LEUPHANA
UNIVERSITÄT LÜNEBURG

transform:research
Doctoral Conference



07 – 08 December 2026
Leuphana Central Building (Room C40.606)

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

If not indicated differently, sessions take place in room C40.606.

07 December 2026

09:30 – 09:45	*Transformation Lab Conference Opening* Dr. Anke Gruendel & Dr. Anna Heudorfer		
09:45 – 10:45	*Doing Research on and in Transformation – Interdisciplinary perspectives on a field in motion* Round table discussion Prof. Dr. Oliver Genschow, Prof. Dr. Erich Hörl & Prof. Dr. Berta Martín-López (Chair: Dr. Anke Gruendel)		
10:45 – 11:30	Coffee and Networking		
11:30 – 13:00	Scientific Talks, Room C40.606 (Chair: Jonathan Mehlfeldt) – Phuong Do Thi Ha Platformed Climate Futures in Vietnam: Memory, Digital Aesthetics, and Environmental Justice – Luca Frank Scheunpflug, Following (Digital) Water in Amazons Web Service's Regions: The Hydropolitical (Un-)Making of Digital Infrastructures – Gyde Wollesen, Eating within limits: How a climate budget shifts food choices	Scientific Talks, Room C40.601 (Chair: Samuel Eyison) – Lennart Bade, Transformations without a Future. Democratic Theory in Times of Polycrisis – Pelin Küçükerdoğan, Parental Socialization in a Changing World: How Conversations About Immigration and Climate Change Shape Children's Understanding and Attitudes	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch, designates area at Mensa		
14:00 – 15:30	World Café, Room C40.606 (Chair: Paula Rubertus) – Alejandra Bazoberry, Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations: Why and How Companies Engage in Digital-Ecological Transformation: A Qualitative Meta Study – Esther Prah Koti, Preparing Sustainability Professionals for a Digital Future: A Qualitative Study of Employer Perspectives	World Café, Room C40.601 (Chair: Paula Rubertus) – Laura Christina Hetzler, Mindsets for Sustainability in Corporate Transformations – Viviane Kowsche, What Makes Organizational Sustainability Transformations Radical? – Jan Caspar Lohss, Lost in Translation – Temporality, Valuation, and Crisis	Workshop, Room of Silence Ariane Rhomberg, Inner Sustainability

	– Entrepreneurship through Open-Source Technology Innovation – Maria Elena Dietz Romero, The Emergence of Transboundary, Private Law-based Climate Litigation as a Corporate Accountability Mechanism and its Adequacy as Legal Response		
15:30 – 15:45	Active break (Lukas Johannes Klasen)		
15:45 – 16:45	*Transformation through and with the doctorate – Postdoc perspectives on becoming a Researcher* Panel discussion Dr. Rowan Alden Hull, Dr. Daniel Irrgang & Dr. Sara Dahlman (Chair: Dr. Anna Heudorfer)		
16:45 – 17:00	Break		
17:00 – 18:00	3MThesis Competition (Chairs: Alejandra Bazoberry, Mayleen Luisa Schack) – Lara Caroline Islinger The Feminist Movement for Self-Managed Abortion Support: Dispatches from Poland's Activist-Run Abortion Center – Lukas Johannes Klasen Addressing super-wicked problems locally – Is Temporal Governance a suitable Approach to tackle Climate Change in Cities? – Yu-Jieh Lin Whose Interests, Whose Decisions? Negotiating for Sustainability Transformations – Victoria Dzifa Oklu The Psychological Barriers Hindering Women Participation in Corporate Boards – Jeanine Rühle Regenerative Education – Anokh Sreejith Temporal Citizenship under Climate Stress: Biometric IDs and the case of Circular Migration under Heat Waves		
19:00	Dinner (La Taverna, Am Stintmarkt 12)		

08 December 2026

<table>
<tr><td>09:15 – 09:30</td><td colspan="3">Arrival and Coffee</td></tr>
<tr><td>09:30 – 11:00</td><td colspan="3">Poster and Visual Presentations
– Ana Maria Acatrinei Acatrinei,
Fuzzy borders: between undoing the nation-state and building Fortress Europe
– Beatrice Aleksiejus,
Towards a Better Understanding of Complexity and Diversity for Sustainable Chemistry
– Elif Laçin Aytaç,
Legitimizing Democratic Backsliding: How Autocratizing Incumbents Justify Democratic Subversion
– Samuel Eyison,
The Role of Managers in Sustainable Development: Examining the Influence of Managerial Characteristics on Stakeholder Theory Mindset
– Samuel Gausi,
Can an LLM code a systematic review? What our dry run showed.
– Merle Zoë Larro,
Organising Ecovillages in Times of Crisis
– Mara Elisa Petzoldt,
Explaining Variation in Sovereignty Transfers in Brazil’s Environmental Governa
– Maryam Raayatpisheh,
– Can a Perennial Grain Make Food Systems Regenerative? A Review of Intermediate Wheatgrass
– Ariane Rhomberg,
Inner Sustainability
– Mari Uesugi,
Preparing Students for Future Uncertainty: A Systematic Review on School-Based Practices and the Role of Emotions
– Sara Maria Velez Restrepo,
Is There Tomorrow? Future-Making in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems under Polycrisis
– Maria Wolters,
Interactions of Regenerative Dynamics in Social-Ecological Systems</td></tr>
<tr><td>11:00 – 12:30</td><td>Scientific Talks,
Room C40.606
(Chair: Lennart Bade)
– Fatemeh Ghayeghi Hassani
Toward an intelligent experience of temporality: How AI reshapes Creative work
– Mariia Kochkina
Rat Race to a New Species: Climate Futures and the Natural Imaginaries of Thinking Machines
– Paula Rubertus
Conflict, Cooperation, and Climate Policy: How Citizens Evaluate Parliamentary Decision-Making)</td><td>Scientific Talks,
Room C40.601
(Chair: Jeanine Rühle)
– Judith Magdalena Aguilar Castellanos,
REAL Entrepreneurship in Times of Socio-Ecological Degradation: From conceptual framework to intervention design
– Laura Berger
Reconceptualizing Organizational Resilience under Conditions of Polycrisis
– Luca Lambers
Fostering Tolerance of Ambiguity in Schools: From a Systematic Review to Design-</td><td>Scientific Talks,
Room C40.320
(Chair: Mari Uesugi)
– Jonathan Mehlfeld
Transformation in Legal Research - Between Heuristic and Disciplinary Openne
– Mayleen Luisa Schack
Sampling Science Under Uncertainty: How Scientific Evidence Shapes Information Engagement
– Milan Schröder,
Periods of Order and Interregnum: Identifying Transformations in Global Order Discourse, 1946-2025</td></tr>
</table>

		Based Research Phuong Do Thi Ha Platformed Climate Futures in Vietnam: Memory, Digital Aesthetics, and Environmental Justice	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch, designated area at Mensa		
13:30 – 15:00	Community space (for doctoral researchers only) Room C40.601		
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break / Active break (Lukas Johannes Klasen)		
15:30 – 16:30	Keynote Dr. Carlie Trott Associate Professor, Community & Organizational Research for Action (CORA) Department of Psychology, University of Cincinnati **Prefigurative Research for Societal Transformation: Enacting Alternatives in the Here and Now**		
16:30 – 17:00	Conference Wrap-up Dr. Henrike Kohpeiß, Dr. Iris Seidemann		



