

Social-Ecological Research in Germany: Concept, Status and Perspectives

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Social-Ecological Research: Conceptual Framework and Objectives



- **Major objective: Enhancement of the coping capacity of societies for environmental and sustainability problems**
- **Core concept: Societal problems as starting point**
Provide insights to bridge the knowledge-action gap
- **Research focus: Shaping of change and transitions**
by working out problems of cognitive and social integration
- **Sustainability from a social-ecological perspective:**
Define and explore corridors of possible development pathways

Social-Ecological Research Funding (1): Facts & Figures



- **BMBF Framework Programme from 2000 to 2010**
- **Number of projects funded until 2007: 44 (18 infrastructure projects: 17 thematic research networks, 9 young researchers projects)**
- **Funded thematic foci:**
 - Supply and disposal systems
 - Urban and regional development
 - Agriculture, nutrition and consumption
 - Governance and policy
 - Assessment of systemic risks
 - Transdisciplinary methods and concepts

Social-Ecological Research Funding (2): Goals and Benefits

■ Strengthening and long-term development

- Influence on other research and funding areas
- Promoting methodological and conceptual innovations in science

■ Community Building

- Development of quality criteria
- Better transfer and joint activities of different research institutions
- Social-ecological training and education

■ Internationalisation

- Interfaces to global change research and sustainability sciences
- Scientific support for the sustainability strategy of the EU
- Participation in EU Research Framework Programme (FP7)

Sustainability Problems in a Social-Ecological Perspective



■ Social action and ecological effects inseparable

- Complexity of interaction processes and problems of scale
- Subjectivity of problem perception

■ Societal context

- Different social claims
- Chances and risks of technological innovations
- Agency relevance

■ Scientific context

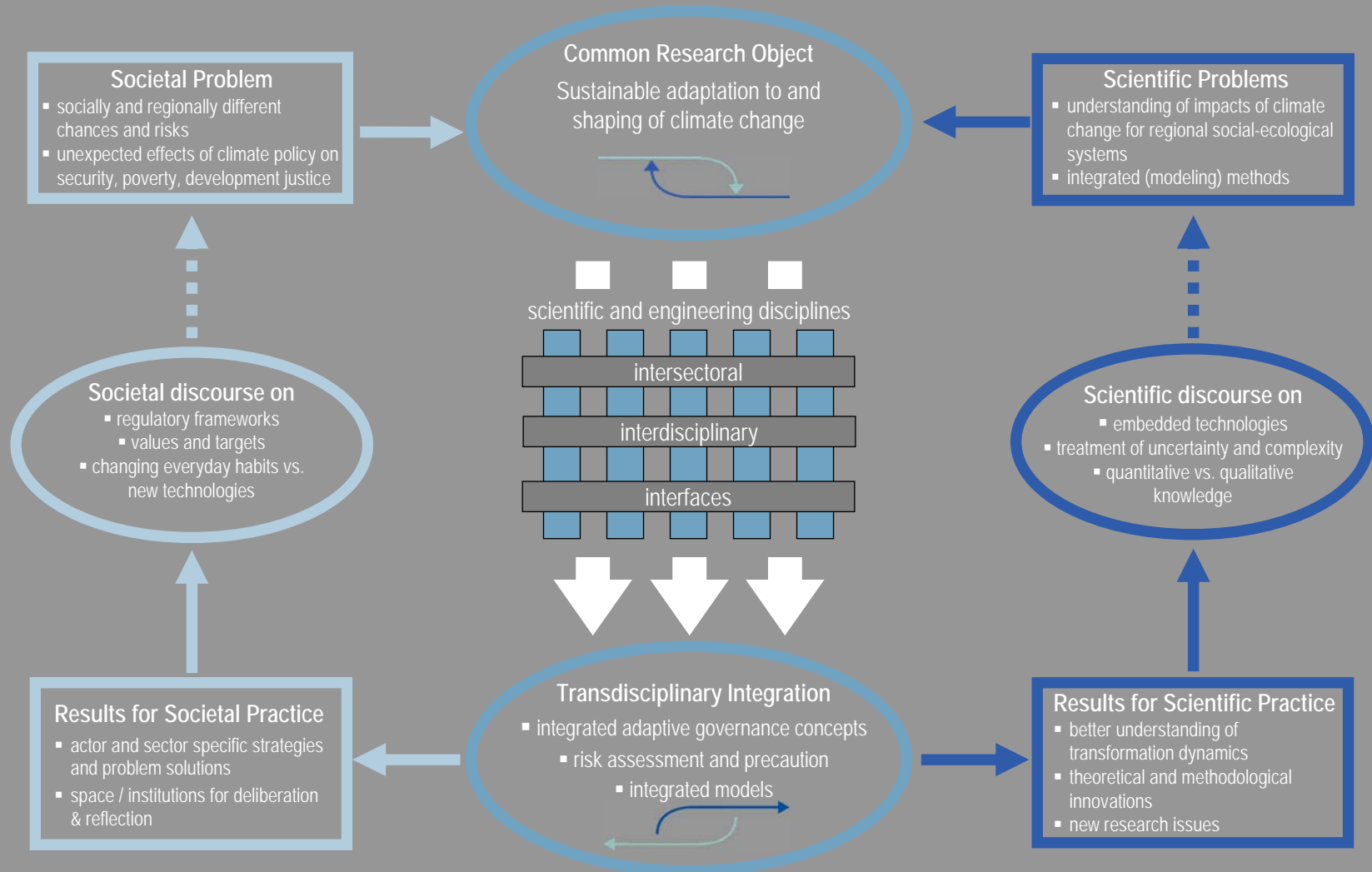
- Uncertainty of (available) knowledge
- Goal conflict: truth vs. utility
- Natural vs. social sciences

Transdisciplinary Research Process (1): An Integrative Approach



- Problem formulation by integrating scientific and non scientific problem perceptions
- Altering societal and scientific problem perceptions by methodological based collaboration amongst different actors from science and society during the whole research process
- Providing science and society with more highly integrated problem solutions

Transdisciplinary Research Process (2): The Climate Change Example



Social-Ecological Research: Benefits

- **Collaborative production of scientifically reliable and practice oriented knowledge**
- **Enhancement of societal decision-making capacity**
 - influencing societal problem perceptions through feedback mechanisms
 - organising exemplary decision making processes and
 - developing already within the research process corresponding solutions for societal problems in the
- **Stimuli for the development of innovative transdisciplinary methods and sustainable system solutions**
- **New forms of transdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation in society and policy**

References

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