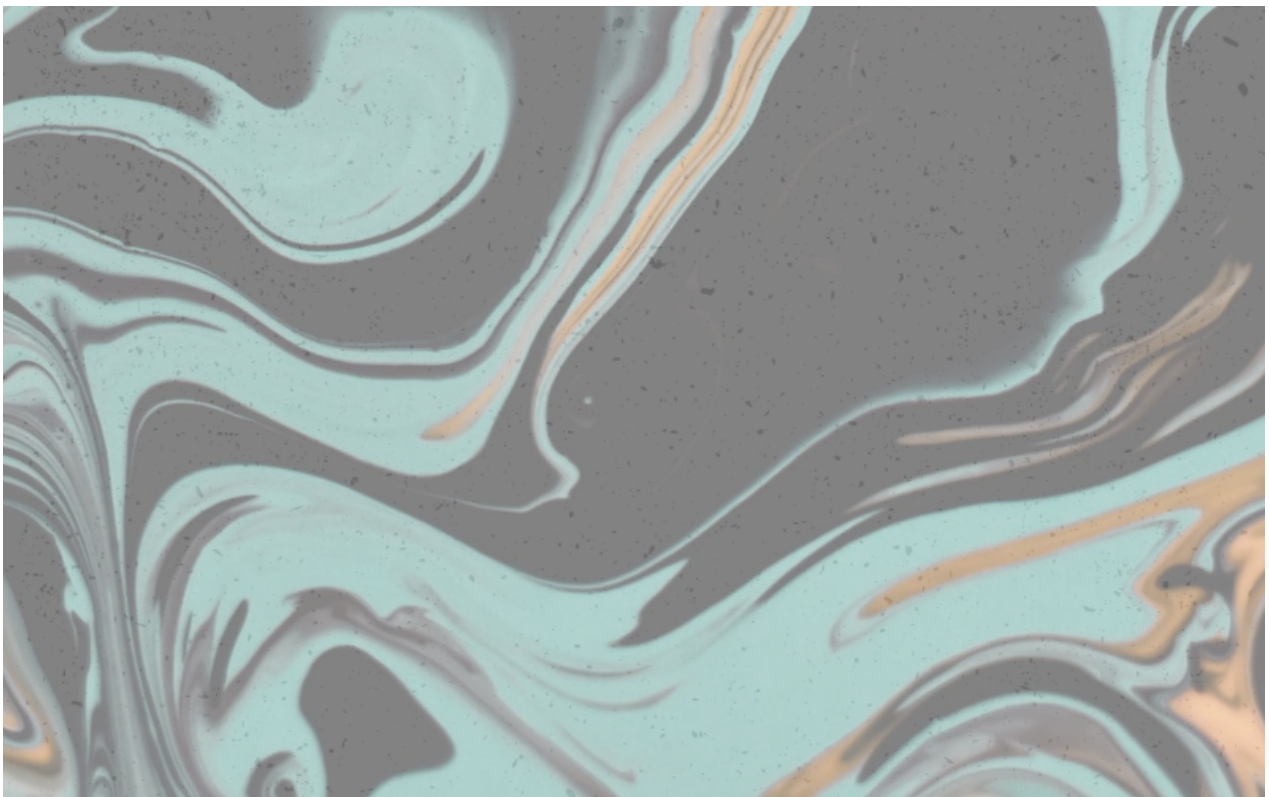# Governing sustainability transformations

## Changing drivers, driving change



## WCSG Conference 2024

Wageningen Centre of Sustainability Governance

**Link to the conference website here**

# One page guide to the conference

When: 16-17 October 2024
Where: Hotel-Restaurant De Wageningsche Berg, Wageningen, Netherlands
Organised by: Wageningen Centre of Sustainability Governance (WCSG)

## Contact

Conference Coordinator: Ilse Smit
Email: wcsgconference2024@wur.nl

## Important dates & deadlines

15 Apr '24 Deadline for submission of sessions, papers and/or posters
15 May '24 Notification of decisions on submissions
31 July '24 Deadline for Registration
16 Oct '24 Conference Day 1
17 Oct '24 Conference Day 2

## Submissions (closes 15 April 2024)

Now accepting submissions—papers, posters and sessions.
See instructions in the following pages or conference website online here

To submit directly follow the link here

## Registration (closes 31 July 2024)

Conference Fee*: 275 euro
cost covers conference participation, refreshments, lunches during the two days of the conference, and a conference dinner on 16 October 2024.

*We have limited opportunity to support participants from global south and young researchers on a case by case basis. Please contact the conference coordinator if you have financial difficulties and we will see if we can help.

Conference updates will be communicated via the WCSG Conference website here

# Changing drivers, driving change

## Context

Transformation of society and sustainability governance requires significant reordering: one that changes existing drivers and structures to drive change towards fundamentally novel systems. During the conference we focus on the central question, can sustainability transformation be governed? And if so by whom, what and how? In our quest to answer this question we explore the four main themes detailed below.

## What is this conference about?

**Can sustainability transformation be governed?**
With multiple sustainability crises unfolding, from climate change to biodiversity loss, from increasing levels of pollution and threats to global public health to increased socio-environmental and intergenerational inequality, poverty and intersectional discrimination, from the digital divide, food and energy insecurity to forced migration and disruptive use of emerging technologies, there is a need for transforming society as well as the way in which sustainability is governed. Therefore, transformation of society and sustainability governance requires significant reordering: one that changes existing drivers and structures to drive change towards fundamentally novel systems.

