

MSC Governance of Sustainability Transformations Programme

1. Profile of the programme

Transformative changes in the way we think, organize, decide and act are necessary to address current and future sustainability challenges related to climate, water, energy, food and biodiversity. But how to bring such fundamental changes about? Can governments, businesses and civil society organize or steer these transformations? And how to do so in the face of growing inequality, urbanization, digitalization, and the rise of populism for example? These are some of the big governance questions that are at the core of this program, which aims to educate future leaders in governments, NGOs and academia. You will develop in-depth understanding on the social, political and legal dimensions of transformative governance and put this to work in designs of and negotiations over novel governance arrangements. The program's embeddedness in one of the world's leading life sciences universities creates opportunities for the development of true interdisciplinary skills and science for impact, which are needed to address today's and future grand sustainability challenges.

2. Unique selling points

- Join an advanced social science program that applies life science knowledge to the causes and consequences of current and future global sustainability challenges in food, climate, energy and biodiversity systems
- Become an expert in advanced theories on governance and transformative change processes across different governance scales and regional contexts
- Develop state-of-the-art research skills and competences, including data science, to unpack the complexity of today's sustainability challenges and analyze the functioning, design, and implications of sustainability governance arrangements
- Learn hands-on skills to develop solutions and negotiate transformative sustainability processes to contribute towards a more sustainable future.
- Join an interdisciplinary and real-life consultancy project to solve real world problems

3. WU-BSc-programmes with unconditional admission

Students from the WUR BSc programme BEB have unconditional admission to this MSc programme

4. Main target groups next to unconditionally admitted students

Social science students with a BSc with affinity of sustainability issues and want to specialize and deepen their social science knowledge and skills on this topic. Open to environmental science students with a social science specialization in their bachelor. Completed bachelor degree in a relevant social science field, such as human geography, sociology, political science and public policy, organisational science, law, international relations, development studies and anthropology. Any deficiencies can be covered by inclusion of relevant courses in the free choice part of the BSc-programme (e.g. by including a WUR BSc minor) or by following a pre master programme.

5. Admission requirements for students not unconditionally admissible

- a. A minimum of 60 ECTS in social science courses in the previous BSc
- b. A minimum number of 5 credits in Math and/or Statistics
- c. A GPA for the BSc study programme of at least 70% of the maximum scale
- d. Fluency in English, both written and spoken.

6. Information on the five specialization courses

Logic of the specialization: Students will be reflecting on the grand challenges of governing sustainability transformations in course #1. These challenges are then being unpacked through three subsequent courses: in course #2 by adopting a 'top down' regulatory perspective, a 'bottom up' societal perspective in course #3 and a mixed governance perspective in #4. The course #5 brings these courses together and takes a solutions orientated perspective by critically reflecting on the research and design of governance arrangements for sustainability transformations.

1. Grand challenges for the governance of sustainability transformations (6 ECTS, new course, compulsory, period 1)

Many of the sustainability grand challenges such as biodiversity, climate change and food challenges require fundamentally different ways of understanding, deciding, and acting. In this course, you will advance your social science perspective on the causes, consequences and interdependencies of sustainability challenges, building on life science knowledge. You will be introduced to and critically appraise state-of-the-art transformational theories. You will reflect on the uncertainty and complexity of sustainability challenges and how to confront this via legal, regulatory and governance arrangements. Moreover, you will reflect on ethical and moral challenges, including equity and justice inherent to system transformations. This course sets the scope for the rest of the program.

2. Transnational Environmental Law and Regulation (6 ECTS, new course, compulsory, period 1)

Law can act as an instrument of transformation but also be a barrier to transformative sustainability practices. In this course you will develop a deep understanding of the implications of the transforming legal landscape related to food, climate, water, energy and biodiversity conservation. You will learn how to analyze and critically appraise the characteristics of sustainability challenges that make them difficult to regulate, specifically through law but also regulation and policy more broadly. In addition, you will be trained in legal reasoning and argumentation in order to effectively engage with the law that regulates these issues at the local, national and international level. This includes the application of legal instruments and provide legal advice to relevant actors involved in sustainability governance.

3. Transformative sustainability practices for systemic change (6 ECTS, new course, compulsory, period 2)

Sustainability transformations are ultimately the result of uncountable behavioral changes that individuals, groups, companies and other actors make on a daily basis. In other words, transformations are social phenomena, made up of shared (bottom-up) practices that are shaped by meanings, knowledge, competences, norms and goals. In this course, you are confronted with cutting-edge theories and concepts that unpack the interaction between everyday social practices, transformations, systemic change and governance. You will learn advanced qualitative methodologies to examine changes to practices and their effect on system level change. Based on this, you design new sustainability trajectories towards sustainable urban environments, circular food systems and biodiversity conservation.

4. Advanced Comparative Public Governance for Sustainability Transformations (6 ECTS, new course, compulsory, period 2).

How sustainability transformations are governed by governmental and non-governmental actors is shaped by existing public governance systems. For example, how do bureaucracies deal with risk and uncertainty, what regulatory instruments are in place to govern transformation, and how can societal actors influence these processes? In this course, you will use advanced public governance theories to critically reflect on factors and

processes that shape the depth, scope and speed of sustainability transformations. You will apply text-based data science methods to empirically investigate processes of transformational change related to food, energy and climate change across different regional contexts and levels of government.

5. Design and research for transformative sustainability governance (6 ECTS, new course, compulsory, period 5)

This course brings together the different theoretical perspectives and empirical knowledge on the grand sustainability challenges offered in the specialization and adopts a solutions-oriented perspective. Through interactive sessions, you will design, negotiate and reflect on novel governance arrangements and interventions to accelerate sustainability transformations. Based on this, you will design the building blocks for transdisciplinary research in the field of sustainability governance. Throughout the course, you will critically reflect on your role as leader of change in transformation processes, and on the ethical and moral dilemmas inherent to uncertain and complex system transformations.

AMC/European Workshop (P6)

We propose to offer the students the option to choose the traditional AMC or follow the European Workshop Environmental Sciences and Management. The European workshop offers the students a unique possibility to work on an interdisciplinary project and travel abroad for the assignment. Students are overwhelmingly enthusiastic of this course.

7. Chair groups that offer a major thesis in this programme

Public Administration and Policy (PAP), Environmental Policy (ENP), Law Group (LAW)