

Call for abstracts:

"Social innovations in energy transition through transdisciplinary research"

The Leibniz Research Alliance is hosting an international conference entitled "**Breaking the Rules! Energy Transitions as Social Innovations**" that will take place on **June 14th - 15th, 2018**, at **WZB Berlin Social Science Center**.

The conference invites international scholars to discuss social innovations in the context of energy transitions, and to spark a debate about their meaning for theories of social innovation, for questions of energy governance, for the evolution of energy innovations, and how they challenge existing power structures in the energy sector. The conference is guided by four overarching themes, each of which will be explored in at least two conference sessions. For a detailed overview of conference themes and sessions please [click here](#).

This is a call for abstracts for the session entitled "**Social innovations in energy transition through transdisciplinary research**"

Abstracts should not exceed **500 words**, and must be submitted in **English language** to Leslie Quitzow (leslie.quitzow@wzb.eu + CC: sebastian.rogga@zalf.de) **by March 1st, 2018**.

Please be sure to include your name, institution, and the name of the conference session that you are applying for. Please direct all questions regarding the session design, presentation format, expected content etc. to **sebastian.rogga@zalf.de**. All questions regarding overall conference organization may be directed to Leslie Quitzow.

Successful applicants will be notified by March 15th, 2018. Presenters are also invited to submit their full papers after the conference for possible publication in a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal (the journal will be announced in March). Those interested in participating in this process are asked to submit their full papers **by July 15th, 2018** for review (one month after the conference). The special issue will be published in mid-2019.

Kind regards,
Sebastian Rogga, Sara Reimann, and Martina Hülz

Session outline for the conference "Breaking the Rules! Energy Transition as Social Innovations"

Session chairs: Sebastian Rogga; Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF), Sara Reimann, Martina Hülz; Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL)

"Social innovations in energy transition through transdisciplinary research"

The demand for societal transformation towards sustainability has been increasingly discussed over the last two decades and has evolved into a major issue in politics and science. Transformation is considered to involve comprehensive changes in behaviour and practices by a multitude of actors and institutions, which requires knowledge to not only understand the interplay of current drivers and inhibitors of global change but also to develop strategies and solutions that lead to desired future development (Zscheischler et al. 2017).

Collaborative approaches such as transdisciplinarity research (TDR) are considered promising means of initiating social innovations in the current course of action. While still debated, TDR is understood

as a mutual research process that involves scientists from different disciplines as well as non-scientific stakeholders alike. TDR processes start with a “real-world problem” and aim at producing integrative knowledge that tackle the before defined issue of societal relevance (Bergmann et al. 2010; Jahn 2013; Zscheischler & Rogga 2015). Even though TDR projects slowly move towards mainstream in the field of sustainability sciences, discussions on its potential, effects and malfunctions are ongoing and exchange on empirical studies is much needed (Weith & Danielzyk 2016).

Contemporary transitions towards more sustainable energy systems are deemed to be tasks of societal relevance and invoke a variety of (partly contradicting) interests, techniques, instruments and regulations. Over the last few years, municipalities and regions throughout Germany have set ambitious goals for the reorganization of the regional energy supply (e.g. in the network “100ee Regionen”). How this transformation should take place in concrete terms, plans and appropriate instruments has remained unresolved in many cases. However, it is often stipulated that a purely technologically driven transformation without participation and social innovations could not take place (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012).

As of late, transdisciplinary research projects address the particular issue of regional energy transitions in which they combine different disciplinary perspectives and expert’s knowledge (professional experts and laypersons) that are further developed into research results that may have the potential for social innovations. Some projects, as in the case of the current funding programme “Innovation Groups for Sustainable Land Management”¹ (2013-2020), even incorporate innovation concepts into their research design with the goal of increased dissemination potential of research outputs into society.

In the session, we want to elaborate experiences, potentials but also shortcomings of transdisciplinary research approaches in the context of energy transitions. We welcome contributions of ongoing and finished projects and provide a platform for success stories, failed stories and open questions. With respect to the topic of the conference, we are especially interested in contributions in the social innovation context in two ways: one, the potential of TDR in pushing forward social innovation in energy transitions; two, the potential of TDR as a form of social innovation in contemporary science.

Reference list:

Bergmann, M., Jahn, T., Knobloch, T., Krohn, W., Pohl, C. & Schramm, E. (2010): Methoden transdisziplinärer Forschung – Ein Überblick mit Anwendungsbeispielen. – Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main: 293 S.

Jahn, T. (2013): Transdisziplinarität – Forschungsmodus für nachhaltiges Forschen. – Nova Acta Leopoldina NF 117, Nr. 398: 65–75.

Seyfang, G. & Haxeltine, A. (2012): Growing grassroots innovations: exploring the role of community-based initiatives in governing sustainable energy transitions. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 2012 (30): 381-400.

Weith, T. & Danielzyk, R. (2016): Transdisziplinäre Forschung – Mehrwert für die Raumwissenschaften. Fünf Thesen zur Diskussion – *Nachrichten der ARL*, 46 (2): 8-12

Zscheischler, J. & Rogga, S. (2015): Transdisciplinarity in land use science – A review of concepts, empirical findings and current practices. – *Futures* (65): 28–44.

Zscheischler, J., Rogga, S., & Busse, M. (2017): The Adoption and Implementation of Transdisciplinary Research in the Field of Land-Use Science—A Comparative Case Study. *Sustainability*, 9 (11), 1926.

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