

Expert Workshop

Sustainability transformations and social sciences:

Methodological contributions, challenges, and ways forward

November 3 & 4 2023

University of Basel, Sociology: HS215
Petersgraben 27 4051 Basel (on-site only)



Hosted by Max Bergman, Basil Bornemann, Antonietta Di Giulio, Rico Defila & Machteld Simoens

Sustainability transformation is a topic that has developed dynamically over the past 20 years in response to increasingly pressing “grand challenges” such as climate change, food insecurity, and social inequality, and in response to the necessity of carving out a future that is desirable for both people and planet. Capturing and supporting these fundamental and comprehensive processes of social change requires not only new theoretical concepts and practical applications but also new and adapted methodological approaches that do justice to the normativity, ambivalence, complexity and uncertainty of sustainability transformations. With regard to methods for integrative approaches and societal transformations, social sciences and humanities are especially called for.

The Social Transitions Research (STR) group at the University of Basel invites experienced methodologists, social scientists and sustainability researchers to discuss the significance, potentials and limitations of social science methods in sustainability transformation research. Integrating insights from the broad and diverse body of transformation-oriented, inter- and transdisciplinary, and transformative methods that the social sciences have to offer, the workshop provides a space to discuss core methodological issues concerning practices of knowledge generation, quality of research, and roles and positionality of researchers.

Inspired by contributions from methodologists Julia Backhaus (RWTH Aachen), Julia Bentz (Nova University Lisbon), Bethany Laursen (University of Michigan), Rolf Lidskog (Örebro University), Roberto Poli (University of Trento, to be confirmed), Carlie Trott (University of Cincinnati), and others, this workshop fosters methodological debates and exchanges among experts in sustainability transformation research.



The workshop will be held in English



The target group of this workshop are researchers from the social sciences and humanities with expertise and a strong interest in methodological approaches related to the field of sustainability transformation research



No registration fees will be charged. Catering (drinks, snacks and lunch) during the workshop will be provided by the University of Basel



As space is limited we ask you to send an email with a short description of your background, your proficiency in methods and motivation to attend this workshop (max. 250 words) to machteld.simoens@unibas.ch until October 10th the latest. You will receive a confirmation of your participation by October 16th.