



MSc Thesis Opportunity – A systematic literature review of the impact of transdisciplinary research

Background. Transformation of agriculture towards a more sustainable, just and resilient system is one of the biggest societal challenges of the coming decades. To support this transformation, science needs to generate societally-relevant knowledge on agricultural systems that can directly feed into the (urgently) required action. But current research on sustainable agriculture often falls short, both in addressing the complexity of the interlinked social and environmental problems in agricultural systems, but also in generating knowledge that can directly support the knowledge needs of decision-makers during this transformation process. To close this knowledge-to-action gap, we need nothing less than novel scientific approaches that are able to effectively address the societal knowledge needs and support societal transformation. Transdisciplinary (TD) research is often proposed as a key pre-requisite for more transformative sustainability research. But what do we actually know about the impact of TD research? Does empirical evidence support the claims of TD research that it can contribute to closing this knowledge-to-action gap?

Thesis question. This thesis intends to carry out a systematic literature review to assess the existing empirical evidence about the impact of TD research. The thesis will systematically synthesize and analyze the literature on TD research impact, trying to understand (1) how existing studies have examined TD research impact, and (2) what type of impacts of TD research these studies have been able to show, and which ones they have not been able to show.

Thesis requirements. Students should be interested in sustainability topics in the agri-food system as well as in interdisciplinary analytical approaches. The student is expected to carry out a systematic literature search and should thus be comfortable both with the concepts and theories behind TD research, as well as have high proficiency in reading and critically evaluating academic literature.

Further readings.

- Schneider, F., Giger, M., Harari, N., Moser, S., Oberlack, C., Providoli, I., ... & Zimmermann, A. (2019). Transdisciplinary co-production of knowledge and sustainability transformations: Three generic mechanisms of impact generation. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 102, 26-35.
- Walter, A. I., Helgenberger, S., Wiek, A., & Scholz, R. W. (2007). Measuring societal effects of transdisciplinary research projects: design and application of an evaluation method. *Evaluation and program planning*, 30(4), 325-338.

How to apply. Please send a short letter of motivation, your CV and transcripts to Jun.-Prof. Dr. Verena Seufert (verena.seufert@uni-hohenheim.de).