P18 / Environmental Policy and Polarisation: Pathways, Futures and Strategies

Topic : ENVIRONMENT, SDGs, ENERGY

Chair : Sina Leipold (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ)

Second Chair : Anran Luo (Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Environmental policies have sparked a wide range of polarising debates, from critical scepticism of capitalism and growth to depoliticised techno-optimism, green growth advocacy, and calls for moderate regulatory reform (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2006; Leipold et al. 2023). These discussions are further complicated by the need for global cooperation among diverse actor groups with varying perspectives on sustainability and environmental justice (Lenzi et al. 2023; Luo et al. 2021). At the local level, polarising issues include public outcry over wind turbines or solar farms, as well as opposition to restrictions on consumer choices, such as plastic straws.

In this context, our panel focuses on the politics of sustainability transformations across time and scale, and how they shape imaginaries of future opportunities and challenges for environmental cooperation and reconciliation. We are particularly interested in longitudinal and cross-case empirical analyses, as well as theoretical and methodological work that provide guidance and orientation for such work.

With this perspective, the guiding questions for this panel include, but are not limited to:

? (How) Do stakeholders — policy-makers, industry representatives, civil society or academics — imagine transformational pathways toward resource sustainability in policy fields such as energy, waste, chemicals, or circular economy?
? How do such imaginaries influence policy interventions today?

? How can long-term (historical) policy analysis help us assess strategies and pathways for approaching environmental challenges amidst polarisation?

? What can such analyses tell us about myriad dimensions of environmental justice?

? (How) Can short-term environmental policies address current challenges while connecting to future societal imaginaries, visions, and transformations?

Within this panel, we invite both empirical studies and theoretical contributions, with disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary work welcome.

References:

Bäckstrand, K., & Lövbrand, E. (2006). Planting trees to mitigate climate change: Contested discourses of ecological modernization, green governmentality and civic environmentalism. *Global Environmental Politics*, *6* (1), 50-75.

Leipold, S., Petit-Boix, A., Luo, A., … Xue, B. (2023). Lessons, narratives, and research directions for a sustainable circular economy. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 27, 6–18.

Lenzi, D., Balvanera, P., Arias-Arévalo, P., ... Pascual, U. (2023). Justice, sustainability, and the diverse values of nature: why they matter for biodiversity conservation. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *64*, 101353.

Luo, A., Mehwish, Z., Liu, J., … Leipold, S. (2021). Why common interests and collective action are not

enough for environmental cooperation – Lessons from the China-EU cooperation discourse on circular economy. *Global Environmental Change*, 71, 102389.

CALL FOR PAPERS

In this light, research questions for this panel include, but are not limited to:

? (How) Do policy, industry, civil society or academic stakeholders imagine transformations towards resource sustainability e.g. through energy, waste, chemicals, circular economy policies?

? (How) Can research address or mitigate polarisation of environmental policy debates?

? How can inter- and transdisciplinary research include unheard or marginalised voices in polarised contexts?

? How can short-term environmental policies address current challenges while connecting to future societal imaginaries, visions and transformations?

? How can we explore the strengths and weaknesses of long-term environmental policy analysis to assess new strategies that tackle emerging challenges?

? What can we learn from histories of polarisation, cooperation and reconciliation for environmental policy?

Within this panel, we invite both empirical studies and theoretical contributions, with disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary work welcome.

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Session 1Policy Cases and Polarization

Thursday, July 3rd 08:00 to 10:00 (C1)

Bridging Policy Polarization: Developing a Sustainable Circular Economy for Japan’s Fashion Industry through Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme

Mitsuyo Sugimoto (Johns Hopkins University, SAIS Washington DC)

Aligning Sustainability and Competitiveness: A Science-Policy Exploration of Chemical Policy Debates

Henry Hempel (Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ))

Towards Effective Regulation of Micro- and Nanoplastics in Europe?: Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions

Paula Roos (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ)

From Ecological Modernization to Strategic Autonomy: The European Union’s Raw Materials Policy and the Future of Resource Justice

Theresa Herdlitschka (Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena)

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Session 2Novel Approaches for Addressing Polarization

Thursday, July 3rd 10:15 to 12:15 (C1)

Comparing Indigenous Culture-making in the Russian Arctic and the Chinese Tibet: Indigenous Narratives and Green Growth Advocacy

Ksenia Gerasimova (Higher School of Economics S)

Turbulent Waters: Navigating Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

Sina Leipold (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ)

Climate Change: For and Against Economic Growth

John Mikler (The University of Sydney)