

60th Postgraduate Programme Curriculum



Curriculum | Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

60th PGP 2024/25

Content

Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)..... 3

Academic Modules..... 7

Policy Module - Policy Advice and Policy Dialogue..... 19

Empirical Research Methods Module 21

Research Teams Module..... 23

 Tracer study of recent graduates in agriculture and land use sciences in East Africa 24

 Mauritius' Digital Cooperation and Engagement with External Partners 25

 Island Sustainabilities in Germany and Indonesia 26

Practical module - International cooperation as a career 27

Schedule 29

Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP)

The need for systemic change has become more urgent within the last years. Whereas a decade ago, the world community agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are now witnessing a world of increasing geopolitical tensions and ongoing wars and violent conflicts inter alia in Europe, the Middle East and the Sahel region. Democracies are under attack, and populism threatens to replace evidence-based policy-making. Poverty, hunger, social inequalities, deteriorating social cohesion and political instability are on the rise. The effects of global warming, biodiversity loss and contestations over natural resources and energy security further exacerbate risks.

A transformation of political, social and economic systems is needed in order to ensure our common planetary future. Rather than being a uniform construct, pathways to and visions of sustainable futures are different in different societies. IDOS aspires to co-shape sustainable futures through its research, policy advice and training activities. It defines sustainable futures as futures in which human life on Earth and within our planetary boundaries are ensured.

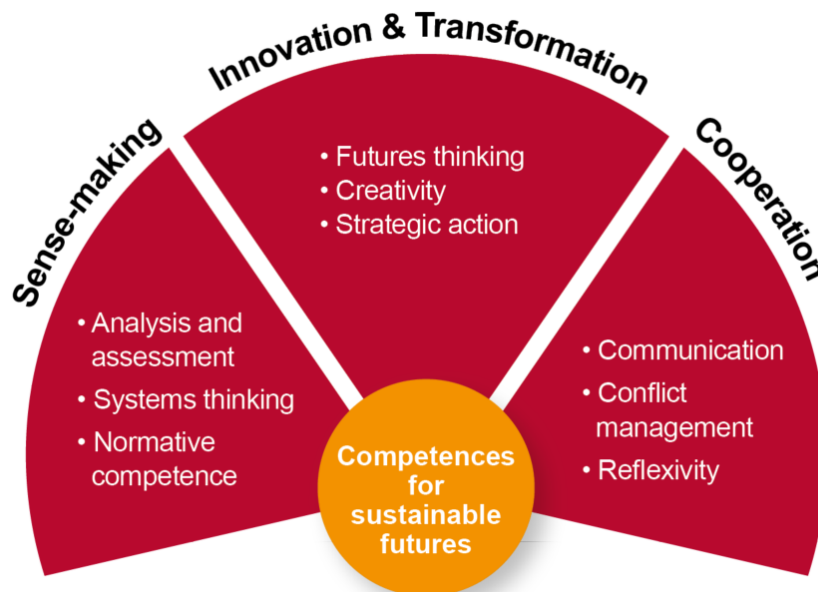
Amidst the urgency to ensure our planetary future, the current changing conditions in various world regions and increased systemic competition, partnership-based cooperation has become more crucial than ever. In response to global challenges, the field of international cooperation has undergone significant transformation in recent years. Previously, development policy focused mainly on knowledge transfer and financial aid. Today, international experts work professionally and collaboratively to tackle global challenges and support partners in designing and implementing problem-solving strategies.

Cooperation competencies are therefore crucial for future leaders in transnational and international cooperation. The *Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation* fosters cooperation competencies for transnational and international cooperation to jointly shape sustainable futures. It prepares our participants for the professional landscape and equips them with skills, knowledge, and attitudes to drive meaningful change and create sustainable solutions for our world's most pressing issues.



What competencies do professionals need in international cooperation?

International cooperation requires experts who can meet global challenges in a spirit of partnership to jointly work on pathways for systemic change. This professional field requires specific cooperation and transformation competencies, which we at IDOS specifically promote in all our training formats. Competencies for the professional landscape in international cooperation comprise three closely interlinked areas:



- Sense-making: PGP participants learn to think systemically and to analyse and evaluate topics from different perspectives. Normative competencies refer to the competency to reflect on and question the norms that guide us.
- Cooperation: Cooperation requires reflexivity, the ability to manage conflict and communication skills.
- Innovation and Transformation: This refers to the ability to develop visions of the future and design scenarios of possible futures (futures thinking), the ability to develop, experiment, learn and adapt alternative solutions and to strategic action as the ability to develop and implement interventions in order to achieve goals.

These competencies model (source: Reiber in preparation) provides orientation for desired learning outcomes in our programmes.

What makes the postgraduate programme at IDOS unique?

As one of the world's leading research institutions and think tank in the field of global sustainable development, IDOS is conducting empirical, theory-led and applied research on global challenges, providing advice to policy makers and engage in training and knowledge cooperation. This proximity to political decision-making processes and the opportunities for agenda setting set us apart from other research institutions such as universities. Science-based policy advice is closely integrated into the postgraduate programme.

In our training and knowledge cooperation programmes, we combine learning with the formation of networks. Since the postgraduate programme was initiated 60 years ago, we have prepared around 1,000 persons for a future career in international and development cooperation. Today, our alumni work in a wide range of activities in the field of international cooperation. Our participants benefit from being part of this valuable and personal network. At the same time, the postgraduate programme offers the unique opportunity to establish contacts with the participants of our programmes for young international leaders - [Managing Global Governance \(MGG\)](#) and [Shaping Futures](#). Participants also benefit from the institutionalized networks of IDOS as an international institute. We consider mutual exchange in trust-based networks as the basis for international cooperation.



