In this talk, Sebastian Pfotenhauer will explore how sub-national regions navigate tensions to reconcile the global innovation imperative and its increasingly standardized organizational models with local socio-economic traditions, unique political cultures, and regional identity. Using the German state of Bavaria as an in-depth case study, he shows how this region enacts a particular vision of "conservative innovation" in keeping with existing sources of identity and social cohesion. This vision is characterized by a tendency to preserve traditional socio-economic orders rather than disrupt them; to favor and safeguard political and economic incumbents rather than enable new entrants; and to act from a perceived position of strength or even saturation rather than decline or emergency. Viewed through this lens of regional cultures, innovation in Bavaria ceases to be a source of disruption and social change and rather becomes a mechanism of socio-cultural reproduction that extends existing identities and frames of reference into the future. The research provides new support for a constructivist rethinking of the foundations of innovation policy, highlighting the unique local situatedness and inter-regional differences in the rationalization and practices of innovation policy.

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Pfotenhauer is Carl von Linde Assistant Professor of Innovation Research at the Munich Center for Technology in Society (MCTS) and the TUM School of Management, where he heads the Innovation, Society and Public Policy research group. He is also the coordinator of the EU-Horizon2020 project SCALINGS (Scaling Up Co-Creation: Avenues and Limits for Integrating Society in Science and Innovation) – a flagship initiative investigating new collaborative innovation formats such as living labs and pre-commercial procurement in robotics, autonomous driving, and urban energy systems. His work has appeared in Social Studies of Science, Research Policy, Nature, Issues in Science and Technology and numerous other outlets. Before joining TUM, he was a research scientist and lecturer with the MIT Technology & Policy Program and the MIT Sociotechnical Systems Research Center, as well as a fellow at the Harvard Program on Science, Technology and Society. He holds a Master’s degree in Technology Policy from MIT as well as PhD in Physics from the University of Jena.

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