
Public Sector Economics

Call for Papers

Special Issue on the Economics and Governance for Sustainability

Guest editors: Dr. Louis Meuleman and Dr. Ingeborg Niestroy

Sustainable development is a concept and broad umbrella of goals, policies and policy tools to address many contemporary challenges in a coherent, holistic way. It is about balancing the environmental, social and economic dimensions of our societies: planet, people and prosperity. The United Nations Agenda 2030 with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is conceived as the “meta-policy” that guides decisions of governments, business and civil society in all 193 UN member states.

Implementation of the SDGs is all about governance. It is about how the goals are achieved, taking into account how countries differ in terms of politico-administrative traditions, values and mind-sets. Such a meta-policy deserves meta-governance: taking a birds’-eye perspective on the different governance styles – usually characterised as hierarchical, network and market governance – and their combinations.

In each of the main three dimensions of sustainable development (environment, social, economic) there are debates about the “best” approach to achieve sustainability. Environmentalists may prefer hierarchical tools such as laws and standards; social scientists may seek solutions in the “network society”, while economists tend to favour market mechanisms and see the degree of government intervention as a key variable.

Economic theory and practice applied to sustainable development is currently a moving target, with a range of – typically conflicting – beliefs, theories and practices. At the same time, the “green” or sustainable economy is becoming a political and economic reality. Frictions between theory and practice, and between different schools of thinking are becoming more visible: no longer can academic economists “hide” within their own schools.

It is therefore time to take stock: what are currently the most salient developments in theory and practice? How can we interpret the long standing discussions on growth and how to measure it “beyond GDP”? Which revisions of economic systems do we need for the 21st century considering “the growth of (planetary) limits” and the need to serve sustainability? What are the debates, opportunities and obstacles in the increasingly popular approaches of sustainable finance, sustainable budgeting and sustainable procurement? Which new thinking appears to deliver practicable guidance for public sector economics, in various contexts?

In this special issue of **Public Sector Economics**, we welcome theoretical, empirical and policy-oriented contributions analysing the state of play of economic theory and practice of sustainable development, with a view of its contribution to the governance of the SDGs. The suggested topics

include, but are not limited to, the relation between sustainability (meta)governance and emerging trends in public sector economy:

- Sustainability (meta)governance and its relationship with economic governance
- Economic growth and (beyond) GDP: practical consequences of a decennia-long debate
- Inequality and leaving no one behind: what challenge for public sector economics?
- Sustainable finance, investments and state aid law
- Competition law, internal market and sustainability
- Fiscal sustainability and sustainable development: a new role for taxation?
- Sustainable budgeting: good practice, obstacles and solutions
- Sustainable procurement: good practice, obstacles and solutions
- Public-sector economics and long-term sustainability
- EU economic governance: the sustainability of the “European Semester”
- Assessing progress: readiness of public institutions for sustainability?
- From theory to practice: Finance Ministries and Sustainability
- From public goods to public value

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Guest editors of this special issue are **Dr. Louis Meuleman** and **Dr. Ingeborg Niestroy**.

Louis Meuleman is member of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and works at the European Commission in Brussels as coordinator of the Environmental Implementation Review and greening of economic governance. He is visiting professor at the University of Leuven (Belgium) and affiliated with the universities of Massachusetts Boston (USA) and Wageningen (Netherlands). He has a PhD in public administration and an MSc in environmental biology. He is the author of the book “Metagovernance for Sustainability. A framework for implementing the SDGs” (Routledge, London, 2018), and co-founder of the think-tank Publicstrategy for Sustainable Development (Brussels).

Ingeborg Niestroy is senior fellow at the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, Germany, research associate at the Environmental Policy Research Centre, Free University of Berlin, and associate at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). She has a PhD on Strategic Environmental Assessment and an MSc in (physical) geography, has worked for 20 years on science-policy relations and governance of sustainability. She is the lead author of a 2019 study for the European Parliament on “Europe’s approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good practices and the way forward” and co-founder of the think-tank Publicstrategy for Sustainable Development (Brussels).