together when addressing the future?

Methods: various (depending on research focus)

References:

Bauer, Anja & Pregernig, Michael (2013): Whose look into the future? Participation in technology assessment and foresight. *Critical Policy Studies*, 7/1, 18-36.

Bauer, Anja & Pregernig, Michael (2012): Wissen für eine vorausschauende Politik: Der Umgang mit Unsicherheit in Strategischer Umweltprüfung, Technikfolgenabschätzung und Foresight. In: von Detten, Roderich, Faber, Fenn & Bemann, Martin (Hg.) *Unberechenbare Umwelt: Zum Umgang mit Unsicherheit und Nicht-Wissen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. 121-155.

Starting date: at any time

For how many students this topic is available: several

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