ABSTRACTS

07 December 2026, 11:30-13:00 – Scientific Talks, Room C40.606

Phuong Do Thi Ha
Climate Futures
Platformed Climate Futures in Vietnam: Memory, Digital Aesthetics, and Environmental Justice
The rise of short-form video content, particularly TikTok, has transformed how people communicate, remember, and imagine everyday life. As sustainability becomes a defining political and cultural challenge, people increasingly experience climate change through digital media infrastructures as well as through scientific or policy narratives. In climate-vulnerable regions, floods, extreme heat, salinity intrusion, and related disruptions are becoming embedded in everyday practices through which people cope with and live with environmental change. This project examines how Vietnamese short-form videos make environmental disruption visible, affective, and meaningful. It treats TikTok videos as cultural sites where sustainability is not only communicated but remembered, felt, negotiated, and made politically meaningful.
Methodologically, the study combines multimodal and discourse analysis with semi-structured audience interviews. A corpus of approximately 150–200 TikTok videos posted between 2023 and 2026 will be constructed across environmental themes and creator types. From this corpus, 40–60 clips will be selected for close analysis, and selected videos will be used as interview prompts with 12–18 viewers to explore their interpretations, memories, emotional responses, and imagined futures. By combining video analysis with audience interpretation, the project connects platform form, aesthetic strategy, and viewer meaning-making. It argues that Vietnamese short-form climate videos transform environmental disruption into platformed memories, affective climate knowledge, and mediated sustainability imaginaries. By focusing on Vietnam, the project contributes a Global South perspective to debates on media, sustainability, climate communication, and environmental justice

Luca Frank Scheunpflug
Climate Futures
Following (Digital) Water in Amazons Web Service's Regions: The Hydropolitical (Un-)Making of Digital Infrastructures
The presentation will introduce my ongoing PhD, in which I follow the power-laden, socioecological transformations caused by digital infrastructures through multi-sited and multi-temporal ethnographic research around water. Focusing on the biggest cloud-service provider by market share, Amazon Web Services (AWS), I critically examine how the Big Tech actor (re-)produces territorial projects called "Regions", their interconnectedness within the company's global network and their positioning as a central actor in the "digital revolution" of water management. The central point lies in the duality between the redirection and extraction of water for data centre projects on the one hand, and the physical interventions and deployment of technologies like AI to promote sustainability on the other. By seeing water as fundamentally relational, multiple and thus political, my research interrogates these heavily promoted, yet opaque transformations to situate them within "the histories and materialities of the worlds from which they have grown and from which their effects must be understood" (Furlong, 2021, p. 196). Throughout cases that reach from Aragón, Spain, to Frankfurt, Germany, and Santiago de Chile, I explore how, in territories shaped by past, present, and future transformations, water also becomes a focal point of contestation to AWS projects. Centring my recently completed fieldwork in Aragón, the presentation takes a narrative form combining fragments of document analysis, interviews, and embodied engagement with local and regional water flows. Through the voices of activists, public-private statements and more-than-human encounters I

will tell the story of how digital infrastructure projects are configured through physical, discursive, and datafied transformations of water. This also depicts how frictions arising from the impacts of the climate crisis, systemic opacity, and emerging social movements give rise to their own transformations.

Gyde Wollesen
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations
Eating within limits: How a climate budget shifts food choices
Food is a primary driver of greenhouse gas emissions, yet most consumers cannot interpret carbon information meaningfully. We test whether reframing emissions as a share of a dietary carbon budget enables consumers to discriminate more strongly between products according to their carbon intensity than a conventional carbon footprint label or no information. Building on mental accounting theory, we argue that a budget label supplies the personal reference account that footprint information lacks and thereby activates a within-budget motivation that absolute emissions values do not trigger. This conference contribution presents the first of two studies. In an online experiment with UK grocery shoppers, we measure willingness to pay for a lower- and a higher-carbon product and examine perceived budget threat as the underlying mechanism. Budget information leads consumers to discriminate stronger between the high and low carbon product than no information does, and this effect runs partly through the threat that the higher-carbon product poses to the personal budget. The mechanism is more pronounced among consumers with high climate concern. The budget label does not outperform the footprint label in its overall effect, although it activates the threat to budget mechanism more strongly. The second study, a field experiment in the online shop of a food brand, is pending and will test whether these patterns carry over to the carbon intensity and value of real shopping baskets.

07 December 2026, 11:30-13:00 – Scientific Talks, Room C40.601

Lennart Bade
Democratic Resilience
Transformations without a Future. Democratic Theory in Times of Polycrisis
In the face of the Polycrisis, a societal transformation is at the same time normatively demanded and descriptively predicted as inevitable. Progressive and reactionary transformations are conditioning each other. Caught in this upheaval, democracy seeks resilience – a precarious balancing act: transformation is meant to strengthen democracy while resilience constructs a defense against (unwanted) transformations. I trace this tension through two strands of democratic theory: liberal-democratic "resilience" research, which defensively preserves the existing liberal order at the cost of alternative futures, and radical democratic theory, whose embrace of contingency and critique of liberalism faces limitations in times of antidemocratic attacks. As democratic transformations become increasingly challenging and theoretically lose sight of the future in late modern conditions, authoritarian transformation projects gain traction.

Pelin Küçükerdoğan
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability
Parental Socialization in a Changing World: How Conversations About Immigration and Climate Change Shape Children's Understanding and Attitudes
As the world continues to change, so do the complexities of social life. Navigating these complex social situations can be challenging even for adults. Therefore, children may benefit from social scaffolding,

especially from parents, to develop an understanding of the social world. In the current study, we specifically focus on how parents talk about two such social issues with their preschool children: immigration and climate change. Both issues can have concrete implications for children's lives, such as having an immigrant friend at school or experiencing extreme weather events. Understanding how parents shape children's understanding of and attitudes towards these topics is therefore valuable. To address these questions, we have created age-appropriate storybooks to prompt conversations between parents and their 5- to 6-year-old children. First, parent-child dyads will be asked to discuss the first part of each story, which ends with an open-ended, child-like question to encourage parents to explain the social issue to their children. Then, first separately and then together, they will be asked to choose an alternative ending to each story, with the alternatives representing either no solution, an individualistic solution, or a collective solution to the issue. Both will complete tasks measuring their attitudes towards these issues, and children will retell the story to a naive listener (e.g., a puppet). With this design, we aim to explore how various conversational characteristics (e.g., content, generic language, and analogical reasoning) relate to children's and parents' attitudes and what children focus on in their retellings. We will also investigate whether parents and children prefer similar solutions and, when they disagree, how they reason about and resolve their disagreements. Ultimately, this study aims to shed light on how parents and children jointly make sense of complex social issues through everyday conversations.

