

Eawag Seminar Invitation

Sustainability science: An overview of the field and its research frontiers

Speakers Prof William Clark, Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, USA

When November 4, 16:00 – 17:00, CET

Where Online via Zoom, contact seminars@eawag.ch for access details.

Abstract Research on sustainable development has grown explosively since the mid-1980s, with the field of sustainability science emerging as a global collaboration network in the early years of this century. I propose to use this seminar for a discussion on the central findings and current challenges of sustainability science. As background, I urge participants to read the review of the field that I and my colleague Dr. Alicia Harley published last year: “Sustainability Science: Toward a Synthesis.” <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-environ-012420-043621> (it is Open Access, so just click on the link).

Our review aimed to provide a manageable overview of the field for scholars seeking to locate their work within the broad enterprise of sustainability science, or to catch up on important findings in parts that are not their own, or to forge new collaborations across distant parts of this rapidly expanding and evolving enterprise. But a year has passed since we completed the review. To keep it up to date, and to correct our errors or omissions, we are now inviting scholars to join in a collective effort to extend and update of our initial results as an experiment in collaboration and community publishing.

We invite you to join that experiment by entering your contributions here: <https://www.sustainabilityscience.org/guide>.

To motivate (provoke?) your participation, I will invite discussion in the seminar on three aspects of the original review:

- 1) a survey of the interdisciplinary research programs that have most shaped understanding of sustainable development over the last several decades;
- 2) a union set of elements (variables) and relationships (interactions) emerging from those programs that provide a general checklist of things sustainability science scholars should consider in their research;
- 3) Six social capacities that have proven to be important for putting research knowledge to use in the pursuit of sustainability in our complex and often chaotic world.