How is the PGP structured?

The postgraduate programme has a modular structure. Ten academic modules and the spotlights provide a comprehensive overview of fundamental topics and current trends in the field of development and sustainability. The policy module offers an insight into scientific policy advice and policy dialogue, while the practical module prepares the participants for their professional entry into international cooperation. The module on empirical research methods serves as methodological preparation for the research team module. The research team module is the core of the postgraduate programme. The module comprises the preparation and implementation of an empirical and applied research project providing policy-advice in cooperation with our partner institutions.

How do we learn?

The modules characterise a broad mix of methods and interactive formats with a high degree of participant involvement. Our aim is to strengthen the competences of our participants. They are conceptualised by IDOS researchers and benefit from the involvement of experts from ministries, implementing organisations, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as external trainers. We integrate our ongoing research and advisory into the modules.

In the research teams, participants work independently in policy-oriented research projects in small teams under the guidance of researchers from IDOS and the partner institution.

The programme offers the integration of participant's prior knowledge and their active involvement through peer-to-peer processes, such as the peer learning days. Participants are encouraged to learn from and with each other.



Academic Modules

In the academic modules, participants learn to understand global challenges in a systemic perspective, with an emphasis on interconnectedness and inherent tensions or conflicting goals. Participants' prior knowledge from diverse university master programmes is actively included and put in context, contributing to critical reflections on a sector that participants aspire to engage in and that they will, in the future, shape “from within” and via practiced global cooperation.

- Participants engage with fundamental issues of the fields of development and sustainability, looking into key questions from different perspectives.
- They engage with and reflect on global transformations to sustainability, needing to understand the interconnectedness of different dimensions of sustainability transformations and recognise underlying contradictions and tensions.
- Participants gain foundational knowledge and learn a systemic perspective by debating key questions on global sustainable development and the possibility of (co-)shaping sustainable futures within the planetary boundaries and a changing geopolitical environment.
- New trends in cooperation are covered – and looked into based on their “disruptive” or transformative potential. This, at times, is rather preliminary and explorative, as will often be the case in a world in transformation.

The cooperation system and its answers to challenges and trends is a continuous element in the academic modules. A gender perspective is integrated as a cross-cutting issue across all academic modules, as we consider gender a fundamental social structure. Some sessions take place in collaboration with our training and dialogue format [MGG](#).



Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures

2 – 5 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

The first few days of the postgraduate programme are designed to give participants an orientation to IDOS. Participants get to know IDOS as a think tank for sustainable development with the three pillars of research, consulting and training. They will gain an initial insight into knowledge cooperation and research for the global common good at IDOS and into IDOS's policy advisory activities in the context of institutional networks. They will also critically examine the concept of development and the various paradigms of development studies.

Furthermore, the introductory days provide orientation on the objectives and the course of the postgraduate programme and initial information on starting a career in international cooperation.

Gender affects all elements of international cooperation and is therefore a cross-cutting issue. During the onboarding phase, we will provide the basis for further discussions in the following modules by theoretically classifying the term "gender" and placing the various forms of its integration into (German and international) development cooperation in a historical context.

In the modules of the postgraduate programme, gender is either addressed on an analytical level, fed in through empirical examples and case studies or discussed in relation to the implications of the content discussed for gender-sensitive or gender-transformative policies (e.g. gendered perspectives on sanitation or the reference of gender to our positionality as researchers in the module "Empirical Research Methods").

Topic Responsibility: Dr. Elke Herrfahrdt-Pähle

Democracy, Fragility, and Peace

6 – 10 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Karina Mross and Dr. Daniel Nowack

The module “Democracy, fragility and peace” deals with the role political processes and institutions play for sustainable and peaceful development. Sustainable Development Goal 16 in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as a goal in itself and for its importance to reach other SDGs. Yet, how exactly do political institutions impact on societies and development goals? Do democratic institutions and democratization processes fuel or mitigate violent conflict? What are the consequences of the current autocratization trend? How can international engagement for democracy and peace impact on these effects and deal with conflicting objectives? What is state fragility, and how can we (better) address its consequences?

The module engages with these questions by presenting and discussing research findings and practical insights on the importance of the political context for development policy. It provides an overview on instruments, approaches and actors in the respective fields and stipulates critical reflection on the practices, potentials and limitations of democracy promotion and peacebuilding efforts.

The module begins with an introductory overview of the subject area. For parts of the module we will offer parallel sessions so that participants can elect which topic they would like to engage more in depth with (Elective I: Promotion and protection of democracy and good governance Elective II: Fragility and peace.). The parallel sessions will speak to each other and be brought back together in a joint plenary session.

Global Power Shifts (with MGG)

11 – 13 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Sven Grimm

We have seen success stories of socio-economic development, specifically in Asia and Latin America, but also beyond, over the last generation. Development levels are much more diverse between countries today than ever before, with numerous countries increasing their average income and providing more opportunities for their citizens, some steeply so, due to better education and health. High levels of socio-economic development might not necessarily be sustainable nor irreversible – as COVID-19 and geopolitical conflicts have recently reminded us. Yet, the progress in human development in numerous countries of the so-called „Global South“ has come with new opportunities for large parts of humanity. At the same time, the earlier assumption of an almost automatic „socialisation“ of emerging countries into a global consensus that resembles Western societies‘ norms has proven idealistic, if not naive. These rising powers, for their part, are faced with new expectations, internally and externally. Different world view, perceptions and identities need to be navigated in the international sphere in order to successfully cooperate on sustainable pathways.

