

PhD course, 3 ECTS

# Niches in transition arenas: Critical perspectives

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The course is coordinated by Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS) and it will take place in Lund, Sweden, 29-31 August 2016.

## 1. Course description

In the context of the multi-level perspective, socio-technological niche experiments are seen as bottom-up governance initiatives intended to challenge regime practices and achieve sustainability goals. The transition management (TM) literature distinguishes so-called transition arenas, where actors can reflect on the outcomes of each experiment in order to acquire knowledge that can lead to a new perspective on a transition issue. TM understands these arenas as involving visionary frontrunners and their actor-networks to create new narratives to the evolving scientific agendas and on-the-ground experiments. This process is assumed to lead to new institutional structures and enabling administrative tools.

Nevertheless, the critics interpret this as a technocratic vision. They point to challenges in terms of leadership, the clash of interests and values in prioritizing sustainability visions and *naïve* optimism about confronting the deep structure of regimes through adaptive and reflexive governance activities at micro level. Therefore, they call for a broader political project wherein reflexive governance can be practiced by social groups and movement lobbying to get their voices heard and prioritized by political and economic elites.

The course provides PhD candidates with a critical perspective on niche characteristics in transition arenas and an in-depth investigation of the “socio” part of “socio-technological” systems, in order to capture and analyze persistent problems, especially in the contemporary context of cities of the global South.

## 2. Individual learning outcomes

On completion of the course, the student shall demonstrate:

### *Knowledge and understanding*

- both general and directed knowledge of transition concepts and frameworks that are used and/or applied in research practices
- a robust understanding of social and political barriers to the niche experiments, and
- a profound understanding of critical perspectives in identifying and reframing socio-technological problems in terms of dynamic social and political systems.

### *Competence and skills*

- an ability to integrate critical-thinking and problem-solving approaches in the conceptualization and operationalization of transition arenas
- competencies in evaluating the adequacy of proposed options in up-scaling niche experiments, and
- an ability to confidently discuss ranges of participation in transition arenas.

### 3. Registration

The course is open to PhD candidates in the natural and social sciences as well as researchers in the field of transition studies. The course will be held in English.

Participation in the course is free of charge. Please note that participants are responsible to make their own travel arrangements and all transportation and accommodation costs should be covered by the PhD student or the affiliated university department.

**You can register to the course by sending your CV to: [maryam.nastar@lucsus.lu.se](mailto:maryam.nastar@lucsus.lu.se) , no later than **15 June 2016**.**

If you wish to cancel your course registration, please do so no later than **5 weeks** prior to course start.

### 4. Teaching and assessment

#### Learning activities

The course consists of lectures and seminars, and a set of mandatory readings, which are to be completed by participants prior to course events. Leading experts in the field will hold the lectures and seminars. Course participants are expected to be active in classroom discussions.

#### Assessment

The course assessment is in the form of active student participation in lectures and seminars and writing assignments. The writing assignments include a:

- two- to three-page reflection paper, to be submitted prior to the course seminars. This should present initial reflections related to the course literature, and indicate the direction and substance of the course paper. The papers will be discussed at a seminar during the course.
- final course paper of approximately 5,000 words (to be submitted two weeks after the course). This should present the linkage and application of transition management concepts to specific topics related to students' PhD research.

#### Grades

The grades awarded are Pass and Fail.

#### Course coordinator

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#### Course Lecturers

Prof. Frans Berkhout, Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy, King's College London (*confirmed*)

Prof. Lennart Olsson, LUCSUS - Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (*confirmed*)

Dr. Maryam Nastar, LUCSUS - Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (*confirmed*)

Dr. Barry Ness, LUCSUS - Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (*to be confirmed*)

## 5. Schedule

<b>Day 1</b> <b>29 August</b>	9:15 – 9:30 Welcome and Introduction 9:30 – 10:30 Lecture ( <b>Transition management</b> ) Coffee Break 10:45 – 12 Lecture ( <b>Socio-technological niches in practice</b> ) Lunch Break 13:15 – 14:45 Lecture ( <b>Critical perspectives on transition management</b> ) Coffee Break 15:00 – 17:00 Seminar based on Day 1 Literature
<b>Day 2</b> <b>30 August</b>	9:15 – 10:30 Lecture ( <b>Politics of transition arenas</b> ) Coffee Break 10:45 - 12:00 Lecture ( <b>Socio-technical regimes: insights from political ecology</b> ) Lunch Break 13:15 – 15:00 Role Play Coffee Break 15:15 – 17:00 Seminar based on Day 2 Literature
<b>Day 3</b> <b>31 August</b>	9:15 – 10:30 Lecture ( <b>The ranges of participation</b> ) Coffee Break 10:45 - 12:00 Seminar based on Day 3 Literature 12:00 – 12:30 Sum up and feedback session 12:30 Farwell Lunch

### Venue:

Room: 117, Wrangel building, Biskopsgatan 5, Lund, Sweden

## 6. Literature

To be announced.