

# The 'user' as empty signifier in energy scenarios?

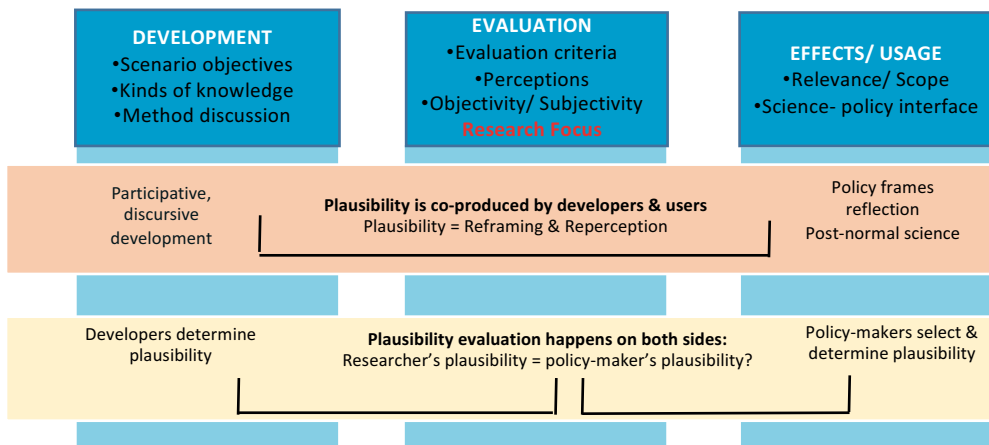
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**Motivation:** Scenarios are popular in discourses on German energy transition goals. Combining modeling with qualitative storylines receives increased attention: Storylines shall not only provide social systems analysis as input data and evaluation frameworks; they shall also take over what models often fail to offer: Informing decision-makers, generating previously unnoticed mental maps and challenging pre-existing ones. However, social science has not properly engaged in questions of *who the users potentially are, how they are integrated in scenario work, and how sense-making can(not) occur*. By refraining from probabilities, plausibility often reads as key scenario assessment criterion. My research focuses on the **under-developed plausibility concept in scenarios**: How is plausibility established, assessed and evaluated?

## Approach: Following the trajectories of plausibility along the life path of energy scenarios

I propose by considering the life path of energy scenarios [1] as unit of analysis. It demonstrates different interpretations how decisions in the development phase may determine plausibility and how this has implications for users' perceptions.



## Application Area: Energy scenarios in Germany

The extant literature suggests certain characteristics of current practices of energy scenario analysis:

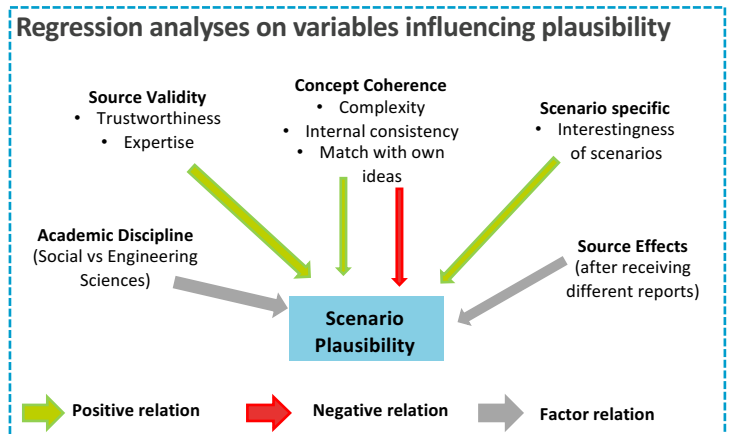
- Concise community of developers
- Serves as scientific policy advice
- Disseminated as reports
- Unclear user group
- Sequential separation of life path

➤ The characteristics reinforce the need to study users' perception and interpretation of scenarios as plausibilistic constructions

## State of Current Work & Preliminary Results

The framework informed an empirical study on the EVALUATION phase, using semi-experimental study findings

- **RQ1:** How is plausibility established for different scenario formats and contents?
- **RQ2:** How do people reason about plausibility of scenarios?
- Approaches from cognitive & educational psychology
- Plausibility as condition for conceptual change



[1] Grunwald, A. (2011) 'Der Lebensweg von Energieszenarien – Umriss eines Forschungsprogramms'. In: C. Dieckhoff, et al.(ed.) *Energieszenarien – Konstruktion, Bewertung und Wirkung – „Anbieter“ und „Nachfrager“ im Dialog*. Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing. S. 11-24.