International Sustainability Transitions Conference 2016

Call for Papers

7th International Sustainability Transitions (IST) Conference 2016
- Exploring Transition Research as Transformative Science -

6th – 9th September 2016
Wuppertal, Germany

Event overview

The 7th International Sustainability Transitions Conference will be hosted by the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, Energy in Wuppertal, Germany. The conference is the annual platform to share theoretical, empirical and practical advances in the field of sustainability transitions. The conference is part of the activities of the Sustainability Transitions Research Network (STRN) and is linked to the journal Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions (EIST).

Sustainability transitions are transformations of major socio-technical systems of provision and use in areas such as energy, water, mobility and food towards more sustainable societies. Sustainability transitions research focuses on the dynamics of system change, studying innovation in its various forms (social innovation, technological innovation, business model innovation, infrastructural innovation, institutional innovation). It is a multi-disciplinary field with inputs from economics, science and technology studies, geography, political science, management, sociology and history. It is also a transdisciplinary field in the sense that it focuses on „real-world problems“, is impact- and solution-oriented, and aims at fostering societal change towards sustainable development.

The Wuppertal Institute as the hosting institution has since its foundation 25 years ago been a sustainability research institute positioned at the science-society interface. Thus, in 2016 we invite you not only to IST 2016 but also to celebrate our anniversary with us. We want to make IST 2016 a very practical transition experience and will open our urban real-world lab in the city of Wuppertal with its many exciting projects and initiatives to all conference participants.

As a special cooperation initiative between STRN and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research's (BMBF) Programme "Research for Sustainable Development" (FONA3) the IST Conference will include a side session on the BMBF's funding initiative "Sustainable Economy" in the context of its funding priority "Social-Ecological Research" (SÖF). Furthermore, one research session as well as one dialogue session at the IST Conference will be particularly discussing questions regarding transformations towards a sustainable economy co-hosted by the BMBF. Papers regarding this topic are particularly invited (details see below).

IST 2016 Theme – Exploring Transition Research as Transformative Science

The theme for this IST conference is **"Exploring Transition Research as Transformative Science"**. Accordingly, we invite contributions focusing on the conceptual and methodological challenges of transformative science, i.e. research that is actively involved in societal transformation processes. We want to reflect on the challenges and lessons learned in concrete research projects, on theoretical contributions advancing our understanding of transitions, and on the role of science and scientists involved in transitions to sustainability. We invite contributions that address the following questions related to the theme of **transformative science**:

- What are the conceptual and methodological challenges of transformative science?
- How can we assess the societal impact of transition research? What are adequate concepts, methods and innovative approaches for impact evaluation?
- What are common challenges in newly emerging research approaches, such as real-world laboratories, LivingLabs, transition experiments etc., what are best practices and promising advances for future research in this field?

We also invite scholars to submit papers or sessions focusing on the broad range of issues and debates in sustainability transitions research, including but not limited to the following:

- **What is the role of geography and cities in the global transition to sustainability?** We invite contributions with a global perspective and a focus on cities as a central hub for change and an empirical focus on specific fields of application (e.g. energy, water, mobility, food, housing etc.) or cross-cutting issues, e.g. related to sustainable production and consumption and sustainable lifestyles or alternative indicators of well-being at local and global levels.
- We invite contributions focusing on a **non-EU/ L**atin **A**merica and the **C**aribbean, **AS**ia and **AF**rica (**LACASAF**) region context: How do transitions frameworks hold in these contexts and how should they be adjusted to better suit them? Which insights from other theories and fields can be used? How to better incorporate contextual aspects and local bodies of knowledge? What can be learned for sustainable development initiatives and policy-making in LACASAF regions?
- **Governance of sustainability transitions**: How can we further improve our understanding of the role of power and politics in transitions? What potential do grassroots initiatives and social movements have in advancing sustainability transitions?
- **Transitions towards a sustainable economy:** How can production and consumption patterns become more sustainable? Which new insights from consumer behavior research, business and sustainability entrepreneurship perspectives can support that task? What is the role of industry incumbents in sustainability transitions? What types of business models and social innovations are needed? How can progress towards a sustainable economy be measured and evaluated? What are potentials and challenges of integrating economic, political, and civil society actors into the research process?
- What are current **theoretical advances** in transition studies, building on core concepts such as the multi-level perspective, technological innovation systems, transition management and reflexive governance of sustainability?

- How does paradigmatic change evolve and how can the deep structures and frames of meaning underlying complex societal systems be challenged? What **theories of change** from other fields (e.g. political economy, social-ecological transformations research, complexity science, alternative/ecological economics etc.) should we look at, in order to compare and enrich our understanding of transitions and to critically challenge our own frameworks?

- What are current **methodological advances** in transition studies and in modeling transitions? What are promising qualitative and quantitative approaches for future research?

- We also invite contributions dealing with **recent developments** following the climate negotiations in Paris or the announcement of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN.

With a view to creating engaging, impactful content throughout the conference, we invite participants to take an active role in constructing an exciting and challenging program. Building on the success of the IST 2015 in Brighton, with various new formats and program content, we are also open to ideas about doing things differently.

IST 2016 Conference structure and formats

Across the different thematic tracks, the conference will be structured using different formats:

- **Paper Sessions**: 90 minute sessions with three full paper presentations and a discussion.
- **Speedtalk Sessions**: 45 minute sessions with 4-5 short presentations, where an idea or a central research finding is presented in 4 minutes. The rest of the session is dedicated to direct interaction between the presenters and the other session participants in small group discussions (app. 20-30 minutes) focusing on the individual presentations. We specifically also invite contributions by PhD students for this format as an opportunity to discuss ideas and research designs at an early stage.
- **Dialogue Sessions**: 90 minute sessions featuring paper presentations with a specific thematic focus, project presentations, panels, discussions or workshops related to the conference theme. We specifically invite session proposals that include non-academic participants and innovative formats. A dialogue session is prepared and submitted by an external session organizer.
- **Poster Session**: posters will be displayed throughout the conference at a central location. There will also be a time slot exclusively dedicated to poster presentations.

Key dates

29 February 2016	**Deadline for submissions**
15 April 2016	Outcome of review process and acceptance decisions
15 May 2016	Draft program
05 August 2016	**Deadline for submission of full papers**
24 August 2016	Final program
6-9 Sept 2016	**IST 2016**

Submission requirements

Submissions should be made electronically via www.ist2016.exordo.com between 15 January and 29 February 2016 according to the guidance below.

- Paper abstracts: 600 word abstracts, which provide information about research question, theory, method and findings, plus a brief biography of each author (10 lines each). Note that full papers will be required for Paper Sessions and extended abstracts for Speedtalk Sessions.
- Dialogue Session proposals: 600 word descriptions of the session (90 minutes), including issues to be covered, participants, chair and format, and how it relates to the conference theme. If the session includes paper presentations please include 600 word abstracts of each paper. We invite PhD researcher-led sessions, non-academic session participants and innovative formats. Biographies of all participants and the session chair should also be included (10 lines).

Abstracts and session proposals should be submitted as pdf or Word files, following the format „organizer or author last name“, plus either „PS“ (Paper Sessions), „StS“ (Speedtalk Session), „DS“ (Dialogue Session) or „PP“ (Poster Presentation), e.g. name_PS.

More information

The conference website will be launched early in 2016: www.ist2016.org
For personal inquiries please do not hesitate to contact us:
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