Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

International Conference

Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), 6–8 April 2027 (in-person)

Abstract submission deadline: October 25, 2026

„Beyond the crisis reflex? Potentials of long-term governance in research and practice“

Keynotes by Prof. Eefje Cuppen (Rathenau Institute) and Prof. Benjamin Sovacool (Boston University)

LONG TERM GOVERNANCE

itas Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE?

The main objective is to bring together researchers and experts from various fields of research and practice who investigate ways to best address the major challenges and long-term problems facing society and politics. The event will provide opportunities for debate about approaches to dealing with these challenges and problems at the interface between science, society, and policy from a governance perspective. A particular focus will be placed on gathering expertise from a wide range of scientific disciplines that touch upon the complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity of long-term governance problem solving. The conference therefore aims to provide an interdisciplinary space for exciting exchange, networking opportunities, and future cooperation.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE?

How can major long-term challenges affecting societies and the environment be dealt with most effectively? How can adequate solutions be found and implemented when societies fundamentally disagree on the best way forward and democratic institutions are under pressure? What role do technologies play in addressing these challenges?

We are facing immense challenges that we already know will occupy us for decades, centuries, or even longer. These challenges include climate change, the energy transition, environmental pollution from substances such as 'forever chemicals', or nuclear waste. The reasons for this are manifold: the complexity and persistence of the problems, their potentially serious consequences and risk of damage, the difficult, time-consuming, and uncertain nature of problem-solving pathways, or the need to adequately consider heterogeneous and changing societal demands and values (including those of future generations). Dealing with these long-term challenges is a fundamental aspect of policy making in modern societies.

At the same time, current crises seem to call for short-term solutions. Navigating the future in such settings inevitably involves trade-offs between current and future needs, uneven distributions of costs and benefits, as well as shifts in power dynamics, to name but a few of the challenges (e.g., Bornemann & Strassheim 2019; Alonso-Epelde et al. 2024; Halsnæs et al. 2024; Meijers 2025). For example, climate change strategies with long-term targets (in the EU a 90% reduction by 2040) sometimes collide with the perceived need to rely on fossil fuels to navigate short-term energy crises (European Commission 2026). These dilemmas are debated and negotiated differently in society, politics, and the economy. Political agendas are sharpened using crisis rhetoric and emotions, while populism and scientific advice are pitted against each other (Bonansinga 2020). Planned phase-outs of old technologies can sometimes be delayed, but can also be the starting point for regional transformations (Rinscheid et al. 2021).

In essence, there are strong calls for the implementation of a long-term governance architecture. This approach goes beyond short-sighted orientations and decision-making processes, focusing instead on a forward-looking perspective – or, in short: long-term governance (Boston 2017; Scheer et al. 2025; Pot & Scherpenisse 2026). Siebenhüner et al. (2013) first introduced the concept of long-term governance, though initial ideas can be found earlier (Voß et al. 2009). It is understood as the proactive and strategic political management of large-scale, goal-oriented processes of change, guided by the principle of sustainability. Long-term governance encompasses strategies, policies, and practices that prioritize strategic decision making and future planning while integrating multiple institutional levels (Czada 2016; Jordan et al. 2015). Furthermore, long-term governance requires integrated, comprehensive, and sustainable efforts that link technical, organizational, social, legal, and economic dimensions while considering issues of justice, particularly intergenerational justice (Sovacool & Dworkin 2015).

Long-term governance is not just something we are permitted to pursue. Rather, it can be justified as an obligation that our societies must fulfill in specific contexts. Several normative approaches can ground such an obligation, building, for example, on rights, sufficiency, or longtermist aggregation (e.g., Thompson 2009; MacAskill 2022). However, any approach that truly obliges must also explain what legitimizes the authority exercised by long-term governance when it conflicts with democratic claims. The normative foundations diverge regarding their implications for institutional design, including courts, representation, and insulated expert bodies.

WHICH TOPICS ARE WELCOME FOR SUBMISSION?

Understanding how politics and society shape, debate, and implement long-term governance requires reflection on styles of policy making, the role of values and related ethical approaches, adequate institutional settings and configurations, social dynamics and narratives, time and temporalities, as well as the role of technology. With this in mind, we invite researchers from political science, science and technology studies (STS), philosophy, sociology, technology assessment, system dynamics, and related disciplines to submit proposals reflecting on the various aspects of long-term governance.

Topic Area 1: Configuring long-term governance

Structures, procedures and institutions: This topic focuses on structures, procedures, and institutional settings that strengthen and consolidate the long-term nature of policy and its problem-solving capacity, particularly with regard to socio-technical settings.

Topic Area 2: The multi-level challenge

Implementing long-term governance in multi-level settings: How can local and regional political actors shape sustainable futures when rules and regulations on issues such as energy and heat supply are negotiated and decided upon at higher governance levels but must be implemented locally?

Topic Area 3: Time and temporality

This topic welcomes explorations of different temporalities and time-related issues in long-term governance, along with the resulting conflicts and coping mechanisms. We encourage both theoretical reflections and empirical case studies.

Topic Area 4: The normative foundations

Rights, sufficiency, or longtermism? We invite papers that clarify, defend, or contest particular approaches regarding the diverse normative foundations of long-term governance, draw out their institutional implications, or examine their interrelations.

Topic Area 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Right on track? Monitoring and evaluation in long-term governance: Experimenting and probing require evaluations and monitoring to achieve political goals in the long term. What are suitable methods and approaches to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of these governance strategies?

Topic Area 6: Open topic

Promising (and failed) experiences from various policy fields: This open topic gathers insights from successful and unsuccessful experiences across different policy fields and countries to provide an overview of the wide range of approaches that have been implemented or are currently underway.

WHAT ARE THE FORMATS?

The three-day conference (half, full, half) will comprise several formats of knowledge and social exchange:

- **Keynote lectures:**

  Two keynote speakers, **Prof. Eefje Cuppen** (Rathenau Institute, NL) onsite and **Prof. Benjamin Sovacool** (Boston University, US) online, will provide distinguished insights and expertise on the topic.

- **Panel discussion:**

  A panel discussion will bring together experts in policy making and science to reflect on the potentials and constraints of long-term governance in research and practice.

- **Parallel sessions:**

  Parallel sessions will be clustered by topic and curated by the conference board, with three to four presentations per 90-minute session.

SUBMISSION AND REGISTRATION

Please submit an abstract (max. 300 words) using the submission form on the conference website. Indicate your first and second choice of topic areas from the topic area list above.
The conference language is English.

- Conference website:
  https://www.itas.kit.edu/veranstaltungen_2026_ltgconference.php
- **Abstract submission deadline: 25 October 2026**
- Registration: via the website, opening on 1 December 2026
- Registration fees:
  > Regular:
  Early Bird: EUR 225,00 (netto) // EUR 258,68 (brutto)
  Standard: EUR 250,00 (netto) // EUR 287,42 (brutto)
  > Students and PhD candidates:
  Early Bird: EUR 125,00 (netto) // EUR 143,71 (brutto)
  Standard: EUR 150,00 (netto) // EUR 172,45 (brutto)

Important dates

- Call for abstracts published: 25 September 2026
- **Abstract submission deadline: 25 October 2026**
- Notification of acceptance: 1 December 2026
- Early bird registration deadline: 31 December 2026
- Regular registration: from 1 January 2027

SUPPORT

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Organizing team at ITAS-KIT

Sophie Kuppler & Dirk Scheer (responsible), Eike Düvel, Andreea Koch, Michael Schmidt, Laura Müller, Patrick Stuhm

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