

Interview

Topic	TransitionLab
Interviewee	Marco Schmitt, Christoph Heckwolf
Moderator	Sea-Hyun Lee

Introduction

The transition of society as a whole to a bio-based economy is accompanied by fundamental changes in the technical, economic and social environment and accordingly requires a broad consensus from science, business, society and politics. This is where the concept of the accompanying research project in the BIOTEXFUTURE innovation space comes in, by examining the development, production and circular usage of bio-based textiles as well as the overall societal transition process towards a functioning bioeconomy and its success factors on several research levels. More insights on the TransitionLab will be provided through today's interview with Marco Schmitt and Christoph Heckwolf.

Q&A

Question: Hello Marco and Christoph, thank you for joining the Interview on TransitionLab and let's start with an easy question: What is currently going on in the Project?

Marco: Hello Sea-Hyun, thanks for having us. Currently, we are in the process of setting up the second phase of the TransitionLab, building on what we already know about consumers, research networks and technology trends in the textile Bioeconomy from the first phase and strive to integrate a stronger communication perspective (especially in relation to social media) with new partners and new formats of collaboration, and also to make significant progress in supporting BIOTEXFUTURE's projects in developing concrete demonstrators for their purposes.

Question: Within BIOTEXFUTURE you run the project TransitionLab together with your colleagues. What is behind the Project?

Marco: We are the accompanying social science research project in BIOTEXFUTURE. There are two main goals we want to achieve here. First, we do research on the collaboration inside the innovation space to establish a learning structure for steering BIOTEXFUTURE and the individual projects. Second, we want to understand how to support the transformation of the textile industry through communication and participation and use this knowledge to enable processes of transformation in research, technology and communication. The overall project consists of six different workstreams. While the teams from University of Bayreuth and FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg focus on consumer research on- and offline (with surveys, experiments and data mining), the team from the University of Heidelberg concentrates on project collaboration networks and technology trends in the field, the RWTH Aachen team focus on experimental settings, demonstrator development, and in-depth qualitative knowledge on material literacy and sustainability trends, the team from the University of Duisburg-Essen is interested in the online communications across different stakeholder groups to discern successful communication strategies and finally the adidas team added a business-oriented perspective, supports project management and supports demonstrator development.

Question: TransitionLab aims to research, design and promote innovation and knowledge transfer, innovation culture, optimised framework conditions. How do you do that?

Christoph: The main point to ensure that the learning structure of BIOTEXFUTURE integrates all these aspects is of course communication. The TransitionLab uses communication and participation formats to realize such a learning structure. To transfer knowledge created within the TransitionLab

we use Insight Reports and Insight Events to spread this information across BIOTEXFUTURE. Furthermore, we use Synergy Workshops on demonstrator development, communication strategy and technological synergies to develop a collaboration mindset and use all the possible synergies in BIOTEXFUTURE. Finally, we explore participation formats for external stakeholders in the textile bioeconomy to integrate vital external feedback, increase visibility and provide actual answers to the societal challenges of concern.

Question: TransitionLab has been part of BIOTEXFUTURE since the beginning. What has been achieved so far?

Marco: So far, we have created extensive knowledge concerning the important stakeholders in research, technology development and communication for a bio-based textile industry by utilizing network analysis based on research and patent data as well as newspapers and magazines. Additionally, we have interacted with technical projects in order to support demonstrator development and use case scenarios as well as developed a student-based reallab (nACHhaltig angezogen) to experiment with activities supporting sustainable clothing in a local environment. Finally, we assembled knowledge on how consumers view bio-based products in general and in specific settings and shared it through insight sessions.

Question: What has been working really well in TransitionLab and what kind of obstacles have you been tackling so far?

Marco: What has been working really well, is to activate students for experiments and the reallab. We also have been asked multiple times to discuss themes from the BIOTEXFUTURE portfolio with an interested public. So, there is the creation of visibility and commitment. A big obstacle for us is the perception, that working with us on demonstrators or engaging with external stakeholders in the innovation process is simply additional work that is not accounted for in the project plans. To overcome this we have to really show our supportive agenda and make the benefits for the projects visible.

Question: How does TransitionLab present itself to the public?

Christoph: We engage in public communication through workshops and dialogues conducted by ourselves, by attending events organized by other stakeholders in the Bioeconomy community and by giving interviews to multipliers.

Question: Are there any upcoming events that you would like to tell your audience about?

Marco: We will have a new Insight Report Event on the 8th of April (at 3 PM) on some new consumer research experiments concerning the influence of communicating bio-based product features on buying behavior.

Question: The innovation space BIOTEXFUTURE is funded by the BMBF for 5 years. Over two successful years have already passed. What are your goals within TransitionLab for the remaining time?

Marco: We aim to bring visibility to the innovations created in BIOTEXFUTURE, further implement the elements of a learning structure into the framework and engage in a lot of meaningful interactions with stakeholders in- and outside of BIOTEXFUTURE to support the transformation of the industry.