

**Title of the presentation:**

Seeds for the future: The transformative potential of commons institutions in plant breeding and seed production

**Abstract:**

Stefanie Sievers-Glotzbach will present the research design and preliminary results arising from the research project *RightSeeds* (<https://www.rightseeds.de/>) - a collaborative project by the Department for Economics at Oldenburg University, the Institute for Ecological Economics Research (IÖW) and the Agroecology group at Göttingen University. With the intensification in the agricultural sector, a commercialized, privatized and more and more monopolized system of plant breeding and seed production has developed: It focuses on a narrow spectrum of high yield varieties for the industrial agriculture and therefore contributes substantially to the worldwide loss of cultivated crop plant variety. Commons-based variety breeding and seed production presents an approach to counteract genetic erosion of crop plant variety, to promote food sovereignty and agro-ecological resilience. The project's goal is to explore the transformative potential of commons-based seed systems for a social-ecological plant cultivation and how this potential can be enhanced. Integrating perspectives from ecology, economics, political science and ethics, as well as collaborating with German and Philippine seed stakeholders, *RightSeeds* follows an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach.

Being a core interim result of the project, Prof. Sievers-Glotzbach will present recently developed conceptual framework for studying social-ecological transformation. Seed and Variety Commons initiatives, such as the Organic Breeding Network in Europe, offer an alternative approach to the dominant regime based on intellectual property rights and biotechnological breeding technologies. However, these initiatives are often faced with structural barriers that limit the scope of their work and their contribution to larger societal changes beyond breeding is not clear. Despite a broad discourse on Social-Ecological Transformation, no concept exists yet in the literature that could assess the contribution of such initiatives to a broader transformation or help these initiatives in developing strategies that could increase their impact. Based on a literature review of diverse transformation approaches, including the fields of Development Resilience, Critical Theory and Sustainability Transitions, the *RightSeeds* group developed a concept for a Social-Ecological Transformation that helps to address this research gap. The proposed framework links processes of change at the micro level to deep leverages of change in the wider system structures. At the macro level, the objectives of inter and intragenerational justice need to be pursued by challenging the central paradigms that constitute unsustainable trajectories. To make the framework concrete and applicable in practice, they propose process-oriented evaluation principles for the micro (initiative) and meso level that reflect these normative objectives and help to measure the transformative character and transformative impact of processes of change.

**Short bio**

Stefanie Sievers-Glotzbach is Junior Professor for "Economics of the Commons" at Oldenburg university. She holds a Ph.D. in Sustainability Sciences and a Diploma degree in Environmental Sciences, both from Leuphana Universität Lüneburg. From 2012 to 2015 she has been a post-doc researcher in the ecological economics group at Oldenburg university and coordinator of the master program "Sustainability Economics and Management". Since 2016 she has been working as a team leader of the junior research group *RightSeeds*. Her present research focusses on commons as a governance model and its potential for social-ecological transformation.