DLGS Dresden Leibniz Graduate School

Call for applications 2022

Beyond 2030: Envisioning sustainable and resilient places for transformative change

Societal transformation requires positive visions of a desirable future. At present, however, future discourses of the Anthropocene are more often than not dominated by dystopian scenarios (e.g. evidence-based "climate breakdown" or hypothetical "planetary urbanization"), by backward storylines (e.g. "coal phase out", "building back better"), or by technocratic utopias that lack a sustainability cause and social-ecological concern (e.g. "smart city"). Apparently, such narratives also remain largely generic with regard to change and transformation *in spatial terms and in particular places.*

Within sustainability sciences (Clark and Harley, 2020; Fang et al., 2018) the role and relevance of place-based positive visions has been widely discussed (see e.g. Wiek and Iwaniec, 2014; Vervoort et al., 2015; Bai et al., 2016; Ravetz and Miles, 2016). In particular, such visions are understood to:

- Offer qualitative and quantitative criteria for assessing the breadth, depth and speed of change required, thus enabling the design of pathways leading to their achievement, including corresponding action in the present;
- Translate between general and abstract global change parameters and the concrete and spatially diverse implications and impacts for particular places and communities, thus making future affectedness transparent and tangible;
- Enable participatory and empowering "future dialogues" that contribute decisively to renegotiate value orientations, goal conflicts and trade-offs, as well as to mobilize and integrate knowledge, thus leveraging normative change and diverse types of innovations (behavioural, technological, institutional, etc.);
- Provide a vital motivation for actors to overcome the plethora of obstacles and resistances to change and especially transformations (institutional, political, economic, social, cultural, material, etc.).

However, envisioning sustainable and resilient places beyond 2030 meets numerous challenges in practice:

- In times of globalization, urban and spatial planning has largely abandoned its *visionary and integrative aspirations* to focus mainly on regulation and place competitiveness (Davoudi, 2001). There is a general lack of competencies, resources and skills for envisioning in the public sector - contrasted by an expanding "future production" through the private sector (e.g. platform urbanism), as well as civil society (e.g. social movements);
- Participation in planning and policy making today has been accommodated as a regulated standard procedure tailored to ensure legitimacy, representation and acceptance. There is however little practice and experience in *participatory envisioning* (Wolfram, 2018), especially with a view to deliberate alternative futures and ensure intergenerational and planetary justice;
- Key social-ecological-technological transformation challenges require *working across policy domains and territorial boundaries* (mitigation, adaptation, food, health, etc.). Demands on systemic integration and collaboration for envisioning are thus higher than ever before;
- The *complexity and uncertainty* of spatial sustainability transformations require novel approaches and methods to conceive of, analyse and discuss possible and desirable futures, addressing not only value conflicts but also gaps in critical data as well as its overall abundance.

Against this backdrop, the Dresden Leibniz Graduate School (DLGS) is looking for innovative research proposals that intend to explore:

- Current discourses, policies, practices and/or techniques dealing with the long-term future of places beyond 2030, including e.g. their
    - emergence and shaping, considering related forms of agency
    - spatiality and geographical patterns
    - knowledge basis and cognitive implications
    - normative claims and orientations
    - confrontation, politics and de-/institutionalization
- New approaches, methods, techniques and tools for envisioning sustainable and resilient places beyond 2030 and the capacities required to implement these - enabling broad and meaningful participation, future exploration and assessment, and connecting with today's policy and decision making.

We invite applications from all international applicants, of all disciplines and using any suitable methods. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are strongly encouraged.

In case of transdisciplinary approaches, to ensure feasibility, proposals should only be in relation to the local DLGS context (Dresden/Saxony region - requires German language proficiency) and pertinent IOER projects.

The DLGS offers PhD scholarships for innovative young scientists in the field of spatial sustainability sciences. The announcement is aimed at excellent graduates with a Master's degree in any field of pertinence for studying spatial sustainability transformations, such as and not limited to geography, urban and regional planning, urban studies, environmental sciences, science and technology studies, transition studies, geoinformatics, civil engineering, architecture, economics, sociology, political sciences, or anthropology, among others.

Application deadline: September 15th, 2021

Start of the program: March 1st, 2022

A detailed description of the application requirements and procedure can be found on the DLGS website: http://www.dlgs-dresden.de

For additional information please contact the Scientific Coordinator:

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The DLGS – Dresden Leibniz Graduate School is a joint interdisciplinary facility of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Dresden (IOER) and Technische Universität Dresden (TUD).

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