



## Laudatio Elizabeth Dirth

Climate change is often described as a *super-wicked problem* that poses unprecedented challenges for long-term planning and decision-making. Causes and effects of climate change are often separated in time and space, which results in numerous potential injustices: injustices over time and across generations; injustices across regions or countries; and injustices between the rich, who have the financial means to protect themselves against vulnerabilities, and the millions of poor who remain utterly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming. The injustice over time is often referred to as the problem of *intergenerational equity*.

Yet, how can political institutions and systems of governance deal with this challenge of designing policies that are to be implemented today, but will affect essentially future generations? How can current institutions be reformed in a way that better takes into account the needs of the future?

This is the core question of Elizabeth Dirth's excellent work. Her thesis is the first study that has examined in detail the implementation of intergenerational equity in a well-structured and detailed way. A unique and innovative conceptual framework was developed, based on the available literature from a variety of disciplines and fields, through which numerous existing governance mechanisms could be identified. Based on this research, a second framework was developed to identify and analyze the effects of these mechanisms, based on the theory on institutional effectiveness.

These are not the only features that make this thesis so special. Elizabeth Dirth has also systematically scanned *all of the world's countries* for their political approach towards the institutionalization of intergenerational equity. In this process, 167 mechanisms were studied, including 12 specialized institutions, 120 relevant constitutional clauses, 13 court cases, and 22 examples of youth representation. The analysis allowed Dirth to conclude that 65% of the countries have indeed mechanisms that work in some way to implement intergenerational equity. However, the sobering result is that only three mechanisms could be considered effective.

It is not, however, only the excellence of the MSc thesis that makes her a potential prize winner. In addition to the master's thesis, Elizabeth Dirth has an excellent academic and professional track record both in and outside the academic community. Just to mention a few exceptional activities. She was a communication officer and climate change officer for the organization 'Keep Scotland Beautiful'. She founded and led the 2050 Climate Group, Scotland, through the early stages of organizational development, from idea stage to achieving legal NGO status in 2017, and becoming a multi-award winning and internationally recognized organization. Elizabeth Dirth helped to set up a new research network, the Planetary Justice Taskforce, within the Earth System Governance Project, a global social science research network on environmental governance. She also represented the Young European Leaders and the 2050 Climate Group at three UN Conferences of the Parties.

According to the jury of the best MSc thesis award, this is all outstanding work that goes by far beyond what is common and expected from a MSc student. The jury was impressed by the theoretical and empirical scope and depth of her research work. Elizabeth Dirth is an exceptionally talented researcher who combines analytical skills and in-depth knowledge with creativity and passion.