

NESS Workshop: Exploring grassroots initiatives for transitions

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In the last years there has been an upsurge of different forms of grassroots initiatives for transitions to more sustainable societies. There are both established organisations as well as looser networks that are engaged with alternative systems of provision of *food*, *energy* and *housing*, like community supported agriculture, food sharing schemes, renewable energy cooperatives, co-housing and co-building, or in the field of *mobility* – Bike Kitchens, critical mass rides, other forms of *making and consuming goods* - DIY repair cafés, free shops, or other forms of sharing, reusing and making goods, *finance* – community currencies, peer to peer lending, etc.

These initiatives are less about campaigning and pushing for governments or corporations to change, and more about *altering practices*, building and engaging in alternative ways of living, and may be understood as “lifestyle movements” (Haenfler et al, 2012), as practicing and expanding “diverse economies” (Gibson-Graham, 2008), as “grassroots innovation” (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012), or in other sociopolitical terms. However, these “lifestyle movements” may well push for changes in policies and influence or support decision-makers and politicians as well as other citizens into more “radical” transitions. In this session we invite contributions that explore questions like:

- What are the motivations for engaging in grassroots initiatives like the abovementioned? And how may they this be conceptualized?
- What type of change do these initiatives and groupings contribute to? Whose practices do they alter? Who is included or excluded in these initiatives?
- When and how do they have a wider societal impact, beyond the engaged? How may or do already lifestyle movements like these influence decisions at a societal level?
- How can “success” or impact of these forms of initiatives be conceptualized? What are key enabling and inhibiting factors?
- What is the role of these initiatives in the overall societal transition, in cooperation and/or conflict with other actors such as governments, businesses, or other organisations?
- What strategies, or forms of organizing, cooperating, funding and communicating – are being used and how may these be theoretically conceptualized?
- What are the challenges and limitations of these forms of initiatives?

References

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2008). Diverse economies: performative practices for 'other worlds'. *Progress in human geography*, 32(5), 613-632.

Haenfler, R., Johnson, B., & Jones, E. (2012). Lifestyle movements: Exploring the intersection of lifestyle and social movements. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(1), 1-20.

Seyfang, G., & Haxeltine, A. (2012). Growing grassroots innovations: exploring the role of community-based initiatives in governing sustainable energy transitions. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. 30(3), 381-400.

The NESS workshops follow a standing session format (similar to ECPR), which allows for substantive discussions on research in progress. The conference invites scholars from multiple disciplinary backgrounds in environmental social science. The overall objective of the workshop is to facilitate and encourage participation, equality and collaboration between younger and more established scholars. Each paper is expected to relate to the theme of the workshop, and the participant submits and presents a paper (or work in progress) for the discussion. Workshop participants will be asked to comment on at least one other paper in the respective workshop and participate in the general discussion of the other papers presented. Participants should only choose and attend one workshop for the duration of the conference. The ambition with this format is that the workshops allow for in-depth and coherent discussions of the respective themes and provide opportunity for potential joint publications or other continuing collaborations between the participants.