

## **Why do we need to think about governance of place for sustainability?**

My research frames sustainability problems as physical and social constructs that are grounded and experienced in places (e.g. landscapes). These constructs can be explored and traced into such institutional contexts in order to understand the governance of place; that is, how actors and their interests interact with each other, and with the physical context in order to shape on-the-ground management and outcomes. This means I have a focus on the multi-level, interdisciplinary nature of governance networks, and in connecting on-the-ground activities into political and policy processes. I hope to demonstrate that this research approach allows us to challenge and reshape governance systems for sustainability transformations.

In this inaugural lecture, I will draw on examples from my research career to date to demonstrate the contribution of such an approach to sustainability science. So far in my research, I have chosen not to focus on specific topics (problems or policy areas) or locations, though my work has a strong emphasis on 'place'. I have focused on in-depth on-the-ground case studies of a variety of problems in a range of socio-political contexts. I have therefore contributed to debates around REDD+, biodiversity conservation, water management, the extractive industries, and climate change adaptation. I have conducted research throughout Europe (including Hungary, Romania, Germany, Sweden), and in sub-Saharan Africa (including Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania).

I will highlight my research agenda for my junior professorship and demonstrate how it links to the faculty of sustainability at Leuphana. I am currently thinking about the big picture contributions of such case studies, and am working towards pulling lessons together into deeper understanding of how the political context and material or physical nature of the problem shapes problem framings and governance (and vice versa). If time allows, I will introduce the 'place' in which I would like to pull together this research.