The module offers direct exchanges and reflexions on global power shifts, aspiring to make often abstract debates tangible. It consists of two days of exchange between the participants of the PGP and the MGG Academy, and thus allows for direct interactions and experiences with different perspectives, reflecting (global) identities and realities and expectations towards partnerships in cooperation. Furthermore, interactive elements encourage personal exchanges and foster networking. The PGP group only will engage on and discuss China, a non-Western international actor, and its engagement with African development.

Environmental Justice

23 – 25 Sep

Convenor: Dr. Jonas Hein and Dr. Jean Carlo Rodriguez de Francisco

In recent years, the accelerating environmental crises led to increased concerns about rising environmental inequalities and higher numbers of environmental distribution conflicts. Scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that technical approaches based on ecological modernization are not able to tackle the root causes of environmental degradation nor the highly unequally distributed social impacts of environmental degradation and eco-modernist policies. In recent years, the accelerating environmental crises led to increased concerns about rising environmental inequalities and higher numbers of environmental distribution conflicts. Scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that technical approaches based on ecological modernization are not able to tackle the root causes of environmental degradation nor the highly unequally distributed social impacts of environmental degradation and eco-modernist policies. Thus, questions of inequality and justice reemerged in scholarly as well as in practitioners debates on environmental governance and are considered as key challenge for any transformation towards a more sustainable future. Environmental justice scholars initially focused on questions of distribution (e.g. spatial distribution of pollution or the allocation of water for irrigation). Today most studies on environmental justice also include aspects of procedural justice (e.g. involvement in decision making processes) and recognition (e.g. acceptance of minorities as equal partners in social interactions).

Studies for example show that conservation initiatives considering environmental justice from the outset lead to better social, conservation outcomes and long-term sustainability. But studies also stress that marginalized urban and rural communities are disproportionately at risk of exposure to air, noise and water pollution, hazardous waste, and climate change impacts like drought, floods, and extreme heat. Therefore, this module approaches the field of environmental justice from different analytical angles and traditions. First, it introduces the concept of environmental justice and its roots in environmental and human rights activism around the world. Second, it will focus in particular on water justice, health, ocean justice and coastal protection and on protected areas. Besides this, it applies the concept of environmental justice in a conflict analysis scenario by playing a planning game, and gives insights into how environmental justice is innovatively accounted for in environmental planning and governance.

Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy?

30 Sep – 2 Oct

Convenor: Prof. Dr. Markus Loewe

Extreme poverty, vulnerability and inequality continue to be among the most pressing problems of mankind. Almost a tenth of all people world-wide still cannot afford to buy what would cost 2.15 USD in the United States; and this share has not continued to decrease after 2018. At the same time, the number of billionaires is rising in all parts of the world. The questions to be discussed are thus:

- What do we mean if we talk about poverty, vulnerability and inequality?
- What forms can poverty, vulnerability and inequality take?
- What are the reasons for the persistence of poverty, vulnerability and inequality? What are the factors on the household-level and what are the causes on the macro level?
- What strategies are effective in reducing poverty, vulnerability and inequality? How much can economic growth and achieve and under which conditions? How much social policy is needed in parallel?
- What social policies are particularly efficient in the reduction of poverty, vulnerability and inequality and which ones are also good in fostering economic growth and strengthening social cohesion and social contracts?

We will look into the different forms of poverty, vulnerability and inequality and then discuss the potential of structural transformation and economic growth, social protection, health and education policies.

Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias

7 – 9 Oct

Convenor: Dr. Lena Gutheil, Dr. Nicholas Goedeking, and Michael Roll

More than half of the world's population lives in cities, and urbanisation is accelerating in Asia and Africa. Significant challenges arise, including the need for sustainable infrastructure and mobility solutions, or climate-resilient urban planning. Urban growth also comes at the risk of exacerbating the rural-urban divide. Dire living conditions and a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas drive migration towards cities. At the same time, cities need rural areas to produce food. The growing global population increases the demand for agricultural products, while approximately 800 million people, primarily in rural areas, suffer from hunger. Enhancing agricultural sector growth is essential for achieving food security, stimulating economic growth, and generating employment. Given this ongoing transformation, the module addresses strategies for sustainable urban and rural development and offers space for critical reflection on rural-urban linkages.

The focus is on cities as complex systems, on the importance and understanding of urban sustainability transformations (the transformation of cities from high CO₂ emitting to low- or zero CO₂ emitting systems), on the political economy of these transformations and, more generally, the role of urban politics and governance, and on urban utopias in the Global North as well as in the Global South. One session provides a deep dive into urban sustainability transformations in the transportation sector, using Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) systems as an example. Other sessions focus on rural-urban linkages, agricultural production and on food systems and how they are embedded in global food systems.

The module ends with a critical discussion to draw conclusions for what these insights mean for future approaches and new modes of development and sustainability cooperation.

From Growth to Green Economy

15 Oct, 28-29 Oct

Convenor: Dr. Babette Never and Dr. Rita Strohmaier

The decarbonization of key sectors like energy, transport, and construction – driven by stricter environmental policies, new technologies and innovative business models – and more sustainable consumer behavior are key features of the green economy. The “just transition” approach thereby ensures that the shift to a green economy is fair and equitable for all, safeguarding workers’ rights, providing access to new green jobs, and compensating those negatively impacted. From an international perspective, a just transition mandates that low-income countries have their just share in emerging green industries.