07 December 2026, 14:00-15:30 – World Café, Room C40.606

Alejandra Bazoberry
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations
Why and How Companies Engage in Digital-Ecological Transformation: A Qualitative Meta Study
Digitalization and ecological sustainability are increasingly interdependent forces shaping organizations, yet scholarship has largely examined them as separate domains. Although emerging research on "digital sustainability" and "twin transformation" addresses their intersection, the field remains conceptually fragmented and rests on divergent assumptions regarding the relationship between the two transformations. Whereas the contribution of digital technologies to sustainability goals has received considerable attention, the reasons why and the processes through which organizations pursue both agendas remain insufficiently understood. This study therefore addresses the following research question: Why and how do companies engage in digital-ecological transformation? Employing a qualitative meta-study, I synthesized and re-coded evidence from 33 published case-studies to compare organizational motives and transformation processes. The study aims to develop transformation pathways and the conditions under which they emerge. The conference presentation will introduce this work in progress to invite discussion of the emerging preliminary findings.

Esther Prah Koti
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations
Preparing Sustainability Professionals for a Digital Future: A Qualitative Study of Employer Perspectives
Digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, digital platforms, blockchain, and Internet of Things systems are reshaping how organizations innovate, identify, measure, and manage business growth as well as sustainability-related issues. As these technologies are increasingly embedded in the organization, the human resources that apply these technologies need to adapt their knowledge, skills

and abilities. The organizations have the primary responsibility of managing both the technology inputs and human resources in order to attain the best outcome for the organization. Using a multi-method approach, this study combines qualitative content analysis of job ads as well as interviews to investigate how the applications of digitalization and AI for sustainability influences employers' expectations of graduates for entry level roles, and its implications.

Maria Elena Dietz Romero
Democratic Resilience
The Emergence of Transboundary, Private Law-based Climate Litigation as a Corporate Accountability Mechanism and its Adequacy as Legal Response
The climate emergency presents an unprecedented challenge to legal systems and democratic decision-making. The current global climate governance regime is broadly criticised as an insufficient answer to climate change, while regulatory regression of climate ambitions further hinders adequate climate policies. In this context, citizens and NGOs are increasingly bringing private law-based corporate framework litigation against large carbon emitters before courts in cases such as Lliuya v RWE, Asmania v Holcim and Casquejo v Shell, using well-established private law tort of negligence or unlawful interference claims. Advances in climate attribution science allow harmed stakeholders to prove causal links between a corporate actor's emissions and the proportional worsening of a concrete climate harm. This monograph asks to what extent transboundary, private law-based and proportional-causation climate litigation against corporate actors ('TPPC litigation') can constitute a deliberative corporate accountability mechanism and, if so, whether this mechanism forms the adequate legal response to existing accountability gaps in global climate governance. The research design is doctrinal legal analysis, applying a functional approach to comparative civil law across Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France. It combines case study analysis of TPPC litigation, legal-normative analysis of separation-of-power and anti-majoritarian arguments and a political theory angle drawing on Habermas, Lafont and Bohman, while testing Gunther Teubner's Transnational Societal Constitutionalism as an analytical framework.

07 December 2026, 14:00-15:30 – World Café, Room C40.601

Laura Christina Hetzler
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations
Mindsets for Sustainability in Corporate Transformations
Corporate sustainability strategies often fail at implementation, despite urgent planetary boundaries and climate targets. My research focuses on how manager and employee mindsets shape sustainability decisions, actions and transformation outcomes. It challenges the assumption of a single sustainability mindset and develops a business-grounded, multidimensional concept of mindsets regarding sustainability as enduring yet changeable configurations of beliefs, attitudes, values and assumptions. The central research question is: How do distinct mindsets regarding sustainability of managers and employees shape sustainability decisions, business case logics and corporate transformation outcomes? The objectives are to clarify and measure mindsets regarding sustainability in management contexts, identify manager mindset profiles and link them to business case logics, and in a next step examine how employee mindset profiles predict responses to sustainability implementation. The future research design comprises an integrative review of mindset conceptualizations, quantitative surveys of managers and non-management employees.

Viviane Kowsche
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations
What Makes Organizational Sustainability Transformations Radical?
The need for transformative change in the face of our planetary crisis is widely recognized. As both parts of the causes and possible solutions derive from our globalized economy and the corporations that underpin it, companies occupy a central role in the transition to more sustainable futures. Yet, despite decades of corporate sustainability efforts, change within organizations and at the market-level has remained largely incremental and insufficient to address the scale, scope, and urgency of our planetary challenges. Sustainability scholars therefore increasingly call for radical transformations of companies, but an understanding of what such radical transformations entail and how they can be achieved remains underdeveloped so far. In this World Café, we therefore aim to foster an interdisciplinary discussion on the overarching question of what makes organizational sustainability transformations radical. Is radicalness a characteristic of the transformation process, such as speed or scale, is it the degree of difference of an organization's state between two points in time, or should we understand radicalness in relation to the broader societal effects that the transformation generates? Who has the power to initiate, shape, and enact radical transformations? Whose responsibility is it to drive them? And how can we identify radically transformative change when consequences and effects unfold over multiple timescales and in ever-changing environments?

Jan Caspar Lohss
Organizing in Times of Crisis
Lost in Translation – Temporality, Valuation, and Crisis
Organizations in forestry and ecological conservation are directly affected by climate change and biodiversity loss. To them, this is not a creeping crisis anymore – we are already in the middle of the storm. Entire forests are dying and long-held certainties about their cultivation and development must be revised. At a closer look however, what is considered good or bad news depends on the organization. Where foresters might lament a dead spruce forest causing immense financial loss, conservationists might rejoice at the opportunity to grow a diverse ecosystem in its stead. Meanwhile, bridges between the sectors are forming. Nowadays, biodiversity is not only regarded as a conservation goal, but also as an economic asset increasing forest value and reducing risk of loss. I believe that organizational Eigenzeit ('own time' – internal temporal rhythms and planning horizons) and valuation (what is valued or not and why) are key to understanding drivers and brakers of sustainability. For my case study, I plan to conduct interviews with foresters and conservationists in the German Mittelgebirge (highland area) of the Harz, which spans the three German federal states of Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia. The Harz contains a national park, several other protected areas, as well as a multitude of public and private commercial forests. Its landscape shows entire hillsides of dead spruce monocultures neighboring thriving wilderness. I wish to investigate how temporality and valuation are perceived and applied in forestry and conservation organizations. It appears to me that in general there is a translation error between global and organizational sustainability, meaning that the global sustainability crisis does not translate to an organizational crisis in many cases. I suspect that in my study it does translate, and I wish to find out how this affects organizing.

07 December 2026, 14:00-15:30 – Workshop, Room of Silence

Ariane Rhomberg
Toward a Regenerative Society
Inner Sustainability
Might inner sustainability be the deepest leverage point for sustainability transformations? While sustainability research and practice have traditionally focused on external transformations, increasing attention is being paid to the role of inner dimensions, such as values, worldviews, emotions, and lived experiences. Yet what is inner sustainability and how can we cultivate it? This workshop combines guided self-reflection and peer exchange to explore these questions. Participants will develop their own understanding of inner sustainability, reflect on experiences and influences that strengthen or undermine it, and explore its relationship with the wider social-ecological world. Together, we will consider whether, how, and under what conditions inner sustainability might constitute our greatest contribution to sustainability in the world "out there", while identifying concrete ways to cultivate it in everyday life.

