

Program line on  
future-oriented

sustainability  
work

**Sustainability –  
Looking  
beyond 2030**

The global sustainability discourse has gained momentum with the Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), drawing from the 1987 Brundtland report's concept of sustainability, considering present needs without compromising those of future generations. The 2020 Report on the progress in achieving the SDGs<sup>[1]</sup> does not only show where progress is lacking. It also reveals where the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis have intensified difficulties, e.g., on food insecurity due to disrupted supply chains, violence against women in lock-downs, children deprived of quality education due to missing access to remote learning, reinforcements of mechanisms causing poverty such as job insecurity in the informal economy, or the very unequal access to health services and thus vaccination.

**While being widely respected as great achievement of the international community of States that has done much to include different voices, the Agenda has faced criticism from different sides, such as its being dominated by “Northern” and “Western” paradigms.** This dominance results in concerns about insufficient inclusion of other worldviews and approaches, such as voices of indigenous populations, and the inability to incorporate other internationally relevant frameworks such as the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Science's voice has often been claimed to have been weak in the negotiation process towards the 17 SDGs of the UN Agenda 2030. Notwithstanding, sustainability science has now proliferated universities and think tanks worldwide. It is concerned with sustainable development at the interfaces of the systems of economy, nature and society. Operating in a field of tension of social discourses and value systems, it refers to diverse actors and their interests. Being application oriented and actionable, it requires cooperation with the private sector, policy makers and civil society.<sup>[2]</sup> It is structured less by disciplines than by concrete problem settings, and thus requires an understanding beyond historically developed “scientific” disciplinary boundaries, of epistemologies and ontologies, and an operation within a scientific multilingualism.<sup>[3]</sup> Thus touching the very grounds of different worldviews, academia needs to integrate diverse cultural, religious and philosophical perspectives into the discourse, and help to negotiate between concepts and views, navigating in the same value-laden environment as policy and decision makers.

**2030 is not far away. In order to be ready for a “post 2030” agenda, we need to think early about improving existing frameworks and tools, for a system change to incorporate previously neglected themes, perspectives and voices. More importantly, we should explore new ways of thinking about sustainability and the pathways to achieve them.**

## Activities

### **Expert workshops and working groups:**

Organization of closed expert rounds for in-depth working processes, initiated by colleagues from at least two Bonn Alliance partner institutions. The workshops should bring together several colleagues from the Bonn Alliance partner institutions, or enable the colleagues from the Bonn Alliance partner institutions to extend their networks by invitation of suitable external guests and experts. Format and outcome of a workshop are to be defined by the respective organizers (e.g., a paper, a funding proposal, working out a theoretical issue, bringing together content and concepts for further joint programs, etc.).

### **Dialogue events, such as panel discussions:**

Organization of an expert discussion on a panel with public audience. Colleagues from at least two Bonn Alliance partner institutions are either on the panel, invited as discussants, or involved in the moderation of the panel. If the Bonn Alliance does not play an active role in the event, it must be made very clear why the panel is relevant for the progress of the S-LB2030 program line. In any case, the colleagues from the Bonn Alliance partner institutions are always invited to the dialogue events.

**The Head Office supports interested colleagues from the Bonn Alliance partner institutions in bundling their contributions to a “post 2030”-perspective under a common umbrella, discussing them with each other and communicating them to a larger audience.**

## Notes and References

<sup>[1]</sup> UN: [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](#).

<sup>[2]</sup> Spangenberg 2011: 276, Nölting et al. 2004: 255, 258.

<sup>[3]</sup> Spangenberg 2011: 279; Kates 2011: 19449; Pröpper 2017.

Kates, Robert W.: “What kind of a science is sustainability science?” In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 108 (49): 19449-19450.

Nölting, Benjamin, Jan-Peter Voß and Hayn (2004): „Nachhaltigkeitsforschung – jenseits von Diziplinierung und anything goes.“ In: *GAIA: ökologische Perspektiven für Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft* 13 (4): 254–261.

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Spangenberg, J. (2011): “Sustainability science: a review, an analysis and some empirical lessons.” In: *Environmental Conservation* 38 (3): 275–287.

**This program line takes place in cooperation with the initiative “Wellbeing, Sustainability and Equity (WiSE) Transformation” at UNU-EHS.**



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