

Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

Course Syllabus

Seminar Perspectives on Narratives in Sustainability Transformations
Self-learning course Master seminar | 5 Creditpoints | English (and German Examples)

Aims

The seminar on narratives in sustainability transformations provides master's students with a comprehensive understanding of different approaches and perspectives on narratives in sustainability science and transformation research.

Structure and contents

The seminar covers an overview of research fields and the role of narratives in transformation processes. Students are encouraged to reflect on the different perspectives in a socio-constructivist research mode and adopt an analytical perspective to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of sustainability transformations.

Beside this Syllabus and a short video description ("Introduction to the course material", [Video 1](#)), we offer three different types of material:

- Part I Integrative theoretical foundations with five presentations to gain profound knowledge about narratives in sustainability transformations.
- Part II Perspectives on Narratives - From Theory to Practice with insights in seven different projects working with narratives in sustainability transformations in manifold ways.
- Part III Case Studies: Apply your knowledge in two different case studies

The following descriptions give a more detailed overview of the material:

Part I: Integrative Theoretical Foundation

Lecture 1 | Introduction to the course material [Video 1](#)

Lecture 2 | Introduction to sustainability transitions [Video 2](#)

Lecture 3 | Psychological challenges in transitions communication [Video 3](#)

Lecture 4 | Understanding narratives as communicative action [Video 4](#)

Lecture 5 | Purpose of the course: Understanding and creating [Video 5](#)

Lecture 6 | SusTelling: The act of telling a story for sustainability [Video 6](#)

Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

Course Syllabus

Part II: Perspectives on Narratives-From Theory to Practice

Interview 1 | My Balcony Network (Helena Trenks, ITAS) [Interview 1](#)

Interview 2 | Mobility Transition City Wolfsburg (Tobi Rosswog) [Interview 2](#)

Interview 3 | Neue Narrative Publishing House (Emma Marx) [Interview 3](#)

Interview 4 | Scientist Rebellion (Dr. Lorenzo M. Perrone, AIP) [Interview 4](#)

Interview 5 | Circulus Research Project (Prof. Dr. Sina Leipold, UFZ Leipzig & University of Jena) [Interview 5](#)

Interview 6 | Land Magazin (Christiane Langrock-Kögel, Kombüse GmbH) [Interview 6](#)

Interview 7 | Tex3 Experiment (Dr. Volker Stelzer, ITAS) [Interview 7](#)

Part III: Apply your Knowledge in two different Case Studies

Case 1 | Your Balcony Network. Engaging citizens and creating community through energy production [Case 1](#)

Case 2 | Mobility Transitions: Cycling Referendum in Berlin, Germany [Case 2](#)

Self-learning course

PART I: The lectures are designed for self-organized learning. You can pause, rewind and re-watch sections.

PART II: Use the interviews, case studies, and readings and interviews as additional material to deepen your understanding.

PART III: Organize a learning group to discuss the cases and your experiences and learning outcomes.

Reading List

Articles

Luederitz, C., Abson, D. J., Audet, R., & Lang, D. J. (2017). Many pathways toward sustainability: not conflict but co-learning between transition narratives. *Sustainability Science*, 12, 393-407.

Veland, S., Scoville-Simonds, M., Gram-Hanssen, I., Schorre, A. K., El Khoury, A., Nordbø, M. J., ... & Bjørkan, M. (2018). Narrative matters for sustainability: the transformative role of

Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

Course Syllabus

storytelling in realizing 1.5 C futures. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 31, 41-47.

Wittmayer, J.M., J. Backhaus, F. Avelino, B. Pel, T. Strasser, I. Kunze & L. Zuijderwijk. (2019). Narratives of Change: How Social Innovation Initiatives Construct Societal Transformation“. *Futures* 112: 102433.

Books

Fischer, D., Fücker, S., Selm, H., & Sundermann, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Narrating sustainability through storytelling*. Taylor & Francis.

Lejano, R., Ingram, M., & Ingram, H. (2013). *The power of narrative in environmental networks*. MIT Press.

Mayer, F. (2014). *Narrative politics: stories and collective action*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Meretoja, H. (2020). A dialogics of counter-narratives. In: *Routledge Handbook of counter-narratives*. Routledge, 30-42.

Molthan-Hill, P., Luna, H., Wall, T., Puntha, H., & Baden, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Storytelling for sustainability in higher education: an educator's handbook*. Routledge

Roe, E. (1994). *Narrative policy analysis: theory and practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Additional material

[SusTelling E-learning Module](#)

Learning Objectives

Subject competence: Students ...

- ... are able to distinguish and differentiate between different understandings of narratives.
- ... are familiar with disciplinary perspectives on narratives in transformation processes.
- ... are able to recognize values and beliefs in narratives.
- ... develop a deeper understanding of onto-epistemological questions in research and scientific work in general (from a realism mode of science to a socio-constructivist mode, recognizing different perspectives on realities).

Methods competence: Students ...

- ... can understand that reality not simply is, but is constructed in different perspectives.
- ... acknowledge the importance of being able to comprehend different perspectives on the

Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

Course Syllabus

same issue.

... can analyze narratives and frame (subject-specific) narratives.

Personal competence: Students ...

... understand the importance of narratives, even for their own arguments.

... reflect on their own understandings of reality, truth, and develop a critical understanding of research.

... can understand conflicts of value and beliefs in handling narratives.