Industrial policy plays a key role in promoting the green economy and sustainable economic development, by driving structural transformation, encouraging innovation, and supporting higher-value activities in global value chains. However, the tension between environmental protection, resource use and sustainable development has also sparked discussions on alternative growth models.

The “Green Economy” module offers a thorough overview of these topics across nine sessions. The first two sessions introduce basic concepts related to the green economy and green industrial policy, along with their international context. Session 3 contrasts “Green Growth” with alternative models like “De-Growth” and “Post-Growth”, offering different perspectives on achieving sustainable development.

Subsequent sessions delve into the social and economic co-benefits of the green economy. Using low-carbon hydrogen economy as an example of disruptive innovation, the module discusses policies to promote local value creation and benefit sharing within countries and across global value chains.

The module also addresses the demand side of the green economy, examining how behaviours and attitudes drive sustainable consumption, as well as the co-benefits arising from green demand and the circular economy. Rwanda’s building sector is presented as a case study to illustrate how low-carbon housing can create employment opportunities and support green growth, providing an empirical example of the green economy concept.

A wrap-up session synthesises the key learnings, highlighting opportunities and challenges of implementing the green economy framework, its potential trade-offs and the importance of context-specific strategies.

The future of international cooperation for sustainable development

18 – 20 Nov

Convenor: Dr. Max-Otto Baumann and Prof. Dr. Stephan Klingebiel

In this module, we discuss emerging perspectives and trends towards the future of international cooperation for sustainable development and we ask how the institutions and actors in this field have to adapt. Having emerged in specific historic contexts, institutions and actors tend to reflect the needs and ideas of previous times more than future challenges. Yet, the transformational social and political changes of our time that unfold across all political levels, and often across thematic sectors, call for a reflection: To what extent are time-honored concepts and the institutions that flow from them still fit for purpose? What changes are needed? Focusing on emerging perspectives gives us a lens through which we can examine the major institutions, rules, actors and organizations of international cooperation for sustainable development, their political economy, path dependencies and current areas of reform. On the first day of the module, we will problematize the traditional North-South binary in development and discuss academic proposals for universal approaches, the implementation of which might have to be squared with the emergence of new geopolitical tensions and a revival of interest-based approaches to development cooperation. On the second day, we review how two complementary types of cooperation fare under changing global trends, the Official Development Assistance (ODA) regime, associated with global North donors, on the one hand and South-South Cooperation as a modality advanced by the global South on the other hand. On the third day, we apply these insights to Germany, the European Union and the United Nations as three major actors, or organizations, each with a distinct profile, that have to find answers to the challenges of our time.

Financing Sustainable Development – Who and how to finance the transformation?

25 – 27 Nov

Convenor: Christoph Sommer

This module addresses the question how to raise the financial resources to achieve the socio-economic transformation envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. It looks at the pivotal topic of development finance and thus focuses on the different sources of finance, including both domestic and international, public and private as well as traditional and innovative sources for sustainable development. The module will provide participants with a thorough understanding of these different sources of development finance, highlighting their respective importance today and in the future. Additionally, it will enable them to critically examine the controversies and trade-offs associated with policy actions designed to enhance financial resources for development.

The module starts with an introduction to development finance discussing the financing needs to achieve the 2030 Agenda as well as providing an overview of the different financing sources and their scale. The first half of the module then dives deeper into public sources of development finance. This comprises the mobilisation of public domestic resources through taxes and related questions of good financial governance and international taxation. It further includes the topic of traditional aid, i.e. official development assistance (ODA), and discussions around its allocation, role and effectiveness. Relatedly, development finance institutions (DFIs), international financial institutions (IFIs) and the international financial architecture along with its current reform processes as well as topics of debt burdens and debt relief are being discussed. This first block concludes with an overview of global climate finance frameworks and mechanisms and explores synergies and trade-offs between climate and development finance, as well as the role of ODA in fostering climate action.

The second half of the module zooms in on private sources of development finance. It looks at (private) international capital flows and how countries attract international investments, most importantly foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investments. In addition, it examines the mobilization of private resources of nationals and how these are being transformed into (sustainable) investments. This encompasses both the remittances of nationals living abroad as non-traditional, but significant and stable source of development finance, as well as domestic savings that – through financial intermediaries and capital markets – are channelled into investments and thus economic development. In this context, financial system development is being discussed as it determines the capability and efficiency of making domestic resources available to finance development. A particular focus is on measures and frameworks to mainstream sustainable finance in order to achieve sustainability. The module concludes with a comprehensive review.

Development Effectiveness and Evaluation

2 – 4 Dec

Convenor: Dr. Heiner Janus and Dr. Armin von Schiller

The aim of this module is to convey a comprehensive understanding of effectiveness and evaluation as this is fundamental knowledge for aspiring junior professionals in development to be able to critically assess the potential and limitations of development interventions as well as the evidence basis for their decision making. Furthermore, these issues are fundamental to enable learning at an individual and institutional level as well as reflect about how the development system ensures (or not) effectiveness and the different incentives in place. Participants will therefore learn about different definitions of development effectiveness, understand the importance of political economy analyses for development cooperation reforms and study practical examples of monitoring and evaluation. Regarding evaluations, participants will study a variety of methodological approaches and engage with experts who are commissioning and conducting evaluations in different countries for varying types of organisations, including governmental and non-governmental organisations. Throughout the module, a focus lies on active engagement of participants by offering many opportunities to jointly learn and reflect. The module will feature three main parts:

