

Emotions in Justice, Power and Transformative Action.

Feeling Transition Pain in Sustainability Transitions.

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Project description

To set the scene for this Assistantship, we would like to begin by asking you to imagine the following:

It's 2024. We as Dutch residents are not allowed to consume CO2-intensive luxury products such as meat, dairy, coffee, and chocolate anymore. As we need to cut back CO2 and nitrogen emissions to prevent planetary collapse, we as a country are not allowed to emit CO2 and nitrogen beyond a certain budget. Because of this, the number of Dutch farmers is being halved, and those remaining are not allowed to produce any meat or dairy products anymore. Some farmers and citizens have accepted that this is the way to go, they see it is the only good option to work towards a more sustainable future. However, most farmers and citizens have raised their voices against this, not wanting to give up their current practices or not being able to break with their daily routines. The government seems to be stuck in their top-down steering processes and is not capable of dealing with these dividing perspectives and the emotional debates nor are they able to provide guidance to the people that feel lost.

How would you feel about this? And, more importantly, how would you go about this?

Not only since the latest IPCC report, we know that we as societies have to change our current consumption and production habits drastically. If we want to continue living on a livable planet, we must stop the way we currently consume and produce food, mobility, energy, etc. We know that the habits, practices, and routines that brought us exactly where we are now are also the ones we find hardest to let go of.

I argue that one reason for this is the **inherently painful process of letting go** of the cherished systems that **we gained from intensively** in the past. **Letting go** can be an **emotionally painful** process that also raises different **questions of justice, power, or legitimacy** and might translate into societal group dynamics such as protests, societal segregation, or political radicalization. Who decides what must be phased out and how? And who decides what is relevant enough to continue? And relevant for whom?

If you are interested in this topic, you are invited to support us in our transdisciplinary research project on **emotions in sustainability transitions, transition pain and designing spaces for letting go in sustainability transitions, with a particular focus on the Dutch food and agriculture transition**. As we believe this assistantship is not a one-way street, we will offer you insights into the whole research process, from the design to the execution and the analysis. Within the project, you have some possibilities in deciding on which activities are most interesting and relevant for you and in which you want to develop your knowledge and skills further. In this project, you are invited to:

- a) support us in **screening literature** from a variety of disciplines (sociology of emotions, change management, protest research, design studies, feminist studies), to identify relevant concepts, frameworks and theories that are helpful in better understanding emotions in sustainability transitions and connecting frameworks and theories from other disciplines to sustainability transitions studies.
- b) support us in **conducting interviews and workshops** with stakeholders from the food/agriculture sector (e.g. farmers, protest movements, citizen councils, ...) to investigate their stories of embodied emotions and how they relate to perceived injustices in the ongoing transition-in-the-making.
- c) support us in **designing spaces for letting go** in which we use insights from design studies to create spaces for meaningful interaction rituals for increasing emotional energy, e.g. designing a funeral for individual meat consumption.

Note: activities need to be primarily research-focused

Make sure to include information on how the assistantship may be affected by the situation with Covid-19 (for instance, the balance between lab work and working from home, the frequency of Teams meetings)

We currently don't see that the Covid-19 pandemic will affect the assistantship. In the unlikely event that we will have another pandemic, all interviews, desk research, and even workshops can be conducted online.

Job requirements

The most important job requirement is that you are interested and motivated to accept the challenge of entering a rather under-researched topic in a transdisciplinary setting, which will ask much flexibility and learning new methods and tools. The ability and willingness to engage respectfully with stakeholders and an open-minded, curious and pro-active mindset are also needed. It would also be nice if you have a strong affinity to the Dutch food and agricultural sector (e.g. family or work background in farming, etc.) and are fluent in Dutch. We are looking forward to getting to know you!