07 December 2026, 17:00-18:00 – 3Minute Thesis Competition

Lara Caroline Islinger
Organizing in Times of Crisis
The Feminist Movement for Self-Managed Abortion Support: Dispatches from Poland's Activist-Run Abortion Center
With the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022 abortion has been catapulted to the center of attention. While the United States, as well as Poland, have been experiencing a rollback of abortion rights, Latin America has seen a transnational momentum towards the decriminalization of abortion, for example in Argentina, Mexico, and Colombia. Beyond the law, the availability of medication to end a pregnancy has revolutionized what it means to have a safe abortion. Feminists across the world are making self-managed abortion available and have built a transnational movement – with ideas, people, and pills crossing the many borders around abortion, which include states, legality and stigma. Drawing on research with activists in Poland, this presentation shares insights from recent fieldwork at ABOTAK, an activist-run abortion center in Warsaw. Located across from the Polish parliament and besieged by anti-abortion protestors, ABOTAK provides a space to share information and to have a safe self-managed abortion in a supportive setting. Polish activists are inspired by a practice developed in Latin America: accompaniment, a peer-to-peer form of abortion support. Most recently, the ABOTAK team has unveiled an "abortion vending machine", a sort of parcel locker which dispenses abortion medication. With the support of international feminist organizations, such as Women Help Women, Polish activists seize abortion rights and make care available against all odds.

Lukas Johannes Klasen
Organizing in Times of Crisis

Addressing super-wicked problems locally – Is Temporal Governance a suitable Approach to tackle Climate Change in Cities?

My PhD project focuses on wicked problems, that is ill-defined problems for which no clear solutions exists, in municipalities and how they can better organize to address them. In a encompassing bibliometric study Peters et al. (2026) trace the field of wicked problems since its inception and develop a new typology how to classify and address wicked problems. For super-wicked problems, with low stakeholder consensus and acute urgency, they suggest temporal governance as a viable strategy i.e. setting binding future targets (e.g. net zero 2035) and reverse engineering actions for the present. Climate change is classified as a super-wicked problem (Levin et al., 2012), with temporal governance being widely adopted by public actors from local to national levels. However, despite its widespread adoption, it remains unclear how temporal governance works in practice, e.g. how it is implemented locally, how targets are transferred into action on the ground and if it is achieving the proposed results. The aim of this research project is to enrich the concept of temporal governance from an organization studies perspective, by bringing in literature at the intersection of temporality and climate change. Based on the understanding that temporality is crucial to comprehend temporal governance, I ask (1) how is temporal governance implemented in practices, strategies and measures surrounding climate change in cities? (2) (How) Does temporal governance shape short and long term orientations of city administrations? To answer these questions, I employ a qualitative, explorative case study approach. The goal is to analyse 4-6 mid-size German cities with ambitious climate targets (e.g. net zero 2035). Data will be collected through interviews, archival documents, and participant observation, with the first round of data collection scheduled for autumn 2026.

Yu-Jieh Lin
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations

Whose Interests, Whose Decisions? Negotiating for Sustainability Transformations

Sustainability transformations often require negotiations between organizations and stakeholders. Yet those sitting at the negotiation table rarely act solely on their own behalf. What does it mean to negotiate on behalf of others, and how does this representative role shape negotiation processes and decisions? This pitch introduces the psychological dynamics of representative negotiation and their relevance to sustainability transformations.

Victoria Dzifa Oklu
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability

The Psychological Barriers Hindering Women Participation in Corporate Boards

In the current era of sustainability transformation, inclusion is widely recognised as a prerequisite for achieving equitable and effective outcomes. Despite decades of advocacy, marginalized groups including women, persons with disabilities, BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds continue to experience limited participation in critical transformation processes (Federo, 2024; Kumije et al., 2025; Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024). A persistent concern within this context is the underrepresentation of women on corporate boards, both in terms of numerical representation and the extent to which their voices are heard (Ramos et al., 2022; Shinbrot et al., 2019), despite its effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted challenges of sustainability (Alawadi et al., 2024). An equally important but comparatively underexplored dimension involves internal factors thus psychological barriers

that limit women's participation in high-level decision-making. In this regard, my study, focusing on Ghana and Germany, will use a mixed-method approach to explore the experiences of women in these positions to uncover the psychological barriers they encounter.

Jeanine Rühle
Toward a Regenerative Society
Regenerative Education
Regenerative Education (RE) is an emerging approach at the intersection of Educational Science and Sustainability Science. Within Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE), it reflects a growing interest in holistic and transformative approaches that consider the interconnectedness of ecological, social and individual dimensions of learning, potentially encompassing learners' emotional well-being and mental health. Meanwhile, Sustainability Science increasingly discusses regeneration as a framework for fostering the regenerative capacities of social-ecological systems, emphasising the role of education in societal transformation. However, how regeneration is conceptualised within these fields and how these conceptualisations turn into educational approaches and broader societal transformations has yet to be examined systematically. My doctoral research explores how RE conceptualises and shapes societal transformation, particularly in the relationships between individuals, educational institutions and their wider social-ecological environments. I am particularly interested in how inclusion, participation and social justice shape these relationships. My first paper examines how RE is conceptualised across Sustainability Science and Educational Science. Through a systematic literature review, I explore its underlying conceptualisations of regeneration, transformative aims and connections to established approaches in ESE. Beyond this first paper, my broader research will explore the role of education in regenerative social-ecological systems, while also considering how regenerative educational approaches engage with learners' mental health and emotional well-being. I am particularly interested in how education relates to wider societal and ecological transformations, whose needs and perspectives are considered in regenerative approaches and whose might remain overlooked.

Anokh Sreejith
Climate Futures
Temporal Citizenship under Climate Stress: Biometric IDs and the case of Circular Migration under Heat Waves
Climate change is reshaping the conditions under which informal workers live and work. For circular migrants in India, extreme heat can disrupt working hours, employment opportunities and income, potentially influencing the timing and duration of movement between places of origin and destination. At the same time, access to social protection is increasingly mediated through digital identification and administrative procedures. This raises questions about how welfare infrastructures accommodate the changing temporal and spatial circumstances of mobile populations. This research examines how Aadhaar-linked welfare infrastructures shape access to social protection among circular migrants in India. It asks how the temporal and spatial rhythms of circular migration intersect with procedures for establishing identity, demonstrating eligibility and accessing welfare entitlements. It further explores how these encounters shape migrants' experiences of social citizenship and the continuity of welfare rights under conditions of climate stress.The study adopts a qualitative, multi-sited ethnographic design, combining participant observation, semi-structured and life-history interviews, and policy analysis. Fieldwork will take place in Kochi, Kerala, a migrant-receiving region, and Murshidabad, West Bengal, a migrant-sending

region. Particular attention will be given to the Public Distribution System and the One Nation One Ration Card scheme, alongside migrants' everyday encounters with welfare administration.

