

BUP Symposium 2020: Research and Innovation for a Sustainable Baltic Sea Region

IFZO – A new Research Centre at the University of Greifswald Analysing the Transformation to Sustainable Societies in the Baltic Sea Region

Introduction

For a sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), societies need fundamental, interdisciplinary research. Therefore, scientific, social and cultural research at the University of Greifswald has been combined in the newly founded Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO) with a strong emphasis on the cultural and social context of transformation processes. Research focuses on cooperation and conflict-driven projections of futures in the societies of the BSR. On the level of content, one working focus of the IFZO is on questions and challenges of current urgency in the three different spheres of sustainability, e.g. the threatened eco-system of the Baltic Sea, economic innovations in rural areas within the region and sustainable energy-supply and new nationalisms.



Framework Concept: Fragmented Transformations

The development of the BSR into one of the first "truly sustainable regions on earth" (CBSS) is a declared goal of all regional political organizations in the Baltic Sea Area. However, despite all achievements, the transformation processes towards sustainability are fragmented and ambivalent. Analyses of accelerated, split and agglomerated transformation processes describe perceptions of unfinished, fragmented and parallel developments that nevertheless have a profound impact. Against this background, fragmentation describes not only today's societies, but reveals also a comprehensive understanding of reactions to and perception of change. The IFZO, therefore, uses the heuristics of "fragmented transformations" to describe current processes in the BSR and to record the braking effects of sustainability transformation from a cultural and social science perspective.

Main assumption

Considering that sustainability measurements have been applied differently in different societies within the BSR, our underlying assumption is that sustainable and innovative solutions in and for the BSR have always a cultural dimension. This applies to different areas such as innovation policy, the sustainable use of mires in the region, sustainable energy projects or and tourism development through maritime cultural heritage.



Carta Marina, 1539

Keywords

Regional Studies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Sustainable Societies, Innovation, Energy Transition, Digitalization.

Six Research Clusters

- (1) International Relations and Security (Hard and Soft Security)
- (2) New Nationalisms
- (3) The Topicality of Cultural Heritage
- (4) Regional Development and Rural Areas
- (5) Sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region**
- (6) Energy



Cluster Sustainability

In the research area of sustainability, research topics were identified which range from the deepening of scientific knowledge about the Baltic Sea ecosystem and the discussion of the societal shaping of sustainability to the research of the mediation and acquisition of the necessary competencies and the associated individual changes in behavior.

Project topics

- **Antibiotics in the Baltic Sea:**
The problem of substance inputs into the Baltic Sea (nutrients and pollutants) is well researched, and various established research institutions in the Baltic Sea region are working in this area. Comparatively little research has been done on the input of antibiotics and antibiotic-resistant germs into the Baltic Sea. IFZO will address this research gap in the main phase.
- **Baltic Sea, the sea of mires between peatland protection and agricultural policy:**
For sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region, the peatlands of the region must be preserved, as drained peatlands emit considerable amounts of greenhouse gases, reduce biodiversity and increase the risk of flooding. Large areas of Scandinavia and the Baltic States, but also the north of Germany and Poland, are covered by peatlands (or drained peat soils). A central framework condition for mire protection and the use of wetlands ("paludiculture") is agricultural policy, whose design towards more peatlands protection in turn depends on various determinants.
- **Baltic Sea Literacy:**
The current state of research on "Ocean Literacy" (i.e. the influence of marine ecology on humans and the influence of humans on marine ecology) shows that the transformation towards a sustainable management of oceans requires more than just an increase in knowledge, it also depends on corresponding changes in behavior at the individual level. A transfer of the concept of "Ocean Literacy" to the handling of the Baltic Sea is still pending, as is the research the conditions for behavioral change.

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