

Incubator Project Proposal

Transdisciplinary Research for Sustainability Governance

The governance of grand sustainability challenges demands more inclusive, participatory, iterative and future-oriented research and design. Research needs to include extrapolations of current situations in a systemic way, but also needs to consider the uncertain, unknown and imaginable in order to contribute to more anticipatory and adaptive governance arrangements and interventions. In addition, increasing inequalities demand more inclusive, transparent, responsive, and reflexive research and design. This type of transformative research requires the active engaging of societal partners in all research phases and not only informing them at the very end. This means crossing boundaries, between policy silos, scientific disciplines, and between scientific knowledge and other forms of knowledge. These are core principles of transdisciplinary research.

With this incubator project, we want to further sharpen the transdisciplinary profile of the Wageningen Centre of Sustainability Governance (WCSG), strengthen the transdisciplinary capacities of (early-career) colleagues, tighten connections between the different chair groups around a community of transdisciplinary researchers, and increase the visibility of the WCSG in the international transdisciplinary research community.

Justification for the Incubator Project

Transdisciplinary research is at the core of the WCSG Mission and Strategy (WCSG research assessment 2021, p. 10). However, especially for many early-career researchers, it is not always clear how to conduct transdisciplinary research. Practical hurdles include journal preferences for traditional forms of research, motivating stakeholders to invest time and energy in an open-ended process, and to find funding for transdisciplinary endeavours, such as design sessions, workshops, living labs, or participation experiments.

With this incubator project, we therefore aim to build up a community around transdisciplinary research, channel the expertise present in the different chair groups, and to further develop the WCSG's capacities to perform this kind of research. We will work with input from two previous incubators, who we asked to endorse this incubator and participate in workshop 1 to provide the most important lessons. The incubators are:

- Towards diversity and inclusivity in sustainability governance research and teaching
- Sustainable governance talks without jargon

Involved researchers have extensive experience in conducting this form of research and are determined to build a community around interested members of the WCSG. In this sense, developing strong ties between the different chair groups within the WCSG is a primary goal of this incubator project.

Proposed activities

1. Workshops

The heart of the project is a series of four workshops (see also timeline below: Mar 2022 (Scoping the challenges – building on incubators, outline paper / WASS event; Jun 2022 (Inter-vision on empirical examples of PhD students), Sep 2022 (Conclusions), Jan 2023 (Finalizing paper and WASS event proposal)). These workshops will be organized for interested staff members, postdocs, PhDs, societal research partners that have been involved in transdisciplinary research, and decision-makers from funding organizations. In these workshops, we aim to gather experiences with previous transdisciplinary projects and start the paper and proposal writing. We aim to stimulate an exchange about encountered challenges and how to deal with them. Challenges are, for example, to be inclusive and diverse in transdisciplinary research as well as to communicate about sustainable governance without jargon. Hence, we build on work of two previous incubators.

2. **Paper writing:** *the core team of organizers (see below), supported by a research assistant, will take the lead in the paper-writing process and prepare each meeting with outlines, abstracts and a division of tasks.*
3. **Writing WASS proposal for PhD Summer school / PhD course.** *The core team of organizers (see below) will take the lead in the proposal-writing process and prepare each meeting with outlines, abstracts and a division of tasks.*

Output

1. Publication

The collaborations in the workshops will form the base for a common publication in an international, peer-reviewed journal (e.g., Environmental Science and Policy or Futures).

2. Proposal for WASS PhD Summer school or course

The collaboration will form the basis for a proposal to WASS for a PhD Summer school or course on Transdisciplinarity for Sustainability Governance Research.

Budgeting

4 workshop sessions	EUR 4 x 400 =	1,600
<i>Material and catering</i>		
Student Assistant*		
<i>Literature review, notes, writing parts of the paper</i>	EUR	3,400
Total	EUR	5,000

Involved researchers

Tamara Metze (Ass. Prof, PAP) **lead**

Sigrid Wertheim-Heck (Ass. Prof, ENP)

Maartje Poelman (Ass. Prof., CHL)

Jan Starke (PhD, PAP)

Joline Wierda (PhD, CHL)

Jillian Student (Postdoc, WIMEK & ENP)

Ayla Schwarz (Lecturer and Researcher, CHL)

Nina de Roo (Postdoc, PAP)

*Nuria Coma-Cros, MSc student (not confirmed, but we would like to ask her to be research assistant)

Endorsed by Incubator Teams:

Towards diversity and inclusivity in sustainable governance research and teaching

FNP: Verina Ingram, Marieke Meesters, Tabitha Muriuki, Josie Chambers

ENP: Annet Pauwelussen, Mary Greene, Eira Carballo Cárdenas

PAP: Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Sumit Vij

LAW: Lucila De Almeida, Alessia d'Amico

Sustainable governance talks without jargon

FNP: Tabitha Muriuki

ENP: Sayel Cortes, Helena Solman, Pamela Bachmann, Nila Kamil

PAP: Yannick Buitenhuis

Timeline

