

Development of a Heuristics for Analysing Sustainability Governance at Universities

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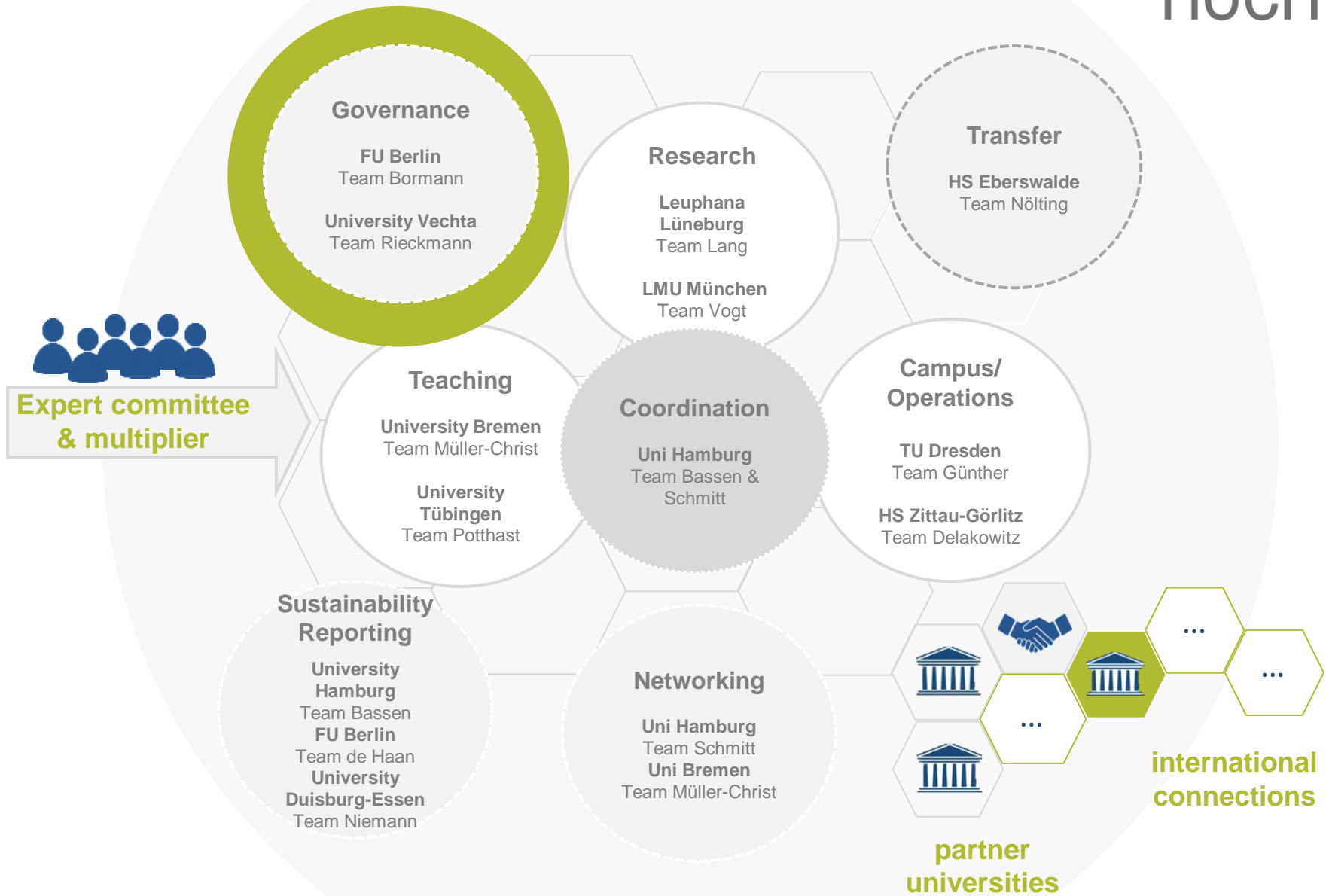
Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions: develop – network – report

- Collaboration of **eleven German Higher Education Institutions** (HEI) in order to multiply, refine and expand expert knowledge and process skills for sustainable development.
- All partners are **dedicated to create a strong inter- and transdisciplinary network** on research as well as applied topics of sustainability.
- The HOCH-N network is an **open innovation platform** for all who are interested in participating.

Our shared goals

- Establish a **network** to exchange experience, knowledge and reflections on topics important to sustainability at HEI.
- Develop a **joint understanding** of sustainability and transformational process.
- Promote sustainable development at HEI by **identifying fields of action and new methods** that help to promote sustainability at HEI.
- Create useful **guidelines** within these fields of action to foster sustainability-related behaviour and organisational development.