1. **Effectiveness and political economy:** In the first part, the speakers will provide a theoretical introduction, present the basics of the international debate on development effectiveness and highlight the differences and similarities between various definitions of effectiveness. In addition, the political economy of the effectiveness discourse will be critically scrutinised. Importantly, participants will discuss key aspects of inputs and reform options for increasing development effectiveness in a short role play.
2. **Insights from theory and practice - Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** The second part will feature a mix of theory-based inputs and practical examples from actual monitoring and evaluation cases studies. A range of experts from IDOS, BMZ, DEval, GIZ and civil society will be involved. The aim is to learn about how the evaluation and monitoring systems are set up on the basis of case studies. It will also feature an element of how to approach evidence and question it in real scenarios.
3. **Insights from theory and practice – Using, sharing and aggregating evidence:** The third part will focus on evidence consumption and discuss how persons and organisation use evidence and ensure that evidence is used. A range of experts from IDOS, BMZ, DEval, GIZ and civil society will be involved. Crucially, the final day will allow room to jointly reflect on how development organisations and individuals can employ evidence. A final session will revisit the role play conducted on day 1 with a view to integrating examples and lessons learned from the previous days.

Spotlights

Several half-day spotlights focus on key issues from different angles, emerging topics, and conceptual approaches that challenge common ways of looking into social phenomena.

For this year, spotlights are planned on the following topics:

- Human Mobility
- Digitalisation
- Trade policy in challenging times
- Oceans (tbd)
- Post-development, Post-colonialism and Decoloniality



Policy Module - Policy Advice and Policy Dialogue

Convenor: Dr. Sven Grimm

The relationship between science and politics is under debate. On the one hand, sustainability strategies and the challenges of climate change require scientific input: expertise from social science, technical studies, and natural science is more in demand than ever. How extensive can or should this be, and repeatedly, how close or distant must the intertwining with political decisions be?

The German Council of Science and Humanities, for example, emphasizes that "[knowledge] transfer must not occur as a one-sided transmission of knowledge but as a feedback process between the scientific system and other functional systems." Science-based and professional policy advice therefore requires a range of competencies that go beyond methodological knowledge in research. These include reflections and fundamental as well as situational clarifications of roles, understandings of impact processes, the recognition and dealing with tensions, and 'technical knowledge' for target-oriented communication with decision-makers.

Scientific Policy Advice

9 Jan

Convenor: Dr. Sven Grimm

In their future professional position, PGP participants will be active in various areas of scientific advice: as decision-makers seeking advice or as advisors in implementing organizations as well as in think tanks or consultancies. In all roles, they need basic knowledge of policy advice.

Advice to decision-makers is based on different expectations of how policy advice works, implying expectations regarding methods, the speed of processing and the scope of recommendations. We discuss models on the effectiveness of advice, possible roles in and types and levels of advice. We are also interested in tensions in the exchange between science and political decision-makers, including how the "impact" of advice can be measured and where the legitimizing and ethical limits of impact expectations lie. We also look at the integration of gender in development cooperation at the policy level.

IDOS has science-based policy advice as a central element of its mandate and has many years of experience and own reflections, which are incorporated into the discussion. During the programme, participants will apply this knowledge themselves in various advisory situations and gain experience.

Simulation Game Government Negotiations

9 – 11 Dec

Convenor: Dr. Lena Gutheil, Dr. Anna Novoselova, and Dr. Marcelo Inacio da Cunha

The simulation game Government Negotiations is a realistic simulation of bilateral development policy government negotiations and preparatory consultations between the Federal Republic of Germany and a partner country. The simulation focuses on the preparation and implementation of consultations and government negotiations, the associated procedures and the preparation of the necessary strategic and substantive documents. In the simulation game, participants learn about administrative and political processes as well as the institutional framework of German development cooperation. This gives them an understanding of roles, areas of responsibility and coalitions of interests in German development cooperation. Moreover, they experience personal and political levels of action in the context of political dialogue and negotiations between institutions and governments.

The simulation game is accompanied by experts in German development cooperation, with whom the participants are in close contact.

Report Writing

29 – 31 Oct (tbd)

The course aims to prepare participants of the PGP to write policy-oriented reports and to formulate policy recommendations. Participants will learn to write from a reader-based perspective and to address a non-academic audience, as the research projects are transdisciplinary and policy oriented.

Participants get an understanding of different writing styles for academic and non-academic audiences, explore practices of effective writing in terms of text, structure and style, and practice collaborative writing. They will learn to look critically at their own writing style and receive individual feedback on their own texts.

The training will prepare participants for writing their inception and final reports and at the same time provide a good basis for later work in international cooperation, where reader-based writing of non-academic reports and knowledge of policy advice are required.

Empirical Research Methods Module

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

Empirical Research Methods

The PGP offers courses on empirical research methods. In the research teams, participants work on a policy-oriented and transdisciplinary research project. The teams conceptualise the research design for their project under the guidance of the team leads and define methodological approaches depending on their research questions. Trainings in research methods respond to the specific needs of the research projects and the participants' prior knowledge and methodological skills.

Trainings can include courses on data collection (e.g. creating surveys, conducting qualitative interviews, focus group interviews), data analysis (e.g. network analysis, qualitative content analysis) or certain tools (e.g. software for qualitative data analysis such as Atlas.ti) and is specifically adapted to the needs of the research teams.

Research Ethics and Research Data Management

Research can never be viewed separately from its social responsibility; research interests are related to its responsibility towards individuals, society and our environment.

