

Stay tuned for:

Making Hope Possible

*Planning conference with conference partners for the 2026 4th Biennial
International Transdisciplinary Conference
on Environmental Justice*

August 17-20, 2025, Switzerland

Host:

Lassalle-Institute, Zürich

Partners (in alphabetical order):

COMPARTE network (COL); ESSC Institute of Environmental Science for Social Change (PHL); Georgetown University, Washington DC (USA); Institute of Geography, University of Berne (CH); Laudato Si Research Institute, University of Oxford (UK); Leuphana University of Lüneburg (D); Munich School of Philosophy (D); Newman Institutet (SWE); Santa Clara University, California; Universidad Iberoamericana Ciudad de Mexico (MEX); University of Fribourg, Environmental Sciences & Humanities Institute (CH) ; XIM University, AIESS Centre, Xavier Institute of Management (IND); ZHAW sustainability, Zurich University of Applied Sciences (CH)

The 2026 Biennial International Transdisciplinary Conference on Environmental Justice at the Lassalle-Institute (Switzerland) will provide a dynamic platform for environmental justice communities, engaged scientists and reflective practitioners working toward social-ecological transformation. In preparation, we invite you to the August 17-20 2025 planning conference, which will provide an opportunity for all partners to participate in the process. As an institution of the Society of Jesus, the Lassalle-Institute fosters inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue, engaging different spiritual and cultural traditions, environmental justice communities, scientific disciplines, practitioners, institutions, and agencies seeking solutions for the common good.

Welcome to the preconference of our biennial “making hope possible”

Social-ecological transformation is driven by a shared vision of a better world and the pragmatic hope that future can be shaped individually and collectively, as outlined in the groundbreaking encyclical Laudato Si of Pope Francis (2015).

The aim of a preconference in 2025 is to jointly deepen the topic of hope regarding social-ecological transformation, specifically to:

- Further specification of the conference topic in the main knowledge fields (see below)
- Design of the conference (keynotes, parallel sessions, dialogue with business and government institutions)
- Preparing the call for papers
- Deepening the relationships between agents of social-ecological transformation

This process will be allowing for a common ownership of our conference in 2026.

To be published in 2025:

Making Hope Possible – On Scaling up transdisciplinary scholarship for sustainability, edited by members of the academic committee of the conference; volume with the results of the 3rd Biennial International Transdisciplinary Conference on Environmental Justice; to be published in the book series on [Environmental Humanities: Transformation, Governance, Ethics, Law](#) (edited by Felix Ekaradt and Susanne Stoll-Kleemann), by SpringerLink (ebook with open access).

*In recent years, the **urgency and relevance of hope** in times of crises, full of uncertainty and profound changes, become apparent. The “Hope Barometer” by an international research network¹ shows that a majority of respondents are convinced to have mastered the Covid Crisis quite well and are looking positively towards their individual future; however they are rather **pessimistic when it comes to societal and global developments**, in particular when it comes to ecological crises and wars.*

*In the eyes of many respondents, **economic and technological progress does not seem to be able to solve the current social and ecological problems**. Many people have **little faith in political and economic processes** to achieve a lasting turnaround (Krafft, A., 2025, Hoffnungsbarometer, University of St. Gallen Switzerland). Despite their concerns, **respondants are not completely giving up their belief in the possibility of positive developments in the area of climate and the environment**. Many would be prepared to make a personal contribution if others, especially politicians and businesses, would do more (ibid.).*

*While some activists claim that hope prevents the necessary fundamental changes, philosophers and political scientists point out the **motivational power of hope**, even if it manifests itself only in small projects (Grethlein, J., 2024, Hoffnung – eine Geschichte der Zuversicht, C.H. Beck). The various manifestations of hope demonstrate the fundamental openness of the human spirit to a better future and the deep relationship between mankind and the environment.*

*Thus, hope must be more than just a “wait-and-see” optimism. It requires, on the one hand, **personal examination of broken hearts, pains and setbacks**, plus the individual willingness and faith to refuse surrender or despair. It requires also, on the other hand, **active solidarity**. “**Standing together**” in **communities of practice** that allow an inspiring dialogue and joint reflection on collective resilience, transdisciplinary methods of problem-solving and sustainable strategies.*

*Social ecological transformation is driven by a shared vision of a better world and the pragmatic hope/expectation that future can be shaped individually and collectively. Instead of dystopian images of a decaying earth, **realistic utopias of a flourishing world are needed, as well as feasible practices to make hope possible**. These practices can be scientific, political, organizational, communicative, spiritual, or artistic in nature. Hence, communities of practice (Wenger, E., 1998/2015) are needed to make hope possible. These practices are held together by regular interaction, based on value awareness, critical reflection and joint action; furthermore, shared images and narratives of a desirable future play a crucial role, as well as permanent exercises to examine the feasibility of these beliefs.*

Based on the previous Conferences on Environmental Justice, the preconference in 2025 will be centered on the following key questions and connect to relevant fields of inquiry:

Key Questions

¹ (Andreas Krafft, unsere Hoffnungen unsere Zukunft, 2022, European countries: F, I, A, CH, E, CZ, Malt, PL, P; other continents: ISR, IND, AUS, COL, NGA, ZAF)

- *How can practitioners of hope enable feasible and sustainable solutions, build communities of practice that make hope possible, and support and promote individual and collective resilience?*
- *With regard to which topics (problems, methods, worst, good and best practices, theories) should key stakeholders be informed and involved in transdisciplinary dialogue, and which formats of interaction are appropriate to this objective?*

Main fields of inquiry:

- **Transdisciplinarity:** *Prerequisites, pathways, milestones and resources for communities of practice focused on making hope possible*
- **Theology,** *exploring especially the eschatological dimension of Christian hope, as well as interfaith perspectives on resilience and renewal.*
- **Humanities and Arts:** *interlinked discourses on hope and how to make hope possible in different modes (visual, linguistic, body-based) and in different actor-networks, exploring the embeddedness of these discourses in political, organizational, economical dispositives and thus practices*
- **Social sciences,** *how communities sustain collective hope amid crisis.*
- **Natural sciences,** *how hope is linked to planetary resilience and ecological restoration.*
- **Integral ecology,** *looking at how hope is embodied in environmental movements, grassroots activism, and indigenous worldviews.*
- **Policy and governance,** *examining practices of making hope possible in different stages of organization and community-building, e.g. democratic grass-roots initiatives, democratic countries, supranational institutions (such as EU and UNO) and multilateral frameworks like COP conferences.*
- **Investigation of family businesses and faith-based organizations,** *and how they can be conceived as communities of practice to make hope possible, and what they need and should do to make hope possible*
- **Specific reflective social practices** *such as leading, counselling, managing, designing etc. in the context of communities of practice to make hope possible, as they are investigated by specific disciplines in transdisciplinary projects and communities.*

Where and When:

The pre-conference will be held from **Sunday, August 17, through Wednesday, August 20.** This year, we will convene in Zurich, specifically at Hirschengraben. The facilities of the community and the Jesuit student house *aki* will be at our disposal to ensure that we can make these intensive days as productive as possible.

Costs:

We are fortunate that also our conference will be subsidized. Participation fees can be waived. Accommodation fees from Sunday evening until Wednesday after lunch are CHF 400,-

We kindly ask you to submit your registration by **May 9** to info@lassalle-institut.org.



This picture is taken from the beautiful terrace at Hirschengraben in Zurich.