

## **Workshop NESS: Governing a sustainable transformation – The role of knowledge, expertise and the reflexivity of public institutions**

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We are facing the need to transform modern societies in their very foundation. Unsustainable processes such as mass-consumption are sustaining the stability of the current economic system while threatening the stability of ecological ones. When managing today's growing amount of socially and technologically generated environmental problems, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, organizations at all levels of society need to assess and make use of complex information and knowledge in their decision-making. Scientific knowledge, expertise, and learning are essential to this work. At the same time, there is an increasing contestation of science, where some even claim that we are running towards a post-truth society where the epistemic authority of science is increasingly challenged. Thus, to understand the paths and pitfalls on the way towards a sustainable transformation of society we need to understand how knowledge and expertise may contribute to transformative change, as well as when and why it does not.

To achieve a sustainable transformation there is a need to reconsider organizing principles and practices of modern societies. The modern societal institutions that carry the responsibility to manage these environmental problems are most often embedded in a technical rationality and specific epistemic cultures. These institutional rationales and epistemic cultures may serve to favor certain forms of knowledge and exclude others. Thereby shaping the knowledge base as well as decisions. We need to better understand the possibilities and constraints on transformative change that these institutions (their rationale and epistemic cultures) constitute. In the context of current challenges, which are both environmental and social, the reflexive capacity of these institutions/authorities is challenged.

To govern a sustainable transformation producing and using knowledge and expertise in reflexive manners is essential. In this workshop, we are interested in exploring how expertise is shaped in different institutional settings, how institutional and epistemic cultures shape knowledge, practices, and decisions. We welcome papers that explore these processes in different ways, empirically as well as theoretically. Papers may focus on a variety of institutional settings and on different institutional levels. We also welcome paper that in different ways explores how knowledge and expertise (and their institutional settings) affect the prospects to govern a sustainable transformation. The workshop leaders have the goal to develop a special issue on this theme to be submitted in the fall of 2022. At the workshop we will propose a more developed theme for this special issue, where we have accounted for the content of the papers submitted to the workshop. We hope that this will be an interesting opportunity to continue collaboration after the conference ends. However, contributing to the special issue is not a requirement for participating in the workshop.

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.