08 December 2026, 09:30-11:00 – Scientific Posters, Room C40.606

Ana Maria Acatrinei Acatrinei
Democratic Resilience
Fuzzy borders: between undoing the nation-state and building Fortress Europe
In my project, I investigate how the EU's cooperation with third countries in migration management may advance the reconfiguration of EU external borders. More concretely, I focus on how such cooperation changes how the filtering function of borders (Mau, 2021) is enacted. This perspective closely follows the view that EU supranational integration should be understood as a process of boundary redefinition (Bartolini, 2005). With my work, I aim to specify how a broader pattern of indirect supranational integration manifests in domains close to core state powers. Methodologically, I rely on theory-testing process tracing to test the transposition of the competence-control theory (Abbott et al, 2020) to core state powers governance. My key argument is that national governments and EU actors have a baseline preference for direct policy tools when it comes to the governance of core state powers, including migration policy and border management. When facing a problem in migration management policy, there would be three possible options: direct integration governance, indirect integration governance, or disintegration. The classic approach for integration in core state powers entails direct governance, either through regulation or supranational capacity building (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2013). However, EU migration policy debates get largely trapped in stalemate, since national governments cannot come to a joint denominator. This deadlock risks putting the EU supranational project onto a path of disintegration if nothing is done. Decision makers may escape deadlock by relying on indirect governance (i.e. outsourcing migration management to third countries) as a subterfuge. As a result, while member states may not be able to not agree on strengthening the EU through direct governance, they inadvertently end up becoming dependent on the cooperation of third countries not bound by EU law and its core values regarding human rights and rule of law.

Beatrice Aleksiejus
Toward a Regenerative Society
Towards a Better Understanding of Complexity and Diversity for Sustainable Chemistry
Pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and innovative materials have greatly improved human life – but they have also left the environment polluted to an extent that raises the question of how far planetary boundaries have already been exceeded. What overwhelms regulatory systems is not only the number of chemicals but their variety. Many are released without sufficient knowledge of their environmental behavior, with consequences for ecosystems and human health. In research on these consequences, two terms keep recurring: complexity and diversity. Pharmaceuticals in water are described as structurally diverse and complex, occurring in complex mixtures that treatment plants struggle to remove. Plastics are called diverse and complex when they combine different monomers, polymers and additives, which hinders recycling. Yet these uses are not equivalent: the terms are applied to single molecules, mixtures, materials and entire systems – and often appear side by side without being distinguished. This matters for sustainable chemistry. The benign by design concept and the EU's Safe and Sustainable by Design framework consider a compound's end-of-life in its design. If complexity and diversity influence whether a chemical can be degraded or recycled, they could become design criteria for more environmentally friendly chemicals. But first it must be clear what they denote.

This critical discussion asks: How are complexity and diversity defined and conceptualized across the disciplines that use them and what do these concepts mean for environmental and sustainable chemistry? A structured literature search was conducted based on seven complexity and diversity terms, and 52 selected articles were analyzed and compared regarding definitions, concepts and disciplines. The poster points out starting points for making these terms usable for environmental and sustainable chemistry.

Elif Laçin Aytaç
Democratic Resilience

Legitimizing Democratic Backsliding: How Autocratizing Incumbents Justify Democratic Subversion

Democratic backsliding has become one of the defining political developments of recent years. Existing research describes the current wave as a process in which elected incumbents incrementally subvert democratic norms and push through institutional changes often by formally legal means (Bermeo 2016; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019). Legitimation, the process through which political actors seek to generate or maintain the belief that their authority, rule or actions are appropriate and rightful (Josua 2024), is central to the process democratic backsliding. Incumbents within the context of democratic backsliding act within democratic institutions and depend on elections. They therefore cannot rely on coercion alone, and they need citizens and institutions at least to tolerate their subversions (Scheppele 2018; Helmke and Rath 2025). Research has established that types and patterns of legitimation claims can signal institutional change (Brunkert and von Soest 2023) or respond to crises and economic conditions (Yavuz 2026; Baturo and Tolstrup 2024). Building on this research, this project asks how autocratizing incumbents legitimize democratic subversions, and how their logic of legitimation changes as backsliding unfolds. I focus specifically on procedural legitimation and performance legitimation. To trace their changes, I aim to annotate speeches with a multi-label coding scheme and fine tune a multilingual transformer model (XLM-RoBERTa). The method is first applied to speeches by Erdoğan and Orbán, the pilot cases for a cross-national design. The presentation introduces the theoretical framework and the measurement strategy, and discusses first descriptive trends from the corpus.

Samuel Eyison
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations

The Role of Managers in Sustainable Development: Examining the Influence of Managerial Characteristics on Stakeholder Theory Mindset

Empirical studies on stakeholder theory mindset (Hörisch et al., 2026; Eyison et al., in progress) and conceptual stakeholder theory research (Freeman et al., 2007, 2010) suggest that stakeholder theory mindset significantly shapes managerial action. Where a mindset has significant organizational consequences, research should examine its origins to inform training and behavioral change (Walsh, 1995). It therefore becomes important to understand which factors are associated with the extent to which managers hold a stakeholder theory mindset. Existing stakeholder research, however, cannot show how managers' characteristics relate to their endorsement of stakeholder theory itself (Hörisch et al., 2026). Accordingly, this study asks: Which factors are associated with the degree to which managers hold a stakeholder theory mindset? Drawing from upper echelons theory, the study examines the associations between managers' experience in stakeholder-focused roles, personality traits, and personal values and the extent to which they exhibit a stakeholder theory mindset. Following empirical evidence that job-related experiences may have intervening effects on the associations between individual characteristics and managerial cognition (e.g., Dragoni et al., 2011; Story et al., 2014; Andresen & Bergdolt, 2021), the study will also examine whether

stakeholder-related work experience mediates the relationship between managers' values and personality traits and their stakeholder theory mindset. The proposed relationships will be analyzed using hierarchical regression and path analyses. The study expands the nomological network of stakeholder theory mindset by identifying associated managerial characteristics and extends Upper Echelons Theory by testing the theory's cognitive premise.

Samuel Gausi
Democratic Resilience
Can an LLM code a systematic review? What our dry run showed.
Democratic Innovations (DIs) are theorised to improve environmental sustainability while at the same time enhancing democratic quality. However, this theory predominantly rests on evidence from Western democracies. We know little about what DIs exist outside this context, the conditions under which they succeed to produce desired effects – and whether Northern theoretical frameworks travel to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This PhD project addresses this gap by asking: When do DIs on environmental issues fail or succeed in SSA, and do the conditions for success differ from those found in Western cases? The research unfolds in three stages. Stage 1 develops an original dataset of environmental DIs in SSA through systematic screening of sources including Participedia, academic and grey literature. Stage 2 applies a case survey method to this dataset of published case studies, systematically analysing how design features (e.g. inclusiveness, deliberative quality, decision-making power, scale) and contextual conditions (e.g. civil society strength, state capacity, decentralisation, potential role of donor organizations) shape both environmental sustainability delivery and democratic quality. Stage 3 compares the resulting configurations against Western meta-analyses and case literature to assess whether and why SSA cases diverge from existing theory. In theoretical terms, the project contributes to debates on democratization and democratic resilience by examining how DIs can simultaneously build input legitimacy (through participation) and output legitimacy (through effective problem-solving) in contexts markedly different from those in which current theory was developed.

Merle Zoë Larro
Organizing in Times of Crisis
Organising Ecovillages in Times of Crisis
On the example of intentional communities with a socio-ecological focus, I am researching how collective organising brings desired futures into the present in the context of crises. To do so, I will work with several communities in 2027, employing ethnographic methods, particularly participant observation and interviews. My research draws on practice theories and includes questions of more-than-human and human entanglements and affects.

