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**Judging Janus: Institutionalising adjudication of the quality of sustainability evaluations and evaluators**

This paper addresses the conference topic “Political relevance of SD evaluations”; strand “Policy learning and SD evaluations”; question “What is the relationship between political culture and evaluation?” It presents results from the Marie Curie research project Accountability and Legitimacy of Governance Institutions that support Viable Environments (ALIVE) and speaks to the EASY-ECO research frame by providing analysis concerning the institutionalisation of practices and procedures for judging the quality of sustainability evaluations and evaluators.

The main empirical task of the ALIVE research has been study of the Janus-faced interface between science and politics, which is a fundamental component in many research projects conducted at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ). It is proposed that ALIVE research results are relevant for EASY-ECO because the objects of sustainability evaluations (sustainable development policies and related practices) are also Janus-faced products of this interface: reflecting, on the one hand, political will regarding what a community wishes to sustain and, on the other hand, scientific knowledge regarding the physical and social systems within which sustainable development must operate.

Five UFZ research projects have been studied under the ALIVE research, with epistemological, institutional and interest relationships between the various actors being mapped for each research project. Among the results of this research is confirmation of the research hypothesis that existing scientific and political institutions within the European Union overlook the Janus-faced political/science character of activities taking place at this interface. It is proposed that filling this institutional gap is important for improving the European Union’s capacity to judge the quality of sustainability evaluations and evaluators.

Because sustainable development policies must successfully address both aspirational and material purposes, evaluations of these policies must take into account consistency between (1) the political purpose(s) and outcome(s) of the policy and (2) the material cum scientific objectives and outcomes of the policy. This requires well organised, robust interdisciplinary research, employing both physical and social scientific analyses. However, established procedures for judging the quality of scientific research are stretched to their limits when called upon to adjudicate the quality of such work. Similarly, although, the quality of such evaluations must be judged based on how successfully scientific insights generated during the evaluation are transposed into policy learning, established procedures for adjudicating the democratic quality of scientific assessments are lacking.

Based on the ALIVE research results, it is argued that institutionalised practices for judging the quality of sustainability evaluations and evaluators can only give rise to useful policy learning if these practices can command a combination of political and scientific authority. A distinction is made between commanding political and scientific authority and commanding a combination of the two. It is argued (1) that combination is required and (2) that such combination can only be effectively achieved through establishment of new institutional structures that support the new political/science activities that are taking place at the limits of established scientific and democratic institutions.