



Press Release

IASS Presents Research Programme for 2017–2021

The energy transition, climate policy, and the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals form the focus of future research

Potsdam, 25.10.2016. Scientific directors Mark Lawrence, Patrizia Nanz, and Ortwin Renn presented the research programme covering the funding period from 1.1.2017 through to 30.6.2021 at the General Assembly of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) held yesterday in Potsdam. The General Assembly, whose members include the research ministries of the federal government and the State of Brandenburg and important scientific institutions, approved the research programme presented by the Institute's new scientific leadership team, which began its work in spring 2016.

"With this research programme we will continue to strengthen our transdisciplinary and dialogue-based approach to research", explained climate and atmospheric scientist Mark Lawrence. "Since our foundation, we have supported processes of political and societal change by gathering together diverse stakeholders and knowledge from around the world. The generation of research-based knowledge that enables us to initiate and support transformations towards sustainability will play an even more important role in this work as we move forward."

3 political processes, 20 core- and 16 third-party funded projects

To this end, research activities at the IASS will focus on three political processes in the coming years: the global and national process to implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the energy transition, and the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement. These political processes present developed and developing countries with significant challenges and call for the adoption of decisive steps and measures to achieve the goals and create economies and societies that are largely decarbonised.

The IASS, which is funded by the ministries of research of the German federal government and the State of Brandenburg, plans to implement twenty projects focussed on these topics and related issues (such as systemic risks, digitalisation, and the futurisation of politics) throughout its next funding period. In addition to this, IASS researchers are currently involved in sixteen third-party funded projects.



Contemporary policy advice: transdisciplinary and democratic

The Institute's transdisciplinary and co-creative research approach promotes dialogue between science, policymakers, business, and civil society. A meta-project on co-creation and policy advice will develop and trial practical formats for the collaborative generation of knowledge. The project will demonstrate the extent to which transdisciplinary research can make relevant contributions to change processes that complement traditional, science-based policy advice.

"We want to learn more about the requirements of contemporary policy advice processes in order to facilitate the role of expert knowledge within the democratic process," explained political scientist Patrizia Nanz. "In a time in which many European democracies are in a state of crisis, participatory processes backed by scientific advice can make a significant contribution to efforts to revive democracy and strengthen its legitimacy."

Research platform for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The IASS is working with other organisations to develop a research platform for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Platform). This activity is being undertaken in connection with the new German Sustainability Strategy, which is scheduled to be adopted by the German cabinet in autumn 2016. The platform will lend the sustainable development goals a stronger presence within the German science landscape and bolster dialogue between science and policymakers. The IASS is to host the head office of the SDG Platform under the leadership of Patrizia Nanz and will play a leading role in the thematic development and coordination of the platform.

Making the energy transition effective, efficient, resilient, and fair

In an effort to support successful transitions to low-carbon energy systems, the IASS research area on the national and international energy supply will be expanded under the leadership of environmental sociologist and risk expert Ortwin Renn. The social sustainability of the energy transition will form a central focus of its activities. A social sustainability barometer, under development by IASS researchers, will support monitoring efforts, enable researchers to collect empirical data on social factors, and facilitate their evaluation. Other areas of focus include the decarbonisation of energy systems and the international dimension of the energy transition.

Developing effective climate governance to achieve the Paris climate goals

The adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 set new parameters for the protection of the climate. Two projects at the IASS focus explicitly on the implementation of the Paris Agree-



ment. These projects will seek to identify the main obstacles and drivers for effective climate governance and address issues relating to regime effectiveness, transparency, and participation.

With its goal of limiting the rise in global temperature to well below 2°C, the Paris Agreement is also fostering debate on the issue of targeted interventions aimed at cooling the global climate, referred to collectively as “climate engineering”. Under the leadership of Mark Lawrence, the IASS has explored the potential impacts, uncertainties, and risks of climate engineering since 2011. A new project will analyse the interdependencies between science and society, with a particular focus on the handling of systemic risks, scientific uncertainties, the social construction of models of the future, and the legitimization of research and policy agendas.

Other projects relating to climate research will address the links between climate change and air pollution, and the challenge of providing effective policy advice to improve air quality in Germany, Europe, and South Asia.

New research structures and an experimental incubator

The scientific leadership team worked with the various bodies and researchers of the IASS in a strategic development process to create new structures for the future research programme. The project-based structure of this research programme marks a departure from the departmental approach previously pursued at the IASS. Each of the new projects will be supervised by two scientific directors, with a view to heightening synergies and promoting exchange.

“Our goal is to overcome fragmentation in research,” emphasised Ortwin Renn “Researchers from around 30 different scientific disciplines are active at the IASS – from atmospheric scientists to theologians. Sustainability research in particular profits from greater integration, which contributes to the generation of knowledge that is both evidence-based and rooted in practice.”

Other innovations include the creation of institute-wide knowledge pools and an incubator to provide an experimental space for the study of new ideas and methods. With the introduction of these new structures, the IASS hopes to harness the creative potential of its roughly 60 researchers, along with the 30 Fellows invited to join the Institute each year from around the world, and to promote innovative research for sustainable societies.

For further information, please visit: www.iass-potsdam.de



Please direct any queries to:

Eva Söderman

Head of Press & Communication

Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies e.V.

Berliner Straße 130, 14467 Potsdam

Tel. +49 (0)331 288 22-340/34 / Fax +49 (0)331 288 22-310

E-mail eva.soederman@iass-potsdam.de / bianca.schroeder@iass-potsdam.de

Funded by the ministries of research of the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Brandenburg, the **Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)** aims to identify and promote development pathways for a global transformation towards a sustainable society. The IASS employs a transdisciplinary approach that encourages dialogue to understand sustainability issues and generate potential solutions in cooperation with partners from the sciences, politics, the economy, and civil society. A strong network of national and international partners supports the work of the Institute. Its central research topics include the energy transition, emerging technologies, climate change, air quality, systemic risks, governance and participation, and cultures of transformation.