

Governance

(20889) - BOTTOM-UP ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

Sohre Annika¹; Iljana Schubert¹; Darja Mihailova^{1,2}; Adam X. Hearn^{1,2}; Antonia Kaiser^{1,3}; Simon Sohre⁴

1 - University of Basel, Sustainability Research Group; 2 - EU Horizon2020 SMART-BEEJS project; 3 - Department of Socioeconomics, Agroscope, Tänikon 1, 8356 Ettenhausen, Switzerland; 4 - Protestant University of Applied Sciences

Background and objectives

It is commonly accepted that a sustainability transition to a low-carbon system can only be achieved through efforts at different levels and scales, i.e., policy instruments from public authorities, initiatives from business actors and civic initiatives at local, regional, national and international levels. Thus, transitions, for instance through behaviour change, cannot be levered only through "top-down", i.e. governmental hierarchical governance modes but also calls for non-governmental actors (NGOs, grassroots, civil society, science, smaller businesses etc.) at a micro or meso (e.g. local/regional; individual/small scale societal) level and also for "softer types" of instruments, like information, nudging or feedback. This "bottom-up governance" (BuG) includes arrangements with complimentary and targeted interventions (policy dimension), and also differentiated politics and polity arrangements, i.e. a diversity of governance actors, their interests and constellations, as well as structural frame conditions.

However, despite a big body of literature contributing to a better understanding of participation and engagement of different actors, there is still a gap in understanding how different bottom-up actors, i.e. not only early adopters but also different groups within "the majority" of individuals as well as business actors or initiatives in the different fields of sustainability (energy, climate, food, mobility, social issues/poverty) can be engaged with lasting effects. For this to be achieved, disciplinary boundaries and black boxes have to be overcome and more inter- and transdisciplinary research has to happen to integrate the multiple factors of ECB-related BuG.

In this session we will put the spotlight on different BuG approaches from different interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspectives. In particular, it will be discussed how to engage local actors, build knowledge, and support networks among existing bottom-up renewable energy initiatives. Furthermore, we will shed a light on how to set up inclusive, participatory local districts in terms of considering justice requirements. Regarding engagement of citizens, we will also discuss how to deal with societal tensions, particularly between rural and urban populations. In addition, we investigate how to engage individuals in sustainable relevant practices (e.g. carsharing practices) and how to engage societal groups as enablers to set up collective learning processes. Finally, we explore different perceptions of the question of individual versus societal responsibilities within sustainability transitions.

Presenters/preliminary titles

- Darja Mihailova "Mainstreaming energy citizenship through research: Horizon2020 projects as actors in strategic niche management"
- Adam Hearn "Inclusive low-carbon transitions? Positive Energy Districts and Energy Poverty"
- Antonia Kaiser "Sustainable agricultural development through the lens of rural-urban divide"
- Iljana Schubert "User-based redistribution in a free-floating carsharing scheme"
- Simon Sohre "Collective learning processes by engaging students in sustainability cooperation projects"
- Annika Sohre "Type casting of responsibility in sustainability transitions – Lessons learnt from Covid-19 and climate crisis"

Significance for the advancement of People-Environment relations

The session addresses different person-community-institution relations with a focus on bottom-up governance arrangements. Particularly, we investigate how to engage different actors, ranging from individuals in different areas, focusing on different practices, to different societal stakeholder groups. We also include justice, network and community-based considerations. Moreover, we explicitly focus on people-society connections regarding questions of responsibility and collective learning processes.

Palavras-chave : Engagement, Bottom-up governance, Sustainability transitions, Participation of citizens, stakeholders, Individual-society