

Transformation as a Process of Transdisciplinary Negotiation

PhD 04b: Sustainability Science

International and Global Real-World Experiments to Identify Sustainable Opportunities for Complementing Local Food Systems (Working Title)

Research Question

How can experiments with international and global food systems get conducted through transdisciplinary collaboration in order to complement local food systems on their way to sustainability?

Background / State of Research

To date, real-world experiments to support sustainable systems have largely been confined to local, small-scale cases. Yet, local food, energy, or mobility systems could be developed sustainably, but there are often necessary or desired complements that are not local in nature and get often ignored. There is now growing interest in complementing sustainable local systems, such as food systems, with sustainable practices on an international or global scale. Instead of forgoing the consumption of chocolate, for example, consumers in Central Europe are interested in supporting sustainable chocolate production and distribution internationally. However, there are very few real-world experiments on sustainable chocolate systems beyond the local scale undertaken; one of the few exceptions is the Granada Chocolate Company. Such experiments require effective collaboration across various stakeholder groups and places. Transdisciplinarity is a suitable guiding concept for such collaborations (Lang et al. 2012). Research to date has mostly focused on transdisciplinary collaboration on the local scale. Yet, more attention to transdisciplinary collaboration on international sustainability challenges has gained momentum over the past few years (e.g., Cornell et al., 2013; Fernandez et al., 2013).

Research Design

The research design is twofold. First, we analyze and evaluate existing real-world experiments on sustainable international and global food systems of relevance to Lüneburg, Germany, and Tempe, Arizona. Second, we develop and apply a concept to (re-)design such experiments in ways that allow to explicitly identify sustainable opportunities for complementing local food systems through transdisciplinary collaboration.

Expected Results

This doctoral research project is closely linked with the first doctoral research project in the domain “Transformation as a Process of Transdisciplinary Negotiation”. Both studies aim at extending the rationale and practice of real-world and experiments beyond the local scale through (i) scaling and transfer of experiment results (Thesis 1), and (ii) through conducting experiments on the international level with an explicit link to the local level (Thesis 2).

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Daniel Lang

Institute for Ethics and Transdisciplinary Sustainability Research

daniel.lang@uni.leuphana.de

These PhD scholarships are part of the larger project „Processes of Sustainability Transformation“ funded by the Robert Bosch foundation. Please refer to www.processes-of-sustainability-transformation.org for application procedure