Governance | Individual communication

IC - (20888) - TYPE CASTING OF RESPONSIBILITY IN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS – LESSONS LEARNT FROM COVID-19 AND CLIMATE CRISIS

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Background and objectives

The debates about urgency of climate change and the necessity of energy transformations towards sustainability have been established as mainstream discourse. For instance, the Fridays for Future movement lately mobilized big parts of the public, besides the traditionally involved stakeholders or interested fringe groups in society. However, public opinion is divided when it comes to who should contribute in what way to the required societal transformations. Political claims are counteracted with finger-pointing to individual responsibilities to act and vice versa. Similar patterns can be observed in the Covid-19 crisis and its governance.

Underlying factors contributing to this ambiguity are differences in perceptions of responsibilities, regarding the role of individuals, "the state" or society in the sustainability transition and its governance, in practice and science.

Process and methods (for empirical research)
This is achieved by triangulation of different findings (1-4): (1) A systematic literature review of the scientific discourses with a focus on explicit and implicit perceptions of individual and societal responsibilities and agency is conducted and conceptualized in an integrative framework. In addition, different empirical insights of perceptions relating to current crises are analyzed to challenge the perceptions found in the literature. Empirical insights are taken from (2) a survey on Covid-19 and sustainability in Switzerland, (3) interviews on perceptions of Covid-19 and sustainability in Switzerland and (4) a survey about the climate movement in Switzerland.
Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The paper results in a systematic mapping of perceived individual and societal responsibilities in sustainability transition governance.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution
It thereby contributes to more informed political decision-making processes, by mapping to what extent individuals or "the society" should contribute in different areas of sustainability transitions. Moreover, it contributes to the state of the art particularly of bottom-up/top-down literature, by systematically reviewing and investigating explicit and implicit perceptions of individual and societal responsibilities in literature and based on empirical data.

Palavras-chave : Responsibility, Sustainability transitions, Individual-society, Engagement, Covid-19, Climate change