Although these principles apply to all research, their relevance is particularly evident in research on development and sustainability. This takes place in the context of global power inequalities - just like the sector of international cooperation for which the postgraduate programme prepares. We therefore have a special responsibility to critically reflect on our research and advisory activities and to discuss ethical issues. Therefore, participants need to develop their reflective competence and get an awareness of our own positionality within social power asymmetries – for their research team projects as well as for their future work as development practitioners.

Different issues and topics raise new ethical questions and answers have to be found within its specific context. At the same time, there are certain questions relevant for every research project:

- Who should benefit from the research?
- What risks are associated with it and for whom?
- How can these risks be minimized or excluded?
- Within which social power relations does our research take place? What is our positionality as researchers and what power asymmetries determine the relationship with our research participants?
- What do we need to consider for the formulation of policy recommendations from an ethical perspective?

Among manifold ethical considerations, it is the reflection of the cooperation with partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the reflection of power relations within these partnerships which are relevant for both our research partnership in the PGP as well as the later engagement in the field of international cooperation.

In the specific research context, issues such as informed consent and voluntary participation in the research project as well as the handling of research data must be discussed. Depending on the research topic, issues such as the particular vulnerability of research participants, research in ecologically sensitive areas or sensitization to trauma-sensitive data collection may also become relevant.

Research data management (RDM) deals with issues relating to the handling of personal data, the documentation and storage of research data and quality criteria of empirical data. The participants will write a RDM plan for their specific research project.

In addition, questions of personal security for researchers, their partners, and their research participants are part of ethical considerations. A security training prepares participants in the postgraduate programme to avoid and deal with potential risks.

Sessions on positionality or critical whiteness raise awareness that we as researchers are embedded in global power hierarchies and shaped by our positionality and privileges.

At IDOS, we have an institutional body, the **Research Ethics Committee (REC)**, which reviews all planned research projects from an ethical perspective in a formalized procedure. The projects within the research teams are also assessed by the REC. Participants receive an introduction to research ethics and research data management and submit their reflections on ethical issues for their specific research project in writing to the REC. A continuous exchange also takes place in the further research process within the teams, especially during the data collection phase.

At the same time, some sessions in other modules also touch on ethical questions. For example, a reflection session on the sociology of the professional field as part of the practical module reflects the role of international experts as advisors in development cooperation.

Research Teams Module

Research Teams

The Research Team Module is the core of the PGP and spans nearly the entire duration of the programme. The module comprises the preparation and implementation of an empirical research project providing policy-advice. The research topics in the projects reflect current trends in international cooperation. All teams are in close contact with partner institutions. Team leads are IDOS researchers, with some of the teams working together with a **co-lead and postgraduates from our partner institutions**. This allows us to bring together expertise and different perspectives and offers the opportunity to work together on a topic relevant to both institutions.

The Research Team Module combines research with the provision of policy recommendations for political decision-making (science-policy interface). Participants acquire the competence to assess research findings through their own research, enabling them to make empirically based decisions in their future careers. They develop competences in collaborating with partners. Participants become aware of the limitations of partnership-based cooperation by reflecting on power hierarchies within global inequalities.

Whereas the research team lead set the overall frame of the team project, it is the research teams which jointly develop the further conceptualisation of the project under the guidance of the team leaders. The teams are **in close contact with our partner institutions**.

Preparation for the field research also includes medical examinations as well as a **security training** on how to behave in potentially dangerous situations. The teams receive extensive **team-building** seminars. Participants learn project management skills by calculating the project budget and the logistical planning for their stay. At the end of the preparation period, participants present and discuss their **inception report** internally at the institute.

During the three-month research between February and April, research data is collected and analyzed. At the end of the research stay, the results are discussed in stakeholder workshops. The partner institutions are closely involved in all of these processes. The aim is to develop policy recommendations and to advise the relevant stakeholders. The research results will feed in a written report (**final report**), which is presented to a public audience and published afterwards.

Research Team I

Tracer study of recent graduates in agriculture and land use sciences in East Africa

Team Leads: Dr. Michael Brüntrup and Dr. George Mudimu

The objective of this study is to understanding the use and utility of academic knowledge by and through master students for agricultural development and related land use, focussing mainly on Tanzania with a smaller comparative study in Kenya. It is embedded in a larger research project of IDOS called „[science futures](#)“ which in turn is part of the [Collaborative Research Centre "Future Rural Africa" \(CRC 228\)](#) of the Universities of Bonn and Cologne. The title „tracer study“ is only reflecting a part of the objectives, in fact it is intended to go beyond knowing where graduates do get employed, but understanding in a broader way how they are prepared for their jobs, how their knowledge contributes to solve real-world challenges, what are perceived deficits, and what can be proposed to improve these.

As part of the CRC 228, IDOS is working on the "Science Futures" project, which examines the role of science in shaping the future of rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa. One aspect or channel of this scientific knowledge is the role of academic education and its graduates. To investigate this role, the research team will study the respective educational systems and in particular analyse where graduates work, how their acquired knowledge and skills are used and how they are perceived. Experience seems to show that most graduates do not respond to calls to participate in tracer studies unless they come from well-known sources, and even then return rates are minimal. Thus, face-to-face interviews will be a centrepiece of the study. Not only graduates will be interviewed but also representatives of stakeholders in the higher education system, alumnae associations, employers and others. These interviews should provide some general quantitative information for tracing and scoring key aspects, but also in-depth understanding of stakeholders' needs, aspirations and expectations, experiences and suggestions. Also the institutional system and the processes of curricula development will be analysed. Thus, formal and grey literature such as strategy papers, press articles and educational assessments will be reviewed.

