

Call for 1 MSc research project

Development of a “Transition Niche Potential” (TNP) evaluation protocol

Requisite: Student of the *Master in Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability* (ICTA-UAB) or of the Master's degree in *Modelling for Science and Engineering* (UAB-CRM). She/he must be fluent reading Spanish and English and writing English. She/he must be eager to do deskwork and interested in sustainability transformations.

Research context: Rural Spain is confronted with a sustainability transition paradox. On the one hand, many rural regions across the country are highly vulnerable to socio-demographic and environmental problems, including depopulation and climate change, to the point that their situation has become a concern at the highest political level. On the other hand, such vulnerability can be an opportunity for those regions to experiment with new, alternative forms of sustainable development (as compared to other less vulnerable and more integrated in mainstream development urban regions) that could simultaneously reduce vulnerability and empower the most marginalized social groups.

Description & Objectives: The Master's thesis will be part of SUSTAIN, a project financed by the Ministry of Science and Education. The project aims at better understanding the influence of rural vulnerability in sustainability transitions and experimenting with new tools for innovative rural development planning and evaluation, paying specific attention to the positionality of women, immigrants, and the elderly.

The Master's project will set the basis for a carry an protocol that can be uses to asses ex-ante the “**Transition Niche Potential**” (TNP) of rural development projects. **The project will consist of** systematic review of the literature on “strategic niche management”, “agri-environmental collaboratives” and “landscape management” (among other stands) to identify indicators associated to successful niche management, paying attention to both project-specific (e.g., whether the project builds on any technological innovation) and organizational (diversity of organization/s promoting the project) characteristics. Evaluation indicators will be identified for four key sectors that are paramount in the current socio-economic organization of rural counties in Spain, and in Europe more generally: the food, forestry, tourism, and renewable energy sectors. The review will cover both theoretical contributions as well as empirical case studies of local projects developed in European rural territories, with an emphasis on case studies concerning multi-stakeholder collaborative projects that have promoted climate adaptation, renewable energies, sustainable exploitation of forest resources, eco-tourism and agro-ecology initiatives in rural environments.

Technical details: The analysis can start in January and not later than February. The master student will be required to use excel and a content analysis software (NVivo) which will be purchased by the project.

If you are interested on writing your MSc thesis on this topic, please contact

Sergio.villamayor@uab.cat