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## Call for Papers

# Long-Term Policies: Governing Social-Ecological Change

2008 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change

International Conference of the Social-Ecological Research Programme

**Berlin, 22 - 23 February 2008**

Social-ecological change affects almost all areas of human life. Well-being, prosperity, health, food safety, social cohesion, energy supply, provision of drinking water, housing and alike are all characterized by the interaction of social and ecological dimensions. They are closely coupled with severe ecological problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, degrading ecosystem services and alike. What is more, all of these problems are long-term developments that require decades rather than months or years to be abated. Infrastructures as well as basic mechanisms of the earth system can only be altered over long time periods. This applies particularly to the energy supply system, food and crop systems, water supplies, patterns of mobility and others. The long-term dimension is a common characteristic of most of these problems of social-ecological change.

These problems pose particular challenges to decision-making processes in the political and economic realm. The short-term focus of democratic decision-making within four to five-year election periods and even shorter budget cycles and the focus on short-term profits in most businesses often hinder the effective combat and prevention of long-term problems of social-ecological change. This conflicting relationship will constitute the focus of the 2008 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change that will be at the same time the International Conference of the Social-Ecological Research Programme.

Recent research has approached long-term problems and their governance challenge from different angles. Theoretically, governance research discussed the challenges for institutions and various actors to address long-term problems of social-ecological change. Other research foci originating in the natural sciences developed concepts such as adaptive co-management to understand the complex interaction between social and ecological systems. Empirically, scholars addressed problems of long-term change in areas such as agriculture, food and rural areas; climate and energy; infrastructures such as water, waste, transportation; construction, housing and urban planning; or biodiversity conservation. Methodologically, numerous approaches emerged that aim at integrative modes of scientific research

and the development of solutions to long-term problems. Concepts such as sustainability science, post-normal science, transdisciplinary research and alike provide avenues for novel ways to advance societies' capacities to deal with social-ecological problem complexes. Practically, scientists and scientific organisations such as the IPCC increasingly become advocates of long term issues and apparently are able to bring long term issues on the political agenda. Long-term policies also are a key interest in the current efforts to design a new IHDP research core project on earth system governance.

Over the past eight years, the Social-Ecological Research Programme in Germany has addressed the challenges of social-ecological change in numerous research projects. Following an innovative inter- and transdisciplinary approach, this research has produced significant contributions to solve problems of long-term social-ecological change.

The conference will bring together recent research and conceptual developments from these scientific approaches to discuss current challenges, research tasks, practical solutions and possible strategies for long-term policies. In particular, we invite papers that deal with one or more of the following issues:

- **Research:** Which results from sustainability science, social-ecological research and post-normal science have spurred practical solutions and in which ways? When and how can transdisciplinary research contribute to the emergence of novel and innovative approaches towards sustainability? How to design science-policy interfaces in order to generate knowledge that is relevant for long-term problems?
- **Governance:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of political systems in addressing long-term challenges? Do state actors, private businesses, civil society organizations or other institutions vary in their capacity to deal with long term problems? Are there examples of institutions – possibly also beyond environmental policies, e.g. budget, security or social policies – that successfully deal with long-term problems? Which kinds of innovations are needed to effectively address long-term social-ecological problems? What is the appropriate scale to deal with such problems? How can governance mechanisms be improved to enable them to deal with long-term problems?
- **Adaptation:** How can social, political and economic systems adapt to ongoing long-term ecological changes such as climate change or loss of ecosystem services? Which adaptation strategies would be required? How can flexibility and the ability to adapt to future challenges be preserved even in long term investments and institutions?
- **Participation:** How can different actors from the private sector and civil society be effectively integrated in strategies to address long-term social-ecological challenges? Which repercussions will broader participation have for legitimacy, accountability, viability, fairness and transparency of democratic long-term policies?
- **Teaching and knowledge systems for sustainability:** As in previous Berlin Conferences, teaching and novel ways to design knowledge systems for sustainability should be presented and discussed. This relates in particular to the transformations of the science system towards transdisciplinary and solution-oriented research.

This 2008 Berlin Conference will be the eighth event in the series of annual European Conferences on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change. It is organized together with the German Social-Ecological Research Programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It particularly targets at bringing

transdisciplinary research results from this field into the international debate and to discuss future perspectives of social-ecological research.

The conference format will involve representatives of the particular actor groups such as businesses, civil society and NGOs, politics and the natural and social sciences to integrate their particular expertise. Thereby, a mutual exchange between the different actor groups will be facilitated and the practicability of problem-solving transdisciplinary work will be discussed. We explicitly welcome papers that also integrate a gender perspective on these subjects. The conference will be held in English.

### **How to participate**

Proposals for papers or posters are to be sent by e-mail to **bc2008@zedat.fu-berlin.de**. The body of the e-mail (no attachments please) should contain

- Title of the proposed paper,
- Abstract of less than 300 words (longer abstracts will be rejected. No graphs, references, tables etc. in the abstracts please), and
- Complete address and professional affiliation of all (co)-author(s).

The deadline for proposals is **15 September 2007**.

All paper and poster submissions will be reviewed by an international review panel before being accepted. Notification of the decision will be sent by e-mail no later than 31 October 2007. Full papers are expected by 31 January 2008.

Through a grant by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, travel cost reimbursement of those conference participants coming from non-OECD countries, of young researchers and colleagues from formerly BMBF-funded social-ecological research projects will be possible on a competitive basis. Paper presenters and other participants are asked to contribute a registration fee of 150 Euros (50 Euros for students with valid student ID) upon registration.

### **Conference Website:**

[www.fu-berlin.de/ffu/akumwelt/bc2008](http://www.fu-berlin.de/ffu/akumwelt/bc2008)

### **International Steering Committee:**

- FRANS BERKHOUT (IVM, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Chair of the IHDP Industrial Transformation project)
- FRANK BIERMANN (IVM, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Chair of the Earth System Governance Scientific Planning Committee)
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**Hosts:**

- Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg
- Freie Universität Berlin
- Social-Ecological Research Programme
- Global Governance Project

**Endorsements:**

- International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP)
- IHDP Earth System Governance Scientific Planning Committee
- German Association for Ecological Economic Research (VÖW)

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