Key partners are several local universities (SUA, Mzumbe, possibly Aga Khan in Tanzania, in Kenya JOOUST tbc) as well as DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst).

The methodological approach consists of the following basic elements, which need further refinement during the conceptional phase of the study and in discussion with partners: An assessment of the curricula; the identification of graduates from partner universities, possibly from last 5-10 years (tbc), and their selection for tracing and interviews; develop methods to interview graduates and their employers and clients, including via internet but mainly by face-to-face methods; applying the methods in some determined regions; analysis appropriate for such mix-method approach; appropriate dissemination.

The key study area will be Tanzania where the complete set of questions and approaches will be applied. In Kenya, a lighter study of the institutional setting and with smaller number of stakeholders and graduates will be done. The countries are far apart in their educational and research capacities, Kenya being one of the strongest, Tanzania perceived as one of the weaker countries in Sub-Sahara Africa. The comparison of these two countries will help to understand national particularities and derive useful and realistic recommendations. Possibly, also institutional cross-country links can be supported.

Research Team II

Mauritius' Digital Cooperation and Engagement with External Partners

Team Leads: Dr. Benedikt Erforth and Dr. Hangwei Li

Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, has strategically positioned itself as a hub for digital innovation and technology in Africa. The country's digital strategic plan for 2030, describes the digital transformation as no less than “an economic and societal obligation”, and outlines Mauritius' aspirations to position itself as a regional and global digital leader. In recent years, the country has sought to bolster its digital infrastructure, governance and capabilities not at last through partnerships with major powers such as China and the European Union (EU). This research project aims to explore the scope, nature, and impact of Mauritius' journey toward becoming a digital society, with a particular focus on the role of digital partnerships and external engagements in driving the nation's socio-economic development and technological advancement. The project pursues several objectives: analyzing the context in which digital cooperation and competition emerge, where digital transformation is embraced as a catalyst for economic and social progress; examining the agency of smaller nations in an increasingly fragmented world; and investigating the effects of rapid digitalization on society and politics.

Sub-streams to be followed throughout the project:

African agency amid global geo-competition: Due to its strategically crucial location in the Indian Ocean region, Mauritius is subject and agent of a geopolitical competition that involves major global powers. Mauritius has a longstanding experience navigating and benefitting from said location. Mauritius' characteristics also makes it a compelling case for studying how a small African nation/ island state navigates the complexities of global power rivalries in the realm of digital cooperation and partnerships. Is the country facing a zero-sum game? Has it succeeded in leveraging its position effectively?

Data governance and implementation: Mauritius is known for having one of the most stringent and most advanced data protection laws in Africa. When enacting the 2004 Data Protection Act, it became the first African country to establish a data protection commissioner and make it operational. In 2017, it became the first country in the world to enact a law compatible with most principles of the EU General Data Protection Regulation. Still, until present Mauritius does not yet benefit from an adequacy decision that would allow for the free flow of data between it and the EU. How has this alignment to be understood? What are its effects?

State capacity and ICT development: Various rankings place Mauritius as the helm of digital leadership. Mauritius is the highest-ranked African country in the latest UNCTAD e-commerce index. However, in view of such progress, Mauritius also faces other daunting challenges, such as having very limited ICT talent and constantly being viewed as a low-end ICT destination. What are the roles of international partners and companies in the development of ICT sector in Mauritius? How do state capacity and governance influence the country's ability to ascend the ICT value chain? What lessons and experience can Mauritius offer to other African countries and small-island countries in developing their ICT sectors?

Methodology

The research team will conduct interviews (expert interviews and elite interviews in particular) and surveys with diverse stakeholders, including politicians, government officials, journalists, scholars, representatives of international digital/telecommunication companies, local partners and competitors as well as representatives of civil society organizations.

Research Team III

Island Sustainabilities in Germany and Indonesia

Team Lead: Dr. Jonas Hein (IDOS), Dr. Irit Ittner (IDOS), and Dr. Fadjar Thufail (BRIN)

General

The work investigates challenges of and pathways to sustainable futures on German North Sea islands and Indonesian Java Sea islands (*Kepulauan Seribu*) by offering different research foci to participants including conservation & protection, energy, natural resource extraction, tourism, inter-island cooperation, and environmental conflicts. Participants would investigate selected themes in a comparative way (different islands/ countries) using either systematic (matrix) or cumulative (ethnographic vignettes) approaches.

Data collection methods consist of interviews with the local population (“islanders”), local authorities, other researchers, NGOs, staff of development cooperation, and state authorities. The team will also apply (participant) observations and other methods.

The research team is organised as transnational learning and knowledge production exercise with participants from Germany and Indonesia.

Research sites

Germany designated 45% of its ocean areas as MPAs (Marine Protected Areas). Industrialization of non-protected areas is accelerating, especially in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). While some MPAs still await the implementation of protective measures, industrial sectors and policy-makers pressurize the use of areas in the close vicinity of MPAs and within MPAs. The industrialization affects island communities and municipalities depending on nature-based and health tourism, as new environmental risks and new economic opportunities offered by the offshore sector emerge. A multi-level protection framework (*Schutzgebietskulisse*) was established for the Wadden Sea, a coastal unique landscape that is strongly characterized by the tides. While islands in Lower Saxony were integrated into the Wadden Sea National Park, most islands in Schleswig-Holstein are located outside the national park. In Germany, the team will investigate North Sea islands located in Lower Saxony, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, where the federal states hold political sovereignty over the coastal marine zone. Potential research sites include Wangeroog, Norderney, Pellworm, Amrum and Föhr.

