

## **Call for Abstracts 2<sup>nd</sup> PhDs in Transitions Conference 2017**

### **“Sustainability Transitions: Theory and Practice” - EPFL, 27-28 April 2017**

The second PhDs in Transitions Conference is the follow-up of the successful first edition at Greenwich University in April 2016. The conference is organized by the “PhDs in Transitions”, a network of PhDs and Early Career Researchers (ERCs) in Sustainability Transitions, catering specifically to the needs of Early Career Researchers and doctoral candidates as a complement to the Sustainability Transitions Research Network (STRN).

The aim of the upcoming conference is to discuss and exchange theoretical frameworks, developments and challenges, and additionally explore how transition research can be useful for “practice”. We invite all interested PhD students and ERCs working on projects related to sustainability transitions to submit a **400-word extended abstract** by **Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017** for a **15 minutes-presentation with 15 minutes-discussion**. We ask to indicate the connection of the researchers` project to one of the four thematic streams. The abstract should be accompanied by a **short biography of no more than 100 words**. Detailed descriptions of the four thematic streams and their aims and themes are included below:

#### **1) Geography of transitions**

The field of sustainability transitions originally grew out of an interest in conducting research on radical socio-technical change in industrial sectors at the national scale. Prominent frameworks such as Technical Innovation Systems (TIS), Multi-level Perspective (MLP), Strategic Niche Management (SNM) and Transition Management (TM) have been developed and applied at the national level to a number of cases in countries of the global North. Recently, however, the field has been expanding its geographical focus across scales and territories, to study socio-technical change and transitions at local, regional and global scales and in other parts of the world: the so-called geography of transitions.

The analyses of transitions at local and regional scale or international, trans-local scale need to focus on the spatial configurations and spatial dynamics of the networks within which these transitions take place. This stream invites PhD students and ECRs to present abstracts which take-up a spatial perspective on sustainability transitions with explicit attention for the spatial contexts in which the sustainability transitions are situated.

**Keywords:** geography of transitions, global, local, regional, cities, spatial differences, networks, socio-spatial context, global South/North,

#### **2) Experiments towards sustainability transitions**

Experimentation is a central concept to sustainability transitions research across all well-established frameworks, especially transition management (TM) and strategic niche management (SNM). Experiments are powerful and necessary tools to foster innovation, learning, and transformation in niches and regimes. However, examples of real-world laboratories, such as urban transition labs, are few and far between. Local experiments raise a number of challenges regarding the protection, upscaling and expectations, so that they can provide unique insights for transition studies – not only in urban settings.

This stream invites PhD students and ECRs to present work, which address the challenges of managing (real world) laboratories for transition experiments. Specifically, we welcome theoretical and practical contributions to the policies, processes, and management of transition experiments at the urban level. Furthermore, we encourage submissions that address recent technological, process and management advances that foster social learning from transition experiments.

**Keywords:** living labs, networks, expectations, transition management, sustainability, niche protection, upscaling, participation, transdisciplinarity, social learning, smart cities, urban development

### 3) Theories of practice and everyday life in sustainability transitions

Transitioning societies towards sustainable modes of production and consumption is a key component in sustainability transitions - particularly in the transitions to low carbon futures. An understanding about how practices are transformed, and the agency of culture, civil societies and social movements in transforming practices is becoming more significant in transitions research. In the analyses of practices of production, consumption and the everyday lives of people, theories of practice are explored by an increasing number of transition researchers. A practice approach is gaining prominence because it enables for a shift of focus from technological artefacts and places the activities of producers and consumers and people's ordinary everyday lives at the core of an analysis.

This stream invites PhD students and ECRs to present abstracts that focus on using a practice approach in transition studies. Abstracts that draw upon theories of (social) practice and theories related to end users and consumers of technologies and make theoretical and practical contributions to sustainability transitions research, are particularly encouraged.

**Keywords:** (social) practice theory, social learning, social and societal change, users & consumers, community-led, social innovations, everyday life, practices of organizations and companies, climate change.

### 4) Modeling and simulation of transitions

Simulation is often the only method available to study complex long-term sustainability transitions. Currently, the field of transition studies is dominated by narrative case studies, which deepen our understanding of historic and early stage transitions, while the number of (prospective) transition studies using simulation is very limited. Furthermore, the majority of simulation models are not based on available transition frameworks. This is a missed opportunity as these qualitative and quantitative methods can be highly complementary in research designs, opening the door to exploring transition policies and pathways under uncertainty.

This stream invites PhD students and ECRs to present abstracts on theoretical and practical contributions to the application of simulation in sustainability transitions research. Of particular interest are submissions of quantitative simulation models, conceptual models, formalizations of transition frameworks for various simulation paradigms and mixed-methods research involving modeling and simulation. We also encourage submissions beyond the preferred modelling and simulation methods, such as agent-based modeling and system dynamics, to broaden the discussion on simulation in sustainability transitions research in general.

**Keywords:** conceptual modeling, quantitative simulation, mixed-methods research, formalization, frameworks.

**Please submit the abstracts for your presentation, accompanying biographies and indicate the thematic track you are submitting to in electronic form to [phdsintransitionsconference17@gmail.com](mailto:phdsintransitionsconference17@gmail.com) by Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017. We will respond to all applicants by Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017.**