4 Sustainability Communication as field of research

Lesson 03: Issues, Topics & Degree of Institutionalization

Assoc Prof. Dr. habil Franzisca Weder
School of Communication and Arts
The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Universität Bremen

ZMML
Zentrum für Multimedia in Lehre

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Where are we?

Episode 4.1:   Literature review, status quo

Episode 4.2:   Methodologies used / studies

Episode 4.3:   Institutionalization of sustainability communication

Episode 4.4:   Future methodologies, engagement

Learning outcomes

Learning outcome 1:

Describe the diverse nature of contemporary practices of sustainability communication on an individual, organizational and societal level, the relationship of strategic communication practices to other public communication practices, the role of stakeholders and publics and the communication practitioners in and outside of organizations (corporate, NGO, political and educational institutions etc.)

Learning outcome 2:

Develop comprehensive and well-founded knowledge in sustainability communication as field of study, an understanding of how other disciplines relate to the field and an international perspective on the field.

Learning outcome 3:

Understand the key elements of communication theories, strategies and tactics, and, thus, the character and operationalization of best practice sustainability communication planning frameworks.
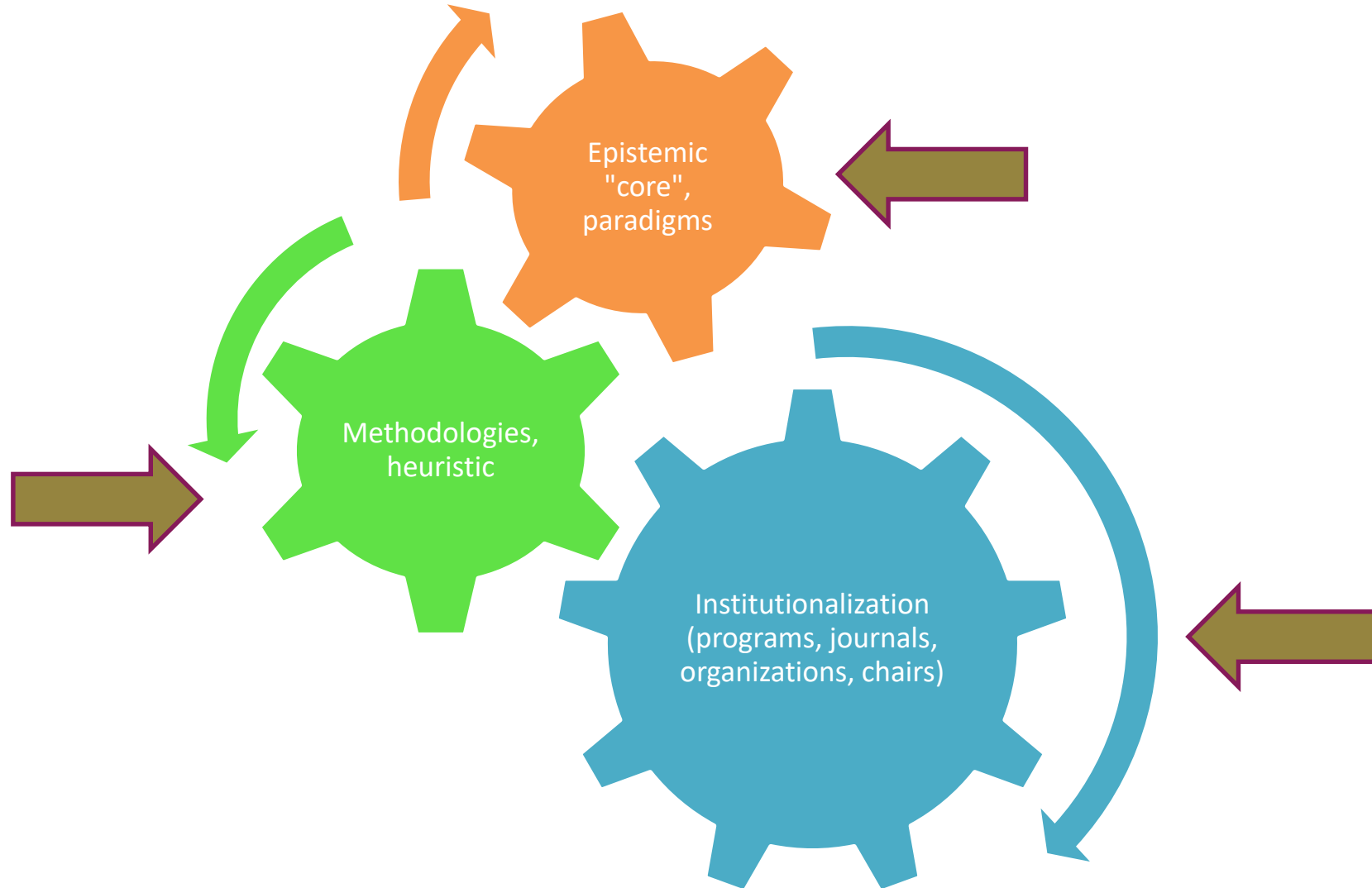
Learning outcome 4:

Advance your understanding of social and civic responsibility and develop an appreciation of the philosophical and social context of sustainability communication. Advance your knowledge and respect of ethics and ethical standards in relation to communication of, about and for sustainability.