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation consisting of approximately 17,000 islands, well known for its marine biodiversity. Its blue economy contributes almost one third to the nation's GDP (Randhawa, 2024 based on data from the Global Environmental Facility). Approximately 10% of Indonesian marine area are protected and as part of Indonesia's commitments to the CBD and to the sustainable development goals the country plans to protect 30% of its waters until 2045. As in Germany, authorities have not yet protective measures for all MPAs, and some people oppose nature protection. The touristic Thousand-Island archipelago is located north of Jakarta in the Java Sea. Administratively, the Thousand Islands are part of special capital area of Jakarta (*Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta*). The northern part of the islands are part of the Thousand Islands National Park, which protects important coastal forests, mangrove forests, coral reefs and sea grass meadows. Tourism transformed many islands significantly and some became fully privatized resort islands. Resource extractivism, such as sand mining, are the major issue there.

Practical module - International cooperation as a career

Convenor: Dr. Simone Christ

The postgraduate programme is a gateway for a professional career in international cooperation. For 60 years, IDOS has been offering the postgraduate programme as an entry-level programme in international cooperation. During these 60 years, the professional field has changed considerably: Previously, development policy focused mainly on knowledge transfer and financial aid. Today, international experts work professionally and collaboratively to tackle global challenges and support partners in designing and implementing problem-solving strategies. New challenges such as shifts in global power dynamics are continuously emerging.

Our alumni work in both bilateral and multilateral organizations of international cooperation. The professional field includes governmental organizations as well as private sector actors, non-governmental organizations and research institutions. Our participants benefit from our close work with key players in the field.

Reflection Session: Sociology of the professional field

In this session, participants will engage with the changes of the professional field of international cooperation. The aim is to enable participants to critically reflect on their future roles as experts in international cooperation.

Presentation and moderation training

A training course on moderation and presentation offers the opportunity to further develop personal presentation skills. What makes a good presentation? What roles and tasks do moderators have?

Presentation of employers

Key employers (e.g. BMZ, KfW, GIZ, PTB, consulting) introduce themselves to the participants of the postgraduate programme. The events offer participants the opportunity to gain an insight into the organisations and to ask individual questions.

Moreover, participants compile a **profile booklet** in which they present their professional profile and which will be sent to prospective employers.

Job coaching

The head of the postgraduate programme offers individual coaching sessions to participants. The coaching sessions provide orientation on individual competences of participants. How can participants strengthen and enhance their competencies? How can individual career paths look like?

Job application training

For an optimal preparation to the upcoming application process, we offer a job application training with a specific focus on the field of international cooperation. The practical-oriented training includes the creation of compelling application documents and preparation for job interviews.

Mentoring and Alumni network

In our mentoring programme, PGP participants are mentored by one person from IDOS and one person from the PGP alumni network. This allows for professional exchange as well as personal insights into career prospects within the mentor's institutions.

The IDOS alumni network now consists of around 1,000 members. Our alumni work in various institutions in the field of international cooperation. Many alumni are also actively engaged in our programme, for example by serving as mentors or presenting their organisation to participants.

Schedule

Times may vary and are subject to change. Detailed and binding schedules can be found in the module reader of each module.

Sessions during the academic modules take place in the following time slot:

Time Slots	Session
9 am – 10:30 am	Academic module
11 am – 12:30 am	Academic module
2 pm – 3:30 pm	Academic module
From 4 pm	Self-organized learning (e.g. reflection, reading, preparation and follow-up of sessions and modules), self-organisation (e.g. PGP plenary, PGP working groups), coaching sessions, preparation for simulation game, other sessions (e.g. introduction to library, communication at IDOS)

Short Overview

2 - 5 September Onboarding and Introduction – Development for Sustainable Futures	6 - 10 September Democracy, Fragility and Peace	11 - 13 September Global Power Shifts with MGG	16 September Peer Learning Day
17 - 19 September Start Research Team Module (ongoing module until May)	23 - 25 September Environmental Justice	30 September - 2 October Poverty, Vulnerability, and Inequality – What is the Role of Social Policy?	7 - 9 October Urban and Rural Development: Politics, Policy, and Utopias
10 - 14 October Empirical Research Methods Module	15, 28-29 October From Growth to Green Economy	20 October Peer Learning Day	21 - 23 October Presentation and Moderation Training
29 - 31 October (tdb) Report Writing	18 - 20 November The Future of International Cooperation for Sustainable Development	25 - 27 November Financing Sustainable Development – Who and how to finance the transformation?	2 - 4 December Development Effectiveness and Evaluation
9 - 11 December Simulation Game – Government Negotiations	9 January Scientific Policy Advise	10 January Peer Learning Day	February to April Research Stay • Tanzania/Kenya • Mauritius • Indonesia/Germany
May Research Team Module (incl. PGP Symposium - Final Presentations)			

LEGEND

ACADEMIC MODULES	PRACTICAL MODULE International Cooperation as a Career
POLICY MODULE Policy Advice and Policy Dialogue	RESEARCH TEAM MODULE & EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODS

Various Dates • Spotlights on current debates and emerging topics	Various Dates • Job Coaching • Reflection Session: Sociology of the Professional Field • Presentation of Employers • Job Application Training • Mentoring Appointments	Various Dates • Teambuilding • Medical Check-Up • First Aid Course • Security Training • Methods Training • Presentation Inception Report • Reflection on Research Stay
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 [German Institute of Development and Sustainability \(IDOS\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/german-institute-of-development-and-sustainability-idos/)

 www.youtube.com/DIE_IDOS_research