This is often framed as radical but global crises can only be reversed when the underlying root drivers of sustainability problem(s) rather than its proximate causes and symptomatic effects are addressed. sustainability transformation is characterized by complexity and raises questions about the possibility of its governance. Indeed, sustainability transformation goes beyond emergent and incremental change within existing interactions, practices and governance arrangements, which are rooted in history and reflect current power relations. Transformative change, therefore, should take place at both the individual level, and collectively as a society, i.e. in terms of beliefs, dominant practices and nature worldviews, values and norms.

In addition, transformational change is seen as, multi-scalar, complex and inherently political as they involve actors, knowledges, interaction, institutions and power dynamics that shape both the triggers and capacities for governing sustainability change.

During the conference we focus on the central question, can sustainability transformation be governed? And if so by whom, what and how? In our quest to answer this question we explore four main themes.

## Four Central Conference Themes

1. Defining transformative sustainability change

2. Actors and just transformations

3. Governance approaches in and for transformations

4. Evaluating sustainable transformations

# Research questions & context  behind the themes

**1.Defining transformative sustainability change**—What is transformative sustainability change?

Transformative sustainability change includes shifts in social, economic, environmental, and technological dimensions, and underpinning paradigms, goals and values. Thinking and discussing explicitly how we are defining transformative sustainability change facilitates more coherent discussions about the assumptions and goals that are shared or contested. Other important questions in this regard are about how the concept of transformative sustainability change relates to different governance aspects, and which conceptual frameworks can or should be used to understand the governance of transformative sustainability change, and in what (legal) commitments, it could be translated?

**2.Actors and just transformations**—Which entanglements of (human and non-human) actors drive transformative change and what are justice implications?

Sustainability change can be driven by governments at different scales, but also by community, civil society, consumer, and (local) societal groups. What are the enabling and constraining conditions (e.g., justice, inequity, temporality/history, coloniality, profits) for different groups of actors to drive change? Who are leaders of change and how have they been able to contribute to sustainability transitions? What is enabling and constraining human and non-human actors to use their capacity to drive (transformative) change?

**3.Governance approaches in and for transformations**—Which solutions, pathways and leverage points for change are addressed by different governance approaches, arrangements and tools? And what are the enabling and constraining conditions in developing these governance approaches, arrangements and tools?

We need to discover how societal norms, different governance arrangements and policies are able to drive transformative changes. The potential of the law and other types of governance ensure just changes with the general aim to achieve more equitable and sustainable society. Question include How can governance be more agile, adaptive and dynamic in order to better respond to transformative change and articulate principles of resource prioritization during societal (r)evolutions.

**4.Evaluating sustainable transformations**—How can we evaluate if efforts to change are sustainable and advance both environmental and public health improvements as well as social equity?

If sustainability change is about changing governance structures and power relations and are long-term but non-linear processes, how do we know whether law and other public, private and societal initiatives contribute to just sustainability change? Also given that current changes rely on decisions in the past, how do we assess solutions, pathways and leverage points for change towards sustainability governance? Which approaches can we use to evaluate changes in governance, impact logics outcomes and impacts? What discourses and paradigms surround current thinking around sustainability governance? What are the ethical considerations, and what about the positionality of sustainability governance researchers?

# Submissions

**Sessions, papers & posters**
We have now opened the submission process for session proposals as well as paper and poster abstracts for the conference. The deadline for submissions is **April 15st, 2024**. We will send a notification of our decisions regarding submissions on May 15th, 2024.

**Submission information**
Sessions, papers, and posters will be organised according to four themes. The sessions will be held in parallel (with approx. 2 to 3 parallel sessions). As an individual you can submit a maximum of 2 abstracts and 1 session proposal in total.

**Sessions proposals**
We are inviting proposals for a diversity of session designs and formats (i.e. fish bowls, panels, discussion groups, outside walking sessions etc.) not only paper or poster presentations.

Innovative Sessions
Innovative session proposal should include the following information:
• Organiser(s) name and affiliation
• Organiser(s) email address for correspondence
• A brief (max one A4 page or 500 words) session abstract
• 5 keywords representing the main content.
• The conference theme to which the session relates
• The proposed format of the session

Paper based sessions
For paper based sessions, the proposal can include some 'open slots' for paper abstracts. Paper-based session proposals should include:
• Author(s) name and affiliation
• Author(s) email address for correspondence
• A brief (max one A4 page or 500 words) session abstract
• The proposed paper titles and abstracts to be included in the session
• 5 keywords representing the main content
• Abstracts should be less than 350 words in length (please do not use abbreviations or cite references in the abstract)
• The conference theme to which the session relates

**Paper and poster abstracts**
Abstracts should clearly state:
• Author(s) name and affiliation
• Author(s) email address for correspondence
• Abstracts should be less than 350 words in length (please do not use abbreviations or cite references in the abstract)
• 5 keywords representing the main content
• The conference theme to which the paper relates

## Submissions (continued)

**What we are looking for in the proposals and abstracts?**
We particularly welcome and will prioritise sessions, papers and posters with the following ingredients:
• Inter- and transdisciplinary approaches from different social sciences and with collaborations between social and natural or public health scientists
• Empirical and/or theoretical contributions
• North-south collaborations
• Presentations of reflective debates engaging with and in partnerships with stakeholders (public & private domains)
• Knowledge creation and mobilisation
• Ideas for innovative sessions (beyond the classic paper and poster presentations and panels, this could be fieldtrips, outdoors activities, walking sessions, games, and debates etc.)


**If you are ready to submit you can make your submission <u>via this link</u>**