Fields of action



Sustainability Governance at HEI: Rationale

- Universities play a crucial role for promoting sustainable development by addressing sustainability through their major functions of education, research and outreach (Fadeeva and Mochizuki, 2010; Müller-Christ et al., 2014; Wals et al.; 2016).
- However, the inquiry of underlying processes and structures, actor constellations and sensitivities of SD implementation at HEI – the sustainability governance – is rather rarely dealt with (Baker-Shelley et al., 2017; Dlouhá et al., 2016; Mader et al., 2013; Spira et al., 2013).
- Research seems to have paid “minimal attention to either critical strategic level dynamics or reflexive activities that could facilitate and accelerate change” (Stephens and Graham, 2010).

Sustainability Governance at HEI: Research focus

- How do universities deal with the request to institutionalise sustainability?
- In which ways and practices do universities acquire sustainability?
- Which conditions are required to institutionalise sustainability?

Governance: Theoretical background

- normative goal, but analytical understanding of governance
 - narrow: intended change of political regulation
 - wide: (emerging) form of social co-ordination of heterogeneous actors
- dimensions and modes of governance
 - observation – manipulation – negotiation
 - hierarchy – bureaucracy – community / network
- institutionalisation of sustainability in HEI
 - “lone wolf” doomed to failure
 - functional demands of co-ordination: politics, profession, organisation, knowledge, public

Theoretical Background: Governance Equaliser

Politics	From selective support... to a long-term agenda setting	embeddedness and legitimacy of sustainability
Profession	From a narrow professional perspective... to multi-professionality	interconnectedness of professional perspectives
Organisation	From projects ... to networking and collective action	cooperation and collaboration within the HEI
Knowledge	From isolated use of data ... to joint and reflexive perspective	gaining and usage of necessary knowledge and competence
Public	From little attention for sustainability ... to public discussion and high interest	awareness of the necessity of sustainability

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Methodological approach

- based on the **five-dimensional approach** from educational governance research the core assumption is: structures and processes of sustainability differ from university to university and can be described with these five dimensions
- 10 **exploratory expert interviews**
- 50-60 **qualitative interviews** with representatives of each status group of the universities collaborating in the HOCH-N network including **network maps**
- data analysis: structured qualitative content analysis

Exemplary Dimension: Profession

Politics	From selective support... to a long-term agenda setting	embeddedness and legitimacy of sustainability
Profession	From a narrow professional perspective... to multi-professionality	interconnectedness of professional perspectives
Organisation	From projects ... to networking and collective action	cooperation and collaboration within the HEI
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Profession

How are different disciplinary and professional perspectives and competencies linked to each other?

Initial Impulses

Structures, Procedures, Instruments

external

Specific perceptions of sustainability in different fields of science and their administration

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Promotion of the sustainability topic among the different scientific societies

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Handouts, recommendations, resolutions and best practice examples for the integration of sustainability as teaching content

internal

Varying professional conceptions of sustainability (i.e. through a focus on partial aspects of the concept)

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Interdisciplinary forms of cooperation, e.g. through graduate colleges or master's programmes

Varying approaches and logics of action between administration, teaching and research concerning conceptions, cultures and practices

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Confrontation with/ development of a common sustainability conception as well as resulting processes for the whole institution

Instruments

Hierarchical Top-Down Control

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Implementation of management systems (operations)
- Sustainability code
- Embedding of sustainability into the study regulations and professorships
- Establishment of staff positions/ delegates for sustainability
- Embedding of sustainability into the states' framework legislation
- Inclusion of sustainability criteria into the procurement directives of funded projects
- Indicator-based allocation of funds between ministries and HEI

