

IGN Research Seminar

The WU-Institute for Social Change and Sustainability (IGN) explores the interdependence of the development of modern societies and their discourses and politics of sustainability. It approaches issues of sustainability, which elsewhere are often addressed from a natural sciences, economic or technological point of view, from an explicitly social scientific perspective.

<http://www.wu.ac.at/IGN/>

Transformation Research & Academic Responsibility

June 8, 2018, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Vienna University of Economics and Business, AD Sitzungssaal 2,
Welthandelsplatz 1, 1020 Vienna

“Transformation Research and Academic Responsibility: The social theory gap in narratives of radical change”

Ingolfur Blühdorn, Felix Butzlaff, Michael Deflorian, Daniel Hausknost

Investigating the transformative capacities of the degrowth movement, the societal mainstream and the democratic state, the paper assesses the ability and willingness of modern consumer societies to achieve sustainability. It argues for a stronger social-theoretical foundation of transformation-related diagnoses, recommendations and strategies.

Discussants: Andrew Dobson, Keele, UK

Sigrid Stagl, Institute for Ecological Economics, WU Vienna

“Environmental Governance as Performance: The collaborative management of sustained unsustainability”

Ingolfur Blühdorn, Michael Deflorian

With decentralised, participative and consensus-oriented forms of multi-stakeholder governance becoming a hall-mark of environmental good-governance, and the politics of unsustainability seeming more entrenched than ever, the paper explores why these new modes of policy making have become so prominent, and what they actually deliver. It suggests that new forms of environmental governance represent a performative kind of eco-politics that helps liberal consumer societies to manage their inability and unwillingness to achieve a socio-ecological transformation.

Discussants: Andrew Dobson, Keele, UK
Verena Madner, Research Institute for Urban Management and Governance, WU Vienna

“The environmental state and the ‘glass ceiling’ of transformation”

Daniel Hausknost

This paper explores the capacity of the environmental state to turn into a properly sustainable state. It argues that there exists an invisible ‘glass ceiling’ blocking such a transformation. Based on a distinction between ‘lifeworld’ and ‘system’ sustainability, the paper shows that the environmental state’s functional purpose is to provide an environmentally sustainable lifeworld, which is, however, predicated on a fundamentally unsustainable reproductive system. Lifeworld and system sustainability become negatively correlated, when the achievement of the latter requires measures that impinge on the perceived quality of the former. Thus, the environmental state itself is shown to have turned into a barrier to sustainability.

Discussants: Andrew Dobson, Keele, UK
Margaret Haderer, Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

Please register by May 31: ign@wu.ac.at