

# Research Concept

**Dr. Stefan Wurster**

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## **Main emphasis of my research**

The main emphasis of my research activities are in the field of comparative international policy research, analysis of sustainability-oriented policy development in Germany, in the OECD and in other industrial countries as well as the theoretically and empirically driven review of democratic and autocratic regime types. This prioritization is reflected in my postdoctoral project on the subject of "Sustainability and Regime Type", in my doctoral thesis on "Zukunftsvorsorge in Deutschland", as well as in my numerous publications in reviewed journals and other edited volumes. In addition, my work consists of analyzing economic, environmental and energy policy, articles on (new) forms of political governance and diverse instruments of government control. In addition to comparative studies on the national level of countries, I have recently also become more engaged in policy processes and strategy analyses on the municipal level.

## **Postdoctoral project: Sustainability and Regime Type**

In the course of my postdoctoral project on "Sustainability and Regime Type" I am reviewing whether the "Churchill Hypothesis", which assumes a relative superiority of democratic states over autocratic states, can also be maintained with regard to their sustainability performance. How do democratic and autocratic states fare with regard to their sustainability in various political fields, and what (political science) indicators help to explain the variance? Against the background of a sustainable development model consisting of several (economic, social and ecological) dimensions, I have written several basic theoretical papers about sustainable politics: (Wurster 2010, Croissant/Wurster 2013; Croissant/Kailitz/Köllner/Wurster 2014a; 2014,) articles on fiscal policy consolidation (Wurster 2012a), long-term human capital development (Wurster 2011c) and ecological sustainability performance (Wurster 2013a). Currently I am working on a paper that is comparing how different types of regimes cope with their internal conflicts. Here, as in most studies before, I provide methodical access to the performance analysis in the sense of triangulating research, also using - in addition to macro quantitative evaluation instruments in a large number of countries - qualitative detailed reviews of individual countries which I select according to systematic criteria.

### **Instruments of sustainable policy design**

In consideration of the importance of various types of governance, I plan to expand my quantitative and qualitative analyses for sustainable performance development (Application of specific sustainability instruments and governance modi, Wurster 2013b). Over the past decades, the spectrum of legal, institutional, financial, planning and participation-oriented sustainability instruments that can be used to perform this complex task, individually or in combination, has constantly expanded and become more differentiated. However, it has hardly been studied so far to what extent and in what combination these instruments are actually used by countries of different political, economic and cultural background. For example, it has remained uncertain so far whether differences can be discerned between democratically and autocratically governed countries in terms of the choice of their instrument mix, and how this may affect a country's sustainability performance. Early in 2015, to answer this question, a data set was published which I especially developed for this purpose, and which records the design and distribution of sustainability instruments in more than fifty surveyed countries. The evaluation results are to be published in reviewed journal articles. Apart from this, I have successfully proposed to conduct a panel relevant to this subject for the section on comparative political science at the 2015 Conference of the German Association of Political Science (DVPW) in Hamburg, to deal with regime type, policy instruments and political performance. I am planning a special issue on that subject for an international journal.

### **Diffusion and learning processes in the comparison of regimes**

Starting with the doctoral course of studies, "Political Performance of Autocratic and Democratic Regimes" (which I have helped to raise at the State Graduate Foundation of Baden-Württemberg), I am collaborating in the development of a research group application, "Determinants of political diffusion and learning processes in the comparison of regimes". Thematically linked to my postdoctoral project, I would like to investigate - within the framework of this larger-scale project - theoretical and empirical questions of policy diffusion and political learning processes by comparing democracies with autocracies as well as democracies with each other. A particularly prominent role is planned for the analysis of the German model. For this, too, a publication project is already being planned.

### **Related research projects**

Apart from projects directly connected with my postdoctoral research, I also pursue and purposefully develop other subjects that were of concern to me in the course of my doctoral studies.

### **Regulating energy policy in Germany and by the OECD**

On the one hand, the results of regulatory measures of energy policy in Germany and by the OECD

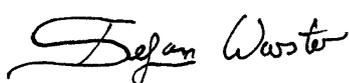
are at the centre. In 2015, building on current publications about conflicting objectives of energy policy (Wurster 2013d), I plan to present a paper on the regulation of electricity and gas markets in the OECD world. Starting with manifestly conflicting objectives in the problem areas of energy price stability, reliability of supply, environmental and climate concerns, I will use macro quantitative methods and a supplementary qualitative revue of countries to take a close critical look at the different regulatory regimes in the - at least formally - largely liberalized energy markets of OECD countries, with regard to their performance effect.

### **Genetic engineering developments and their implication for research policy**

Furthermore, ever since my dissertation, I have been involved with questions of research policy. While until now, the division of labour and performance development in R&D politics have been the main focus (Wurster/Wolf 2011a; 2011b), I would now like to conduct a policy analysis of stem cell legislation in Germany in which not only political and legal, but also philosophical and ethical aspects would be taken into consideration. In this, I can establish a direct link with preparatory studies for my dissertation on the subject of green and red genetic engineering.

### **Agenda 21 processes in German municipalities**

Starting from my analyses of various sustainability instruments on a national government basis, I have recently paid more attention in my studies to governance processes and strategy analyses on a municipal and local level. Thus, in September 2014, I was able to attract the interdisciplinary research project called "Ergebnisse des Lokalen-Agenda-21-Prozesses in Heidelberg" at the Heidelberg Center for the Environment (HCE). The goal of that project was to take a closer look at the regulatory mechanisms on the municipal level (with the city of Heidelberg as the model) and to search for successful determinants of the Local Agenda 21 process. The Local Agenda 21 characterizes a complex field of action that is marked by self-regulatory processes of citizen groups (governance from below) as well as by regulatory interventions by the municipal administration and the political leadership (government from above). The findings obtained with the aid of qualitative investigation methods (semi-standardized individual interviews, evaluation according to Mayring) were so differentiated and promising that in addition to two planned individual publications, a follow-up application could be filed that has been approved in the meantime (broadening the analysis to include other municipalities in Germany, creation of a doctoral position, application for a 50,000 € grant).



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