Mara Elisa Petzoldt
Democratic Resilience
Explaining Variation in Sovereignty Transfers in Brazil's Environmental Governance
Brazil's government under Lula welcomes international cooperation in some areas of environmental governance, such as international funding for forest protection, while limiting or rejecting foreign involvement in others, such as the use of natural resources. In both cases, it invokes national sovereignty. This project asks: Why does a government grant sovereignty to international partners in some environmental cases and retract it in others? Research on sovereignty in International Relations often treats cooperation as a binary choice and explains differences between states rather than within one government. Drawing on Krasner,

Philpott and Litfin, the project understands sovereignty as a divisible practice made up of distinct elements, such as decision-making authority and control over resources. A sovereignty transfer is a decision to cede such elements; sovereignty bargaining is the decision-making process behind it. The project takes a class-based political economy perspective. It assumes that the Brazilian state is not a unitary actor but operates in a field shaped by competing fractions of capital, as well as by the government's own social base. The working hypothesis is that sovereignty is granted where cooperation is compatible with the interests of dominant fractions and retracted where it threatens them. Sovereignty discourse is understood as part of how such decisions are justified as the national interest. The research design is qualitative. It combines the systematic mapping of cooperation decisions of the Lula governments, including rejected offers, with in-depth case studies selected to compare similar areas with different outcomes. It draws on document analysis, interviews during fieldwork in Brazil, and discourse analysis. The poster presents the research question, the conceptual framework and the planned design. It invites feedback on case selection and on combining structural and discursive perspectives.

Maryam Raayatpisheh
Toward a Regenerative Society
Can a Perennial Grain Make Food Systems Regenerative? A Review of Intermediate Wheatgrass
The transition towards regenerative food systems calls for agricultural approaches that support ecosystem health while providing nutritious, high-quality food. Perennial grains are attracting growing attention in this context. Intermediate wheatgrass (IWG, Thinopyrum intermedium), commercially known as Kernza®, is a promising example, offering both environmental advantages and opportunities for food innovation.
This poster presents the main findings of my published review, which brings together current knowledge on the cultivation, environmental benefits, nutritional composition and food-processing applications of IWG. Its perennial growth habit and extensive root system contribute to soil protection, reduced nutrient leaching and soil carbon storage. Its grain is notable for relatively high protein and dietary fiber contents, alongside valuable phytochemicals, offering opportunities to diversify cereal-based foods.
Despite these advantages, low grain yield, higher production costs, limited baking quality and flour functionality still restrict broader use. The poster shows how breeding programs are narrowing the yield gap and which processing strategies can improve the use of IWG in food, including blending with wheat, bran reduction, functional additives, enzymatic treatments, extrusion and steam explosion.
It closes with the remaining research gaps and the priorities needed to move perennial grains from promise to practice: continued progress in crop improvement, nutritional and functional quality, and viable food applications. I would welcome discussion on how perennial grain research can contribute to regenerative food systems across disciplines.

Ariane Rhomberg
Toward a Regenerative Society
Inner Sustainability
Might inner sustainability be the deepest leverage point for sustainability transformations? While sustainability research and practice have traditionally focused on external transformations, increasing attention is being paid to inner dimensions, such as values, worldviews, emotions, and lived experiences. Yet what exactly is inner sustainability? How does it emerge, what strengthens or undermines it, and how does it relate to sustainability in the world "out there"? Through a systematic literature review and qualitative research, I am investigating how inner sustainability is conceptualised, experienced, and cultivated for its

intrinsic good and as a potential means to social-ecological sustainability. This poster presents guiding research questions and preliminary findings. It invites critical reflection and discussion on whether, how, and under what conditions inner sustainability might contribute to sustainability in the outer world.

Mari Uesugi
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability

Preparing Students for Future Uncertainty: A Systematic Review on School-Based Practices and the Role of Emotions

Background: Rapid technological, social, and political transformations have increased attention to educational approaches that help students anticipate and engage with possible futures. Yet engaging with uncertainty is not only a cognitive process; it may also involve emotions that shape students' learning and motivation. Method: This systematic review examines (1) the characteristics of school-based practices aimed at preparing students for future uncertainty and (2) how emotions are conceptualized and addressed within these practices. Following PRISMA guidelines, we searched five databases (Scopus, Web of Science, APA PsycInfo, PubPsy, and ERIC) for peer-reviewed empirical studies of practices in primary and secondary education. Two independent raters screened records against predefined eligibility criteria. Results: Preliminary findings indicate varied n in educational aims, duration, and pedagogical approaches. Practices frequently address climate change and sustainable futures, targeting competencies such as futures literacy, systems thinking, and agency. Activities include scenario development, imagining future cities, storytelling, and participatory play. Most studies focus on secondary school students. Emotions including hope, anxiety, and empathy appear both as responses to uncertain futures and as experiences during educational activities. By synthesizing these approaches and examining the place of emotions within them, the review aims to inform future educational practice and teacher education.

Sara Maria Velez Restrepo
Organizing in Times of Crisis

Is There Tomorrow? Future-Making in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems under Polycrisis

Research on entrepreneurial ecosystems (EEs) has long explained how they develop, perform, and endure, and a growing body of work examines their resilience and persistence under crisis. Yet crises are increasingly continuous, overlapping, and entangled, a condition captured by the term polycrisis, and under these conditions the past offers little basis for extrapolating what an ecosystem will become. Existing research treats the future of an EE as a development stage, a performance outcome, or a story told to promote a place. It rarely asks how the actors of an ecosystem produce the plural, sometimes competing futures on which they act, particularly when no single actor coordinates them. This research asks: How are futures produced in entrepreneurial ecosystems under polycrisis? It adopts a practice perspective on future-making, which treats futures as made in the present through the activities and material arrangements of actors. The study aims to show how futures are imagined, justified, contested, materialized, and revised across ecosystem practices, how artefacts hold particular futures in place, and how futures remain plural and open where no actor integrates the ecosystem. The empirical setting is the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Cali, Colombia, where long-standing conditions and successive shocks, including the 2021 national strike, armed violence, and the earthquake of August 2026, have become entangled. The planned design is an interpretive ethnography. Data will come from observation and shadowing, semi-structured interviews, and documents, with fieldwork planned to begin in early 2027. Analysis will be iterative and sensitized by practice theory and the future-

making literature. In the presentation, I will present the research design as work in progress and invite discussion on how to study future-making in entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Maria Wolters
Toward a Regenerative Society
Interactions of Regenerative Dynamics in Social-Ecological Systems
The concept of 'regeneration' is gaining increased attention in various fields relevant to sustainability science including social-ecological systems science. A regenerative system is dominated by positive system dynamics that support human and non-human life, so called regenerative dynamics. Theory suggests that regenerative dynamics mutually reenforce each other across social-ecological domains and scales, which would make them especially strong levers of transformative change. However, evidence on these effects is scarce. Thus, in my PhD I conduct a case study with the aim to provide empirical evidence for cross-domain and cross-scale interactions between regenerative dynamics. My case study area comprises the territory of a holistic landscape restoration (HLR) project in the Altiplano Estepario in Spain. In this poster I present my research plan, the progress made on the first work package and the next steps of the research process. As part of my first work package, I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews between March and May 2026 with famers and other residents of the case study area. The interview data was coded for returns, barriers and drivers of activities related to the HLR project that include for example restoration, community building and regenerative farming. I use this data to analyse if the HLR project drives regenerative dynamics, and in which domains and on which scales these dynamics occur. I will then explore how the regenerative dynamics interact with each other and with other dominant dynamics in the system. The results of the analysis will be validated in the first part of a participatory workshop in Summer 2027. The second part of the workshop will centre around work package two, which focusses on possible scenarios for future regenerative development of the territory.