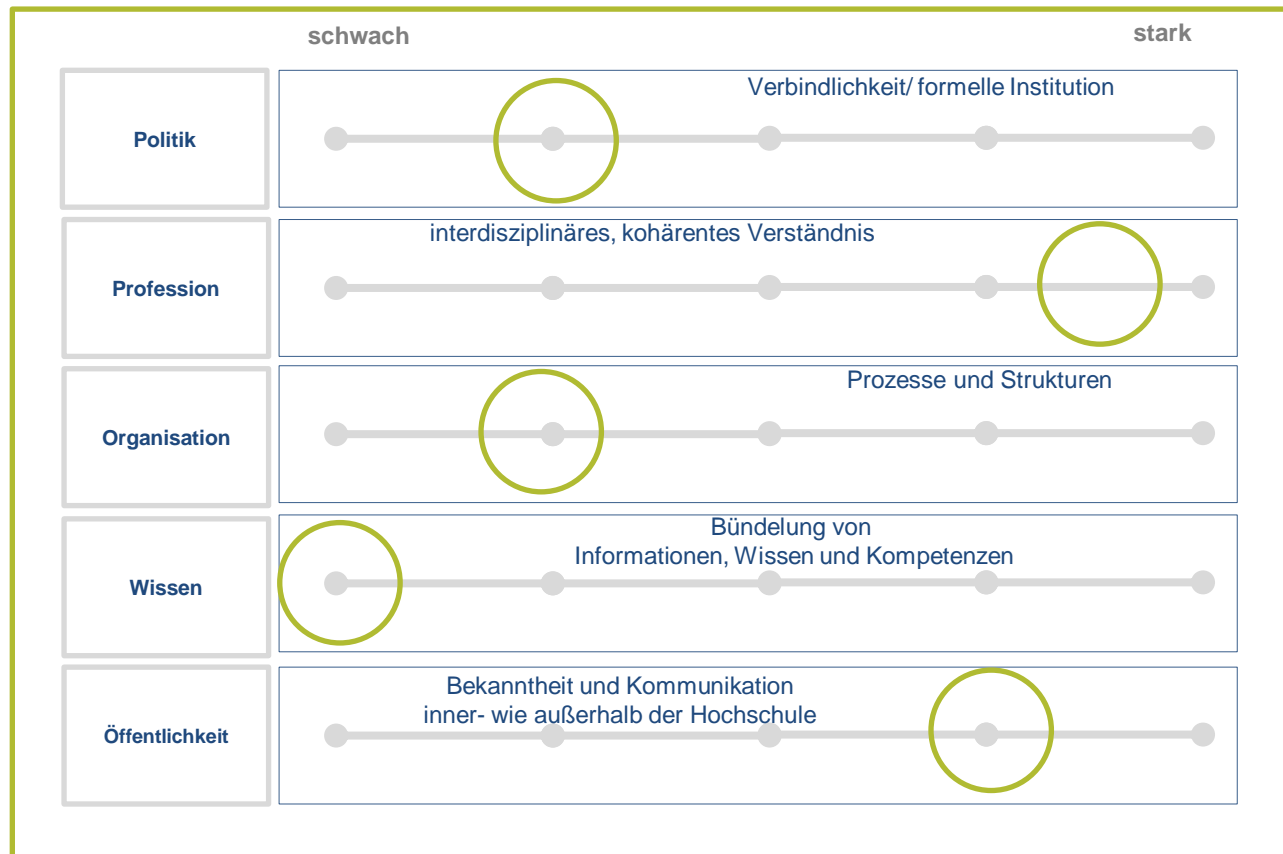
Indirect forms of control

- Promotion of interdisciplinarity in teaching and research
- Incentives for the participation in training programmes (Capacity Building)
- Promotion of sustainability related concepts for teaching and learning
- Development of a sustainability mission statement for the institution
- Commitment from the university administration to the guiding principle of sustainable development

Horizontal, soft control

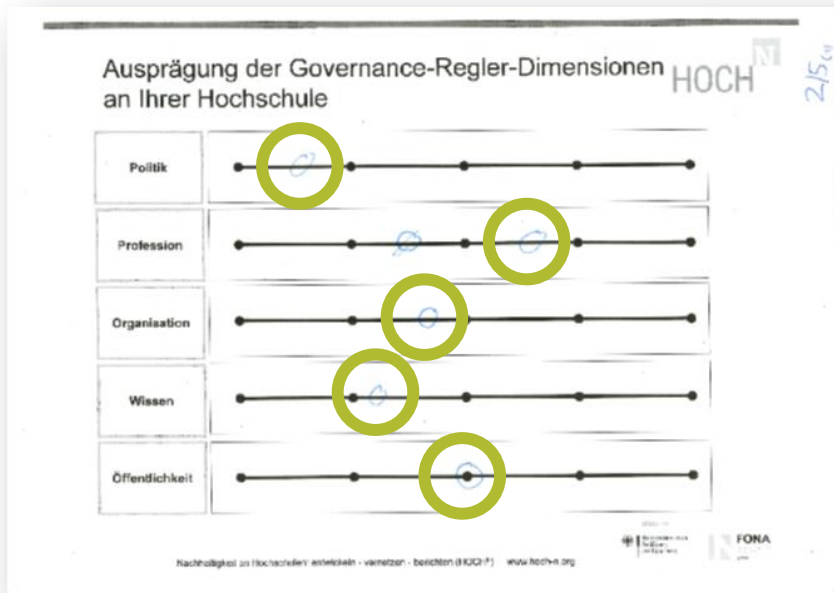
- Openness towards the society
- International university cooperations
- Regional/ local collaborations (civil society)
- Participative formats of working on higher education sustainability
- Establishment of working groups

