



Research for Sustainability Transformation

Workshop SUD 2026

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Facilitator and Co-Facilitator



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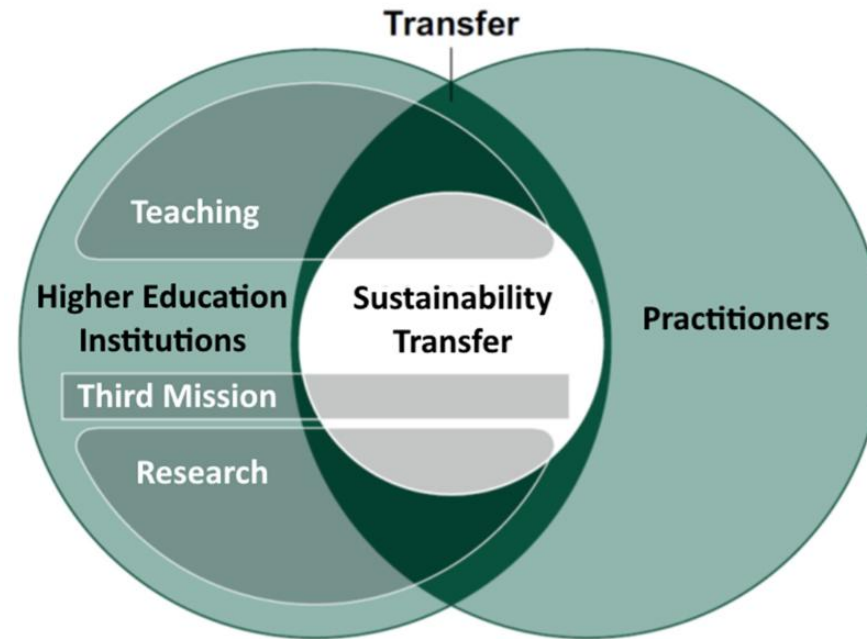
Head of Sustainable Development in Research and
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Transfer happens when researcher and practitioners cooperate



The three missions of a university

1. **Teaching:** educating students and developing skills.
2. **Research:** generating new knowledge and innovation.
3. **Third Mission:** transferring knowledge and collaborating with society to address real-world challenges.



The Third Mission = third core function of universities alongside teaching and research

Who is in the room



- Name
- Institution, role
- A transformative research project that you have been part of or heard from and what was that about

Three main aspects of a holistic approach for transformative sustainability research



- 1) **Ambition:** Clear outline of the underlying problem and how the research approach contributes to a transformative structural change in society.
- 2) **Cooperation:** co-create research project with diverse stakeholders: companies, NGOs, civil society and state actors to ensure its relevance for concrete transformation
- 3) **Real-world testing:** Testing solutions in real-world contexts (e.g. living labs), include this phase in proposals and remunerate practitioners for their contributions