Learning outcome 5:

Anticipate and Interpret current issues and challenges of a world in transformation and social change. Develop a deep understanding of and skills to create change, develop advocacy, leadership and authorship in and for sustainability communication.

Overview

Epistemic "core", paradigms

Methodologies, heuristic

Institutionalization (programs, journals, organizations, chairs)

Overview

A. Institutionalization in literature (journals, books)

B. Institutionalization in higher education (chairs, professorships)

C. Institutionalization in education programs (master, bachelor etc.)

D. Institutionalization in organizations (professional associations, conferences)

A. Institutionalization in literature

Well established (recap):

- corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication & corporate sustainability communication

- climate change communication

- sustainable consumption communication

A. Institutionalization in literature

Google scholar:
- Sustainability: 4.040.000 results
- "Sustainability communication": 4.860 results

Books:
- Godemann & Michelsen, 2011
- Weder et al., 2021

Journals:
- Sustainability (MDPI, open access)
- Sustainability Science (Springer)
- Journal of Sustainability Research (Harper, open access)
- nature sustainability (nature)
- Sustainability: Science, Practice & Policy (TuF, open access)
- Global Sustainability (Cambridge, open access)
- Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability (Elsevier)
- International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education (Emerald)
- Asian Journal of Sustainability and Social Responsibility (Springer)
- Journal of Sustainable Development (Canadian Center for Science & Education)
- UmweltWirtschaftsForum
- Journal of Business Ethics
- Gaia

B. Institutionalization in higher education

Central role of higher education for the promotion of sustainable development addressed & identified by …

- United Nations as early as 1972 at the "United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" (UNCHE) (UN Documents, 2020),

- following conferences and official documents that further emphasized this role, such as the "Belgrade Charter" 1975 (UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme, 1975), the "Tbilisi Declaration" 1977 (UNESCO, 1977) and the well-known Brundtland Report, which particularly emphasizes the teacher's role: "the world's teachers [. . .] have a crucial role to play in helping to bring about the extensive social changes needed for sustainable development "(WCED – World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 14).

- Agenda 21, "for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues "(UN – United Nations, 1992, Kap. 36, p. 2).

- "Ubuntu Declaration" 2002: for the first time addresses the need to integrate sustainability aspects in curricula of all educational levels (UN – United Nations, 2002);

- the global plan of action "Education for sustainable development" 2005 (UNESCO, 2005)

- the SDGs, (Goal no. 4) "quality education," which, among other things, aims at ensuring that "all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" (UN – United Nations, 2015a).

B. Institutionalization in higher education

No regulations, policy – instead: increase in self-commitment since the 1990s, within the meaning of higher education's "third mission"; examples:

- Talloires Declaration 1990 – the first official statement made by university presidents for incorporating sustainability in teaching and research (ULSF – University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1990)

- the COPERNICUS Charta 1993 – a self-commitment in leading change for sustainability, renewed in 2011 (COPERNICUS, 2020) –;

- the Turin Declaration on Education and Research for Sustainable and Responsible Development 2009 (IAU – International Association of Universities, 2009) are just a few examples of this.

B. Institutionalization in higher education

Status Quo:

a) In Organizations: Sustainability & Wellbeing
b) External Communication: Reporting, Nachhaltigkeitsbewertungen, Social Responsibility, Environmental Accountability, Klimaneutralität
c) Departments, Schools, Chairs; examples:
   a) Fakultät Nachhaltigkeit (Leuphana, Lüneburg)
   b) Chair for Corporate Sustainability (ESCP.eu, Berlin)
   c) Chair for Sustainability Management (St. Gallen)
   d) Chair of Sustainability Management (HHU, Düsseldorf)
   e) Lehrstuhl für Unternehmerische Nachhaltigkeit (TUM, München)
   f) Lehrstuhl für Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften (Uni Mannheim)
   g) Nachhaltige Forstwirtschaft, Sustainable Finance, -> siehe auch „DG HochN"

C. Institutionalization in education programs

Status quo

d) program level:

-> relevance of curriculum development as an essential decision-making process in and for higher education management (Drake, 1998; Barnett et al., 2001; Lattuca and Stark, 2009).

Examples in Germany:

- **HS Bochum**: Bachelor „Nachhaltige Entwicklung" und Master „Nachhaltige Entwicklung" (konsekutiv) sowie Master „Angewandte Nachhaltigkeit"
- **FH Dortmund**: Master „Soziale Nachhaltigkeit & demografischer Wandel" aus dem Fachbereich Angewandte Sozialwissenschaften
- **HS Pforzheim**: Bachelor „Nachhaltigkeit und Ressourceneffizienzmanagement", Master „Life Cycle & Sustainability"
- **DHBW Karlsruhe**: Bachelor „Sustainable Science and Technology" (mit den Studienrichtungen Papiertechnologie, Verpackungstechnologie, Sicherheitstechnik, Arbeitstechnik und Umwelttechnik)
- **SRH Mobile University**: Bachelor „Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement" und MBA „Sustainability Management"
- **Euro-FH**: Master „Soziale Arbeit und Nachhaltigkeit"; Prof. Stefan Müller-Teusler

Reflection

- Check your University / your "Alma Mater"'s website: Who is responsible for Sustainability related issues?

- Who is teaching & researching about sustainability related issues? What are the disciplines and faculties that deal with sustainability the most? Why?

- On which level (bachelor, master, phd) do you think sustainability should be integrated in programs? Why?