08 December 2026, 11:00-12:30 – Scientific Talks, Room C40.606

Fatemeh Ghayeghi Hassani
Organizing in Times of Crisis
Toward an intelligent experience of temporality: How AI reshapes Creative work
As generative AI spreads through creative industries, research has examined how it changes tasks and organizations, but little attention has been paid to how it changes the temporal conditions under which creative ideas emerge. This paper draws on the distinction between Chronos (linear, measurable, schedulable time) and Kairos (the qualitative, opportune time of immersion, serendipity, and insight). Creative work depends on their interplay: Kairos-driven breakthroughs arise inside Chronos-driven routine, and are often enabled by unplanned pauses and friction, or "idle meantime," that let actors detach and defocus while the creative process is still open. I argue that AI, by shortening the path from possibility to output, may remove these delays and thereby compress the temporal space in which Kairos moments can appear. To explain why AI becomes so deeply integrated into creative work that it reshapes actors' temporal experience, I adopt a posthumanist perspective. This perspective treats agency as emerging from human and more-than-human entanglements rather than from humans alone, and it shifts the question from whether AI is human-like to what AI does within creative relations. It also helps explain the growing integration: technology is over-coded by the profit logic of advanced capitalism, so workers feel pushed to adopt AI to keep pace, which tightens the entanglement and accelerates work further. The paper therefore

asks what happens when technologies that expand creative possibilities simultaneously eliminate the idle time on which creativity depends.

Mariia Kochkina
Climate Futures

Rat Race to a New Species: Climate Futures and the Natural Imaginaries of Thinking Machines

In the 1950s, American cybernetics pictured intelligence as a mouse in a maze. Today, the ghosts of this early thinking return when AI is called a new species that is rapidly learning and evolving, with news about agents escaping their "sandboxes". Our futures become then a matter of planetary-scale experimentation with it. This paper surveys natural metaphors in American and Soviet cybernetics, both shaped by the Cold War, from the laboratory animal to the biosphere as a computable system, and traces their later transfer into climate modeling and ideas of planetary governance. I treat these metaphors as constitutive of scientific facts rather than as decoration. They carry assumptions about how the world functions and what our tools are built to do, for whom and at what cost. Making them visible lets us ask what lies at the end of today's rat race, and what alternative digital futures we might dig up through an archaeology of computing.

Paula Rubertus
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability

Conflict, Cooperation, and Climate Policy: How Citizens Evaluate Parliamentary Decision-Making

Despite alarming ecological impacts, climate change has lost salience relative to other crises, leaving public support for high-impact climate mitigation policies in decline. At the same time, democracies are increasingly criticized for struggling to address complex long-term issues, fueling skepticism toward political institutions. Understanding how political decision-making processes can be designed to sustain both democratic legitimacy and effective climate action is therefore an important task for a sustainable society. We first aim to understand whether and how citizens' evaluation of standard representative decision-making processes shape public support for climate policies. In a factorial vignette experiment (German online sample, target N = 400; data collection November 2026) participants evaluated parliamentary decision-making scenarios varying in interparty conflict, opposition involvement, and policy features (pro- vs. anti-climate mitigation; tax reductions vs. regulations). Policy support and process evaluation were measured using Likert-type ratings across repeated trials. We present multi-level regression results addressing our main hypotheses. We expect process evaluations to be positively associated with policy support and to be shaped by information on parliamentary conflict and involvement, as well as by individual-level variables like democratic preferences, institutional trust, and relative deprivation. In exploratory analyses, we examine the extent to which evaluations of political decision-making processes are influenced by policy features, and vice versa, and contrast responses to pro- and anti-climate policy scenarios. Through a critical discussion of our findings in light of theoretical foundations and our experimental methodology, we aim to establish a theoretical framework and to improve our study design for future research across different political systems and democratic innovations.

08 December 2026, 11:00-12:30 – Scientific Talks, Room C40.601

Judith Magdalena Aguilar Castellanos
Companies as Drivers of Sustainability Transformations

REAL Entrepreneurship in Times of Socio-Ecological Degradation: From conceptual framework to intervention design

The Mesoamerican Reef System in the Caribbean extends over 1,000 km through Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Guatemala, with three million people depending on it. Along this coastline, rural women are collectively organizing entrepreneurial initiatives through locally embedded, non-traditional forms of cooperation in response to socio-ecological pressures affecting their livelihoods, communities and coastal-marine ecosystems. Regenerative organizing offers a lens for understanding how place, local knowledge, relationships and entrepreneurial activity may contribute to regeneration by shifting organizational priorities towards working with and for nature. It seeks to restore degraded ecosystems, strengthen community wellbeing and foster capacities for continued renewal through place-based knowledge, relationships and collective action. Drawing on regenerative entrepreneurship, decolonial perspectives and organizational theory, this study conceptualizes Reweaving Place as a potential process through which entrepreneurial activity becomes reorganized by restoring and reconfiguring the social, cultural, economic, ecological and more-than-human relationships that constitute a territory. It asks: What regenerative practices of rural women-led initiatives support community regeneration?

Laura Berger
Organizing in Times of Crisis

Reconceptualizing Organizational Resilience under Conditions of Polycrisis

The increasing frequency and simultaneity of crises disrupt organizational structures and processes and challenge established forms of organizing. This phenomenon is increasingly understood as a polycrisis – a constellation of simultaneous and causally entangled crises whose interactions exceed the sum of their parts. In response to the increasing adversities organizations face, the concept of organizational resilience has gained considerable attention as the capacity of organizations to anticipate, respond to, and recover from adverse events. However, existing research on organizational resilience largely builds on an understanding of crisis as an episode the organization passes through and returns from. This conceptualization assumes that adversity comes to an end, that there is an equilibrium to return to, and that organization and crisis remain separable. Under polycrisis, these conditions no longer hold. First, the organization does not move through successive phases of a single disruption but is simultaneously situated in different phases of several crises. Second, systems are pushed into a sustained state of disequilibrium, so it becomes unclear what resilience is measured against. Third, as polycrisis phenomena cross geographic, organizational, and institutional boundaries, organizations are entangled with the crises rather than merely exposed to them. As a result, responses to one crisis can create or intensify vulnerabilities elsewhere. The guiding research question of this dissertation is therefore "How is organizational resilience conceptualized and enacted under conditions of polycrisis, and with what consequences for the organization and its stakeholders?"

