



Colloquium “Bioeconomy and Sustainability Policies and Politics in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay”

23 March 2022, 14-17h CET online

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The broad concept of bioeconomy is increasingly being promoted as a potential strategy to foster sustainability transitions and address climate change. Key elements are the replacement of fossil-based raw materials with bio-based alternatives, fostering more efficient use of biomass, or developing bio-based materials, increasing the economic value of forestry and agriculture and promoting innovation in biotechnology. Yet, sustainability benefits are by no means automatic and without appropriate safeguards and sustainability strategies bioeconomy development may also carry significant risks and trade-offs.

The SABio research project examines these questions in relation to bioeconomy and sustainability in three South American countries, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. In many South American countries reports of socio-environmental conflicts related to natural resource governance have increased over the last two decades while political polarisation often makes it difficult to find consensus. At the same time, our recent work* has shown that there are also important differences between countries within the same region. The constellation of actors that drive bioeconomy visions differs and so does the scope of issues covered. Such differences are important because they demonstrate variations in inclusiveness.

This colloquium provides an opportunity to discuss the policies and politics of bioeconomy and sustainability in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina in more detail. The members of the research group in Political Science at the University of Münster will give a presentation of their research in each of the countries followed by a discussion and Q+A with the audience.

* Siegel, K.M., Deciancio, M., Kefeli, D., de Queiroz-Stein, G., Dietz, T. (2022) “Fostering transitions towards sustainability? The politics of bioeconomy development in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil”, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, <http://doi.org/10.1111/blar.13353>

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Agenda

14-14.10h	Welcome
14.10-15.00	Guilherme de Queiroz-Stein: “A Bioeconomy based on Socio-biodiversity in Brazil and the role of access and benefit-sharing regulation”
15-15.10h	Break
15.10-16h	Daniel Kefeli: “The interplay of international and domestic politics: driving environmental policy integration in the Uruguayan forestry sector”
16-16.10h	Break
16.10-17h	Melisa Deciancio: “Bioeconomy in Argentina: public policies for a (not so) new development model”

Abstracts

If you would like to read the full paper, please contact the presenter directly.

A Bioeconomy based on Socio-biodiversity in Brazil and the role of access and benefit-sharing regulation

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Brazil is a megadiverse country with approximately 20% of the world's biodiversity. However, factors such as deforestation and agricultural expansion threaten this biodiversity. At the same time, mainstreaming biodiversity into bioeconomy strategies can be a path to value, conserve and restore this important natural capital. Understanding the nexus between biodiversity and bioeconomy is a significant challenge because there is a growing recognition that the bioeconomy is not inherently sustainable. Most of the discussion focuses on the impacts of the bioeconomy on biodiversity, but biodiversity can actively contribute to developing a sustainable bioeconomy. The valorization of industries and services based on biodiversity is crucial in this sense. Likewise, cultural diversity and traditional knowledge about the uses and management of biodiversity will play a fundamental role in developing a fair and inclusive bioeconomy. This presentation will discuss my ongoing research on a bioeconomy based on biodiversity in Brazil. Its objective is to identify the economic potential of Brazilian biodiversity, different conceptions regarding the development of this bioeconomy, and possible associated risks. For this purpose, I used documental research of policy papers, descriptive statistics, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders that work in the Brazilian bioeconomy. The analysis identified that governmental actors, civil society, academia, and national industry had presented different concepts about developing the Brazilian bioeconomy, converging in the search for alternatives to the hegemonic bioeconomy, based on soybean, corn, and sugarcane monocultures. Also, I identified significant developments in sectors such as food, cosmetics, and medicines and future potentials linked to bioenergy, payment for environmental services, and ecotourism. However, even an economy based on biodiversity is not intrinsically sustainable. Regulatory governance must mitigate three main social and environmental sustainability risks: biopiracy, overexploitation of biological resources, and aggravation of iniquities. To this end, policies and institutional arrangements to control access to genetic heritage and associated traditional knowledge and generate benefit-sharing have an essential role.

The interplay of international and domestic politics: driving environmental policy integration in the Uruguayan forestry sector

Daniel Kefeli (with Karen Siegel, Lucía Pittaluga and Thomas Dietz)

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There is a general consensus that policy integration must be conceptualised as an ongoing process. It is also a challenging process. Even though policy integration is often regarded as a desirable way to increase effectiveness, particularly in addressing complex problems, such as climate change, in practice it faces significant obstacles because it requires overcoming the sectoral logic that generally characterises policy-making. This also means that policy integration is not just a technical question of how to make policy-making more effective, but it is a highly political process among actors with different interests, values and preferences. A key empirical question is therefore, where policy integration happens, how are the obstacles to policy integration overcome or what are the drivers and

dynamics that have made this possible? In this paper we seek to address this question through an in-depth qualitative study of policy integration of economic and environmental policies over 30 years between 1990 and 2020 in the forestry sector of Uruguay. To examine the main drivers and dynamics of environmental policy integration, we have identified three time periods between 1990 and 2020 reflecting the most significant changes in the level of policy integration. For each time period we first describe the extent of policy integration, using the framework of Candel and Biesbroek. This demonstrates the continuous progress in policy integration over the 30 years. For each time period we then examine the main drivers and dynamics. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of policy documents, sector reports, parliament hearings, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. It highlights the need for a better understanding of the interplay between international politics and domestic policy-making. Our analysis suggests that in particular the role of foreign transnational companies and international civil society deserves more attention and a better conceptualization in existing theoretical frameworks on policy integration.

Bioeconomy in Argentina: public policies for a (not so) new development model

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In recent decades, the bioeconomy has been gaining ground in discussions about the development model in Argentina. Its central objective is to replace fossil fuels for the production of inputs with resources of biological origin, contributing to combating climate change through more sustainable production with less impact on the environment. As previous studies have shown, the bioeconomy is beginning to gain momentum in Argentina, driven by the private sector, through various business and academic initiatives, mainly associated with the biotechnology and agroindustry sectors. However, the development of the bioeconomy has been strongly accompanied by state policies during neoliberal and developmentalist governments, which has received less attention in the literature. Different state policies generated the institutional and regulatory conditions necessary for its promotion. Although with variations, it remained present as a development project in governments from different political colours. In this line, the article focuses on the extent to which the state, through the promotion of various initiatives (public policies, regulatory frameworks, public-private partnerships, etc.), contributed to the development of bioeconomy projects in Argentina and what the positive results and limitations of this process have been. To answer these questions, the paper will examine two cases of the bioeconomy in Argentina. First, it will investigate the development of biorefineries and the state policies that accompanied their development and promotion. Since the biofuels law was passed in 2007, biorefineries and soy-based biodiesel production have become the pillar of the Argentine bioeconomy, both for their rapid growth and their impact on the economy. Second, the paper will focus on another Argentinean bioeconomy project: biotechnology applied to genetically modified seeds, where, through public-private partnerships and the exchange of knowledge and technology, the company Bioceres has managed to become a global leader. From the analysis of policies and the actors involved in the development of both projects, it becomes clear that the state has played an important role in accompanying the private sector in the promotion of the bioeconomy and that, despite ideological divergences, the policies designed demonstrate the continuity between the various governments in the promotion of this strategy. Nevertheless, these strategies have shown limitations and risks as the sustainability of the processes and negative socio-environmental impacts have not received sufficient attention. The study is based on the analysis of official documents, interviews with key actors from both the public and private sectors, and secondary bibliography that allow for an in-depth analysis of the process of bioeconomy development in Argentina and the role of public and private actors.