

Transformation towards sustainability - Psychological barriers and catalysts of change

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There is near-to-perfect academic consensus that humanity is responsible for the deteriorating situation of the earth system. This situation, characterized – among others – by biodiversity loss, land-system change and climate change, requires rapid and concerted action in order to prevent life-threatening scenarios. Long neglected, the psychological processes involved in transforming society to a sustainable one contribute to an understanding of the systemic change we need. In this talk, I argue that a focus on collective, rather than individual, processes is vital to define the levers in the system. Specifically, I will position the role of these processes within a multilevel model of transformation. Emerging from this perspective, I present empirical work on different behaviors (e.g., mobility, dietary behavior, activism, consumption, policy support), and how these are subject to social identity concerns. I hope for a stimulating and controversial discussion on how this research informs limits and potentials of psychology in understanding – and overcoming – global crises.