

**15th Annual International Sustainable Development Research Conference
July 5-8, 2009**

***"Taking up the Global Challenge: Analysing the implementation of
innovations and governance for Sustainable Development"***

CALL FOR PAPERS

Track nr 1A: *Sustainability Science: Problem definition, goal formation, and assessment*

Track chairs: Dr. Jeroen van der Sluijs (Utrecht University, The Netherlands),
Dr. Arnim Wiek (Arizona State University, USA)

Goals and Objectives

One of the core challenges of sustainability science is to bridge the gap between analytical and normative knowledge. Other than traditional academic fields, sustainability science goes beyond the question how our social-ecological systems have evolved (past), are currently functioning (present), and might further develop (future). As a problem- and solution-oriented endeavor, sustainability science has to address the normative question of how these systems *ought to* develop and be developed in a way that would balance socio-economic needs and environmental capacities. This quest is challenged by critical issues of uncertainty, dissent, and asymmetrical power relations. Sustainability scientists open the ivory tower of science and engage with a broad range of stakeholders in order to cope with these challenges. This session explicitly addresses the normative dimension of sustainability science in a wide range of topics in order to map and critically evaluate success and failure of approaches to contribute to the sustainability transitions our societies face.

Topics

We invite original and innovative contributions addressing, for instance, the following questions:

- *Problem Definition.* What are evolving key problems of sustainability? What are new and robust approaches to jointly define these problems? How can we escape the dominating scientific pattern to studying problems rather than solving them? How can we sufficiently account for conflicting perspectives and values among stakeholders? How can we cope with particulate interests, power, hidden agendas, mistrust, and other obstacles in collective problem definition?
- *Goal formation.* What are recently elicited and constructed goals and principles of sustainability? What are innovative and participatory ways of formulating these goals? How to overcome inconsistencies among goals and to construct coherent sets of goals? What are new approaches to conceptualize synergies among different social practices to support win-win-win situations for sustainability? How can we successfully deal with the uncertainty inherent in projections that motivate goals – and how can we counter the strategic use of uncertainty to avoid setting goals at all?
- *Assessment.* What are innovative approaches and methods to assess the state and development of socio-ecological systems regarding

sustainability? In how far are different approaches required to evaluate plans, strategies, and measures affecting and transforming these systems? What are robust assessment approaches that account for social and cultural diversity as well as for different stakeholder groups with uneven cognitive and communicative capacities)? How do we elicit the preferences of stakeholders that are not informed, misinformed, unavailable, or not interested? What are the normative implications when we rely our assessment on allegedly 'neutral' systems approaches such as vulnerability, resilience, or robustness?

- *Bridging streams of research.* How can we transparently integrate normative aspects of problem definition, goal formation, and assessment with analytical aspects (observations, experiments, surveys, etc.)? How can we innovatively and meaningfully link analysis, scenarios, assessments, and strategy building?

We are looking for rigorous contributions preferably combining conceptual reasoning and empirical evidence.

Format

In order to ensure that each abstract conveys the main aspects of the respective research, we strongly encourage interested researchers to cover the majority of the following issues in his/her submission:

- the context of the problem addressed (motivation)
- the research gap (embedding in the literature) and the research questions
- the methods/approach you applied in your research
- the key results and conclusions (contributions to sustainability science)

This recommendation applies to both empirical as well as conceptual/theoretical papers.

Please look at the detailed instructions and deadlines for submitting your abstract and paper, using the [Submission & guidelines](#) button at the left side.