Luca Lambers
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability

Fostering Tolerance of Ambiguity in Schools: From a Systematic Review to Design-Based Research

Democratic education depends on the ability to negotiate competing viewpoints (Habermas, 1992), even when differences cannot be fully resolved (Mouffe, 2000). Schools therefore need spaces in which students encounter and examine different interpretations (Achour, 2025). But how can teaching concepts be developed, tested and refined to foster students' tolerance of ambiguity? Tolerance of ambiguity concerns how individuals respond to competing or incomplete meanings (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949; Budner, 1962). A systematic review of 34 publications examines how the concept has been understood and studied in schools. The studies address learning and achievement, well-being, professionalisation and teaching practice, and plurality and difference. Some link tolerance of ambiguity to collaborative learning (Lin et al., 2023); others examine conflicting demands on teachers (Wilke et al., 2024). Across these areas, tolerance of ambiguity is primarily understood as an individual disposition. Its expression, however, also depends on how ambiguous situations arise and are addressed in schools. Experimental work suggests that it may be malleable (Endres et al., 2015), yet little is known about how schools can deliberately foster it. My doctoral project addresses this question through design-based research (McKenney & Reeves, 2019). Qualitative interviews with students and teachers will first identify existing opportunities and challenges. These findings will inform the participatory development of teaching concepts, followed by testing and refinement in lessons and other school settings. Questionnaires and qualitative data will be used to examine possible changes in students' tolerance of ambiguity and the conditions under which the concepts can be put into practice. At the conference, I will discuss how the review informs the research design and which theoretical and methodological questions remain open.

08 December 2026, 11:00-12:30 – Scientific Talks, Room C40.320

Jonathan Mehlfeldt
Toward a Regenerative Society
Transformation in Legal Research - Between Heuristic and Disciplinary Openness
Both the digital and the sustainable transformation have recently emerged in the legal-scientific discourse as socio-legal phenomena to be analysed through a novel research perspective. This presentation attempts at identifying this perspective as a specific methodological approach, contextualising its epistemic assumption and its disciplinary openness as two central, distinguishing characteristics. While the intersections of transformation research and legal scholarship embody diverse approaches with varying degrees of extradisciplinarity, the presentation focusses on the approach of Transformative Legal Research, coined by von Landenberg-Roberg and categorised into Transformation-related Law, Transformative Law, and Law of Transformation. Based on the hypothesis that these three categories map onto a continuum of degrees of interdisciplinarity, the presentation argues that the risks of engaging in heuristic reasoning and normative import rise in proportion to the degree of interdisciplinarity demonstrated by each approach. To establish a methodology capable of accounting for these risks, the presentation will then contrast Transformative Legal Research with traditional legal-doctrinal methodology characterised by doctrine-based normativity and disciplinary stringency, integrating the traditional and the novel research perspectives through the notions of epistemic reflection and political-normative transparency. This presentation therefore explicates the concept of Transformation as a perspective in legal research and reflects on the associated methodological risks to inform both the broader methodological discourse and further legal-scientific inquiries into socio-legal transformations.

Mayleen Luisa Schack
Psychology of Transformation towards Sustainability

Sampling Science Under Uncertainty: How Scientific Evidence Shapes Information Engagement

Science communication aims to equip people with the knowledge to make informed decisions. Yet scientific evidence rarely comes with certainty, especially when conditions change quickly. Research has mostly examined how people react to uncertainty in a message they are given, for example in terms of credibility and beliefs (e.g. Gustafson & Rice, 2020). Less is known about how the certainty of evidence shapes the information search, that is, how much people choose to read, when they stop, and how their feelings change along the way. This project addresses this gap. It asks how certain and uncertain scientific statements shape how people feel about a novel technology and how much information they seek, and whether the uncertainty predicts their attitudes towards science. We use an online within-subject information-sampling experiment. Participants learn about three technologies, presented in random order. For one technology the scientific statements give a certain-high estimate (e.g. 90%), for another a certain-low estimate (e.g. 10%), and for the third an uncertain estimate (e.g. 50%). Participants can read up to 20 statements per technology and decide after each one whether to continue. After every statement they rate their affect towards the technology, and after every technology they report perceived uncertainty, concern and support for science. This paradigm allows us to examine how uncertainty in scientific statements shapes sampling behaviour. It addresses how people engage with scientific information when the science itself is still unclear, with implications for how researchers can communicate their work and how citizens can be involved early in the research process, when uncertainty is high or conditions are constantly changing.

Milan Schröder
Democratic Resilience

Periods of Order and Interregnum: Identifying Transformations in Global Order Discourse, 1946-2025

The global order is flux. As the US retreats from the Liberal International Order, emerging powers might aim to fill the hegemonic void. However, as formations of new orders tend to occur only at major historical junctures like hegemonic wars, the current situation might be better understood as transformation within an existing order. International Order(s) are understood as “patterns of relating and acting” and the rules, institutions, laws, and norms maintaining them (Barnett, 2021). Drawing on the tradition of Critical Geopolitics, I investigate the implicit assumptions and ideologies expressed in competing states' discursive constructions of International Order. Natural language processing and network analysis are combined to operationalize global order discourse as discourse networks between states, institutions and more abstract political concepts. Their relations are classified by framing (as cooperative/conflictive, hierarchical, etc.) and aggregated to identify stable patterns like ideological blocs or spheres of influence implicitly assumed in high-level state discourse. Based on this, change points are identified at which formerly stable elements of order were transforming, either by a sudden turn towards a new paradigm or by entering a period of interregnum, indicated by a fragmentation of discourse. I apply this approach to the UN General Debate, the prime forum for state leaders to discuss their country's perspective on international politics and order. The paper traces shifts in Representations of Global Order across actors from 1946 to 2025 to assess how far dominant discourses have been contested or (universally) taken for granted. In identifying nuanced changes, including formations of regional and sectoral sub-orders, fragmenting perspectives, and emerging discourse coalitions for wholly new alternative orders, the analysis advances our understanding of contemporary processes of transformations of and within International Orders.

08 December 2026, 13:30-15:00 – Community Space

This space includes offers from PhDs to PhDs.

- Ana Maria Acatrinei Acatrinei: Science communication and outreach during our PhD
- Jeanine Rühle, Ariane Rhomberg, Alyssa Solvie: Regenerative World Café
- Simon Meyer: Spaces of Imagination & Playfulness - Exploring Improvisation Theatre
- Further offers possible.

Details will be announced at the conference.

08 December 2026, 15:30-16:30 - Keynote, Room C40.606

Dr. Carlie Trott

Associate Professor, Community & Organizational Research for Action (CORA)
Department of Psychology, University of Cincinnati

Carlie D. Trott, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cincinnati, where she directs the Just Climate Futures Lab and advises doctoral students in the Community and Organizational Research for Action (CORA) Ph.D. program. A social psychologist by training and community psychologist in practice, Dr. Trott's climate justice research aims to bring visibility to, and work against the inequitable impacts of climate change, socially and geographically.

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Prefigurative Research for Societal Transformation: Enacting Alternatives in the Here and Now

How can research move beyond examining societal problems and recommending solutions toward actively contributing to transformative social change? Drawing on social movement scholarship, this talk introduces prefigurative politics as an action-oriented approach to societal transformation that seeks to enact desired alternatives in the present while disseminating images of possibility that challenge the status quo. Through examples from community-engaged, participatory research on climate justice in the United States and Haiti, this talk explores how researchers across disciplines might adopt prefigurative methodologies that treat the research process itself as a site of action, cultivating collective agency and helping to bring into being more just and sustainable futures today.