

**The institute Transitions aims at exploring the different ways in which nature and human societies undergo processes, periods and impacts of transitions.**

TRANSITIONS put the current ways of living, working and thinking under intense pressure, the outcomes of which are undetermined. They spark fears and raise hopes; they call for greater awareness to our present needs and vulnerabilities; they invite everyone to bind with history's signals and promises.

The institute emphasizes the main fields wherein transitions are of a critical significance: environment, economics, development, mobility, digital landscapes, politics, education, health, justice and social cohesion. These fields are examined using a combination of methods, concepts and theories.

### **TRANSITIONS groups 4 research clusters:**

#### **1. POPULATIONS**

This cluster brings together researchers working on migrations and ageing, in an attempt to understand how these phenomena challenge different social models, including migration assets (from the local to the international level), interactions between economic and environmental aspects of migration, changes in individuals' ability to adapt to their environment in the course of their development, the organization of work (aged workers), the allocation of social benefits to vulnerable persons between family and public solidarities, both the anthropological and religious places of interior life for the elderly.

The cluster leans on researchers already working together within GRIVES<sup>1</sup>. However, the aim is to go beyond by exploring new research fields (e.g. rights of the elderly, ICTs contribution, the biology of ageing...).

#### **2. TERRITORY**

This research cluster embraces a specific meaning of 'territory', namely: "a portion of terrestrial space envisaged in its relationships with the human groups that occupy it and manage it for the purpose of meeting their needs. (2)" The concept of territorial transition embodies new local forms of development, aiming at sustained human well-being, congruent with environmental care.

In this research cluster, we argue that a harmonious growth of cities revolves around a redefinition of rural development, which focuses upon both the specificities and primary functions of rural life: providing a quality environment, developing sustainable agriculture and food systems, fostering a culture of participation. This cluster therefore mobilizes participatory approaches in order to ease and accompany transition processes with networks of stakeholders. Specifically, we rely on concepts such as integrated valuation of ecosystem services and agro-ecology.

#### **3. SOCIETY**

Societies are the conveyor belts between individuals and bigger structures, such as states. The way they evolve thus shapes and is shaped by the transformations below and above them. This cluster focusses on transitions that affect groups which make up a society, whether they are politically organized and/or recognized or not. It brings together researchers whose work centers around how specific groups are formed and framed, as well as the ideas and beliefs, which underpin their existence.

The cluster studies the evolution of societies by diving into their inner workings and mechanisms.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unamur.be/grives>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hypergeo.eu>

## 4. SECURITY

Though this cluster is primarily led by the Tocqueville Chair in Security Policies, it gathers researchers working on security, broadly understood (political, military, environmental ...).

The cluster considers security to be transdisciplinary and argues that a major challenge of our time is to think security through transitions, not against them. It does not have any level of analysis (local, national, international) preference nor does it propound one type of method only. It pursues the following interrelated objectives:

- To analyze how security has evolved across history;
- To examine how security issues emerge and dissolve by emphasizing the role of language, beliefs and emotions;
- To develop theories which account for social, institutional and normative implications of establishing the level of security of a problem;
- To identify and examine the symbolic and material components of security interactions;
- To assess how institutions and practice (e.g. diplomacy) people and leaders adapt to the changes undergone by security.

### Emerging research – Future prospects

The aim of TRANSITIONS is to enable the development of research synergies. There is already some degree of research integration within clusters, but no cross-cluster collaboration currently exists.

TRANSITIONS will enable cross-cluster research collaborations as the cluster is organized around themes rather than disciplines.

### STRONG POINTS

**TRANSITIONS is unique on at least three counts:**

**TRANSITION gathers a very rich body of researchers from different disciplines to explore and capture the different ways in which nature and human societies undergo processes, periods and impacts of transitions. It is the first of its kind in Belgium.**

**TRANSITIONS develops innovative capabilities and strategies, which enable the researchers to facilitate and creatively cope with transitions as they emerge, and pursue future collective interests and well-being in a sustainable fashion. The Institute seeks to liberate different kinds of impacts, both academic and social.**

**TRANSITIONS examines the extent to which transition processes interact with and/or alter our social, political and ethical institutions by combining qualitative and quantitative methods.**

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