The projects briefly sketched below will be conducted in the context of a larger interdisciplinary research group entitled “Cultures of Sustainability” within the newly founded Research and Study Center at the University of Mannheim. Other projects include “Justifications for sustainable institutions” (project 1, philosophy) and “Narratives of climate change” (project 4, literary studies).

**Project 2: „Comparing public debates on sustainable restructuring”**

*Project director: Hartmut Wessler*

This project will compare media coverage on climate change in general as well as on proposals for institutional innovations aiming at sustainable restructuring around the world. For this purpose, an inventory of debates on climate politics since 1980 will be generated using existing media content databases.

Based on this first step particular debates on specific proposals for institutional innovation will be analyzed more deeply in the second phase. This includes the proposals to install ombudspersons for future generations with veto rights in law-making processes such as those previously discussed in Hungary, Israel, Germany and New Zealand as well as the respective discussions in other countries and on the level of the United Nations. Furthermore, this analysis also focuses on individual reform debates as derived from the world-wide inventory. Using a framing approach informed by argumentation theory (cf. Entman, 2004; Matthes & Kohring, 2008; Gerhards, Offerhaus & Roose, 2007) problem definitions, attributions of causality and responsibility, policy positions, and justifications found in media debates on such reform proposals will be re-constructed. Thereby, this project will provide the necessary knowledge for Project 1 (“Justifications for sustainable institutions”) on the functioning of public debates concerning institutional reform. This will help to identify effective strategies of argumentation.

Finally, the project will provide explanations for the distinctness of media coverage and climate debates by systematically comparing countries with high and low problem involvement (i.e., high/low level of historic responsibility and current vulnerability) as well as with a strong and weak tradition of climate skeptical positions.
Project 3: “Persuasive effects of argumentative, visual, and narrative climate discourse”
(Project director: Hartmut Wessler)

The persuasive effects of particular discourse modalities (argumentative, visual, narrative) and their interplay are understudied in international research on climate communication. So far research has dealt with information-oriented media use and its consequences and in doing so has focused especially on possible increases in knowledge and motives for action (cf. Thaddicken & Neverla, 2011).

This project has two aims. On the one hand, it aims at extending extant research by conducting experiments with media users through which the persuasiveness of those justifications for institutional reforms will be analyzed that are to be developed in Project 1 and whose presence in media coverage will be empirically assessed in international comparison in Project 2.

On the other hand, Project 3 complements existing media effects studies by including the thus far neglected visual and narrative elements of journalistic climate coverage as stimuli (on visuals cf. among others: O’Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Doyle, 2011; DiFrancesco & Young, 2011; on narratives cf. Viehöver, 2012; Schwarze, 2006; Smith, 2012; Spoel, Goforth, Cheu & Pearson, 2008). Particular emphasis will be placed on affective effects of visual and narrative elements of climate communication in addition to cognitive and behavioral effects. It is assumed that affective effects influence motivations for actions and are therefore important for the support of innovations in climate politics as addressed in Project 1. The project partly draws on results from the existing research project “Sustainable media events?” in which the interplay between argumentative, visual, and narrative elements of journalistic climate coverage is analyzed in an internationally comparative media content analysis (see climate.uni-mannheim.de). Thus, realistic stimulus material for the effects study of Project 3 already exists.
References


