

RSA research network on Transformative Knowledge Regions (TRAKR)

Third workshop

The Policy Dimensions of Transformative Knowledge Regions

Neuchâtel/Switzerland, April 15-17, 2026

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

TRAKR is an international and interdisciplinary network, supported by the Regional Studies Association, that seeks to renew the understanding of knowledge and knowledge dynamics as strategic assets in regional development, particularly in the context of ongoing sustainability transitions. Bringing together scholars from the fields of regional innovation studies, economic geography, and the geography of sustainability transitions, TRAKR aims to develop a collective conceptual and empirical framework for analysing how regions can mobilise knowledge systems to navigate and shape transformative change. The network also actively promotes dialogue between established and early-career researchers, fostering a collaborative and intergenerational approach to the study of knowledge in regional transformation.

Following a first workshop dedicated to conceptualisation, two thematic webinars on methodological approaches, and a second workshop centred on paper development, **this third workshop will focus on the policy dimensions of Transformative Knowledge Regions**. This event represents an important milestone in the network's collective research journey. It will serve as a forum to connect conceptual innovation with policy relevance, deepen interdisciplinary collaboration, and outline future directions for both academic inquiry and regional policymaking for Transformative Knowledge Regions.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop will enhance scientific reflection and collaborative exchange on how policies at different scales—local, regional, national, and supranational—can support or hinder the emergence and consolidation of Transformative Knowledge Regions. The discussions will explore whether existing policy instruments are sufficient and adaptable to a transformative regional framework, or whether new policy tools, governance mechanisms, and coordination approaches must be envisioned. Participants will also reflect on the broader political context shaping regional policymaking, including the rise of polarised political rhetoric, geopolitical uncertainty, and the re-scaling of sustainability challenges.

The workshop will specifically address the policy implications of a transformative knowledge region approach, structured around three interrelated thematic questions:

- **Implications for transition policies:** How do Transformative Knowledge Regions align with or challenge current approaches to mission-oriented innovation policies and urban experimentation in sustainability transitions?
- **Implications for knowledge and innovation policies:** What do Transformative Knowledge Regions mean for the usual “knowledge triangle” of education, research, and innovation? How might established frameworks such as Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) evolve to better accommodate transformative aims?
- **Implications for regional policy:** How can regional development and cohesion policy debates integrate the transformative perspective on knowledge and learning processes? What governance models, partnerships, or funding mechanisms are required to foster such change?

Expected Outputs

This workshop is intended not only to foster intellectual exchange but also to imagine and co-develop potential flagship policy outputs within the TRAKR network, such as:

- **A perspective paper** summarising collective insights on the policy dimensions of Transformative Knowledge Regions, to be possibly co-authored by all workshop participants and submitted to an academic journal.
- **A Policy Book proposal** to be developed for submission to the Regional Studies Association (RSA), outlining policy frameworks and case-based insights.
- **A Policy Expo concept** to be submitted for an RSA grant in November 2026, showcasing the TRAKR network's contributions to policy and practice communities.

Workshop contributions—conceptual, empirical, or methodological—are expected to feed into one or more of these outputs, strengthening the scientific and policy impact of the network.

Preliminary Programme

1. Wednesday, 15 April 2026

- Evening – Welcome drink and informal dinner

2. Thursday, 16 April 2026

- 09:30–10:00 – Keynote I
- 10:00–14:00 – Workshop sessions and group discussions (*with coffee and lunch breaks*)
- 14:00–18:30 – Field visit and/or walk in the Jura Mountains (*depending on the weather*)
- 19:00–22:30 – Dinner

3. Friday, 17 April 2026

- 09:00–09:30 – Keynote II or thematic workshop discussions
- 09:30–11:00 – Thematic workshop discussions
- 11:30–12:30 – Synthesis session and potential outputs
- 12:30–13:00 – Farewell and snack lunch

Abstract Submission

The final workshop programme will be built around contributions from registered participants. Interested researchers are invited to submit a **250-word abstract by 31 January 2026**, indicating how their work relates to one or more of the workshop's three thematic questions. Proposals should highlight relevant empirical cases and/or conceptual frameworks leading to policy analyses and policy viewpoints that engage with the notion of Transformative Knowledge Regions.

Submission addresses: hugues.jeannerat@unine.ch and pauline.lavanchy@unine.ch

First insights into possible policy issues on Transformative Knowledge Regions could be discussed along with, in complement to, or in debate with the following preliminary working paper:

- Jeannerat, H.; Butzin, A.; Carvalho, L. & Manniche, J. (2025): *Transformative Knowledge Regions: Bringing Knowledge to the Frontstage of Transformative Innovation*. IAT Discussion Papers, 25/01, July 2025. <https://doi.org/10.53190/dp/202501>

Key Dates

- 12 November 2025 – Launch of the call for papers
- 31 January 2026 – Deadline for abstract submission
- 15 February 2026 – Notification of acceptance and finalisation of programme
- 15–17 April 2026 – TRAKR Workshop, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

TRAKR Organisers

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