Methodological approach

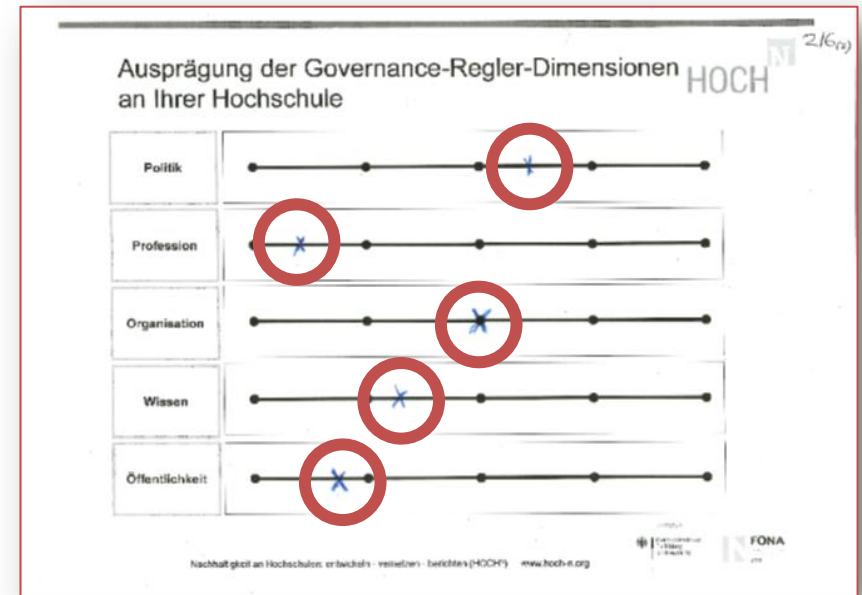


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Example

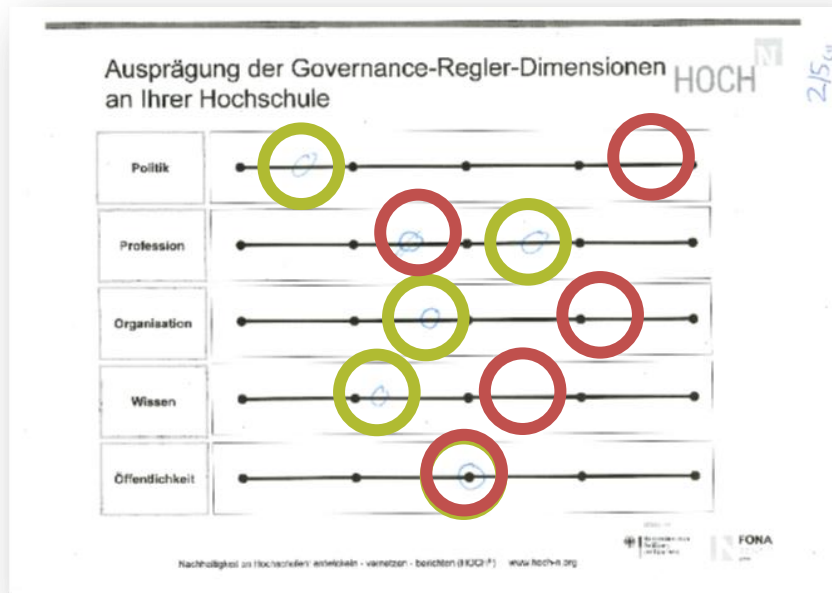


Staff



Student

Methodological approach



- concordances and discordances
 - analytically: reasons (world-views, acknowledgement, historicity, path-dependence, thematically bound, ...)?
 - counselling: switchpoints for supporting effective transformation (mutual blind spots, dialogue, ...)?

Discussion and preliminary conclusion

- Insights on processes and structures, actor constellations and sensitivities of SD implementation at HEI
- “attention to either critical strategic level dynamics or reflexive activities that could facilitate and accelerate change” (Stephens and Graham, 2010).
- general
 - good goal \neq good governance
 - beyond administrative order but far away from transformation (whole institution approach)
 - from “one for all” to broad commitment
 - critical junctures – “history matters” – path-dependent development
 - “shadow of hierarchy”
- governance / governance-equalizer

Thank you!

Find more information on our website: www.hoch-n.org