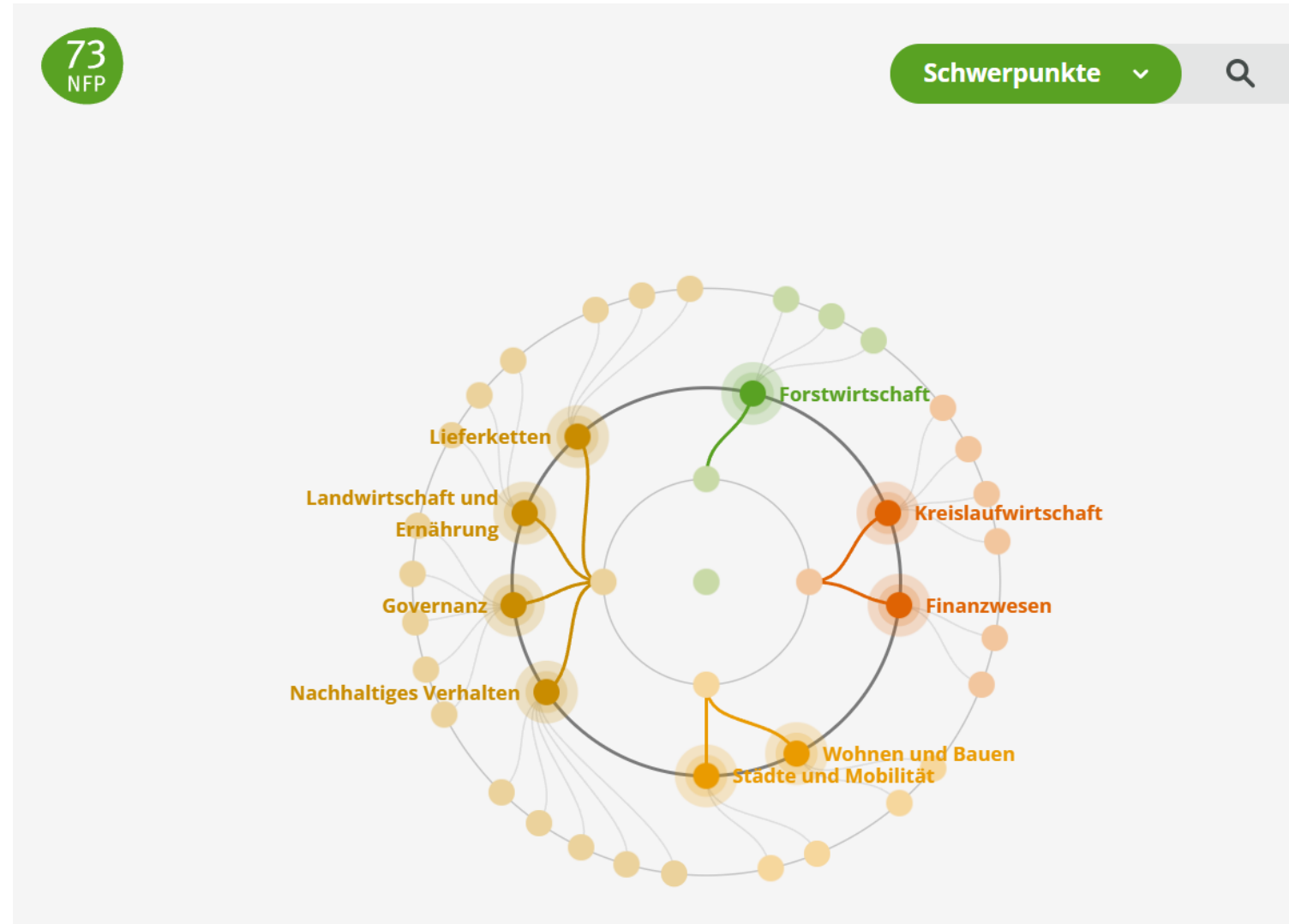
My personal experience



+ good intentions

Steering committee vs
sounding board

- “end-of-pipe” inclusion of
practitioners



Real-World-Laboratory Jurapark Aargau

The Real-World Laboratory Jurapark Aargau brings together residents, practitioners, and researchers to **develop and test solutions for sustainable regional development**.

The thematic foci lie on real-world experiments in **water management, climate adaptation and circular economy**.

The Real-World Lab Jurapark Aargau is a joint initiative led by ETH Zurich and the Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL in close collaboration with Jurapark Aargau and a range of regional, national partners and national research institutes.

CEDD-Agro-Eco-Clim

The collaborative initiative between the University of Neuchâtel and the Fondation rurale interjurassienne **places the active involvement of practice partners at the centre of its approach**.

It involves stakeholders such as individual farmers, farmers' associations, and cantonal authorities.

Its overarching aim is to support the **development of sustainable agroecological farming systems in the Jura region through participatory and transdisciplinary collaboration with farmers**.

Input Jeannette

Discussion in Groups



3 groups – you can choose the topic (see next slide) 20'

Exchange on your experiences, prepare to share 3 main aspects to the group 10'

How can research have a relevant impact on sustainability transformation?



- 1 What does meaningful collaboration with practitioners look like?
What is needed to make it work?
- 2 What are the key levers for translating research findings
into sustained change beyond the project or intervention?
- 3 How can research contribute to institutionalization or adaptation of results?
For example through changes in regulations, standards, organisational
practices or professional norms?

1

What does meaningful collaboration with practitioners look like?
What is needed to make it work?

1)

2)

3)

2

What are the key levers for translating research findings into sustained change beyond the project or intervention?

1)

2)

3)

3

How can research contribute to institutionalization or adaptation of results?
For example through changes in regulations, standards, organisational practices or professional norms?

1)

2)

3)



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Recommendations



1. **Strategy:** Development and implementation of a third mission strategy on a national level by swissuniversities and at individual university level
2. **Framework conditions:** expand funding structures, resources and cross-university collaboration to strengthen the third mission, and in particular transfer and cooperation projects for the sustainability transformation; in state research and innovation funding, specifically promote transfer and cooperation projects for the sustainability transformation
3. **Approaches and projects:** start from a relevant sustainability challenge and tackle, implement and further develop it in an ambitious and scalable manner
4. **Understanding of transfer:** develop a transfer mindset at universities; involve practice partners right from the design stage and cooperate on an equal footing; strive for co-creation
5. **Students:** involve them more closely; involve more students through links with practical modules and utilize these for the practical acquisition of knowledge and the development of students' skills; harness students' potential and creativity through student projects