

Co-designing pathways for transformative change

Online International Winter School on Sustainable Development for Bachelor's and Master's Students

www.cde.unibe.ch/online_school

23 to 31 January 2025

Programme

Days 1–2: Introduction and gaining a deeper understanding of sustainable development, transformation, and your own role as a researcher.

Days 3–6: Delving deeper by exploring different case studies and beginning to co-design student projects.

Day 7: Harvesting insights from student projects and reflecting on personal learning journeys.

Session summaries

Day 1: Thursday, 23 January 2023

Session 1: Welcome and introduction

The summer school will be opened by a welcome session. We will introduce the programme, as well as a set of “house rules” that will ensure smooth running of the online course. This will be followed by a positioning game and a general introduction to the University of Bern.

Session 2: Workshop on intercultural learning

[Dr. Lenka Fehrenbach](#), UniBE International, University of Bern

This session will delve into the inspiring topic of intercultural learning and communication. Designed to help you develop your intercultural learning skills, it will encourage you to be critical about your views on the culture and society of both your home country and your host country, Switzerland. We will discuss your expectations of the summer school, learn about complex terms such as culture and interculturality, and reflect on how you can best benefit from this online summer school with fellow students from all over the world.

Session 3: Sustainable development – concepts, perspectives, and values

[Sara Frey](#), Research Associate and PhD Candidate, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

This session will provide an overview of different perspectives on sustainable development by introducing various concepts. We will trace the evolution of the concept of sustainable development in the context of the UN, focusing specifically on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We will then consider concepts from different world regions, looking in particular at *buen vivir*. We will discuss the different concepts and explore potential conflicts that can arise in the context of sustainable development. We will also reflect on our own assumptions, values, and beliefs, and why we hold them.

Session 4a: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

[Dr. Isabelle Providoli](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

[Dr. Brigitte Portner](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

What is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and why is it so important? Better inclusion of sustainability topics in university curricula is key to tackling sustainability challenges. Teaching approaches and curricula need to focus more on competences, as it is important to build academic knowledge, professional skills, and critical awareness (attitude, values) simultaneously. In this session, we will have a closer look at the various competences you need to become an agent of change. Besides, we will start a process of reflection that will guide us through the week and through our individual learning journeys.

Day 2: Friday, 24 January 2025

Session 5: Transformation towards sustainable futures

[Prof. Dr. Thomas Breu](#), Director, CDE, University of Bern

This presentation will start with a brief overview of increasingly complex global development challenges. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Sustainable Development Report call for a new form of science that actively helps to address these challenges. Science must provide knowledge that is capable of guiding negotiations and shaping transformations towards more sustainable development. This is not an easy task: it requires scientists to find new inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to research, as wicked and dynamic sustainability problems are rarely captured within the boundaries of established scientific disciplines.

Session 6: Networking event and social meet-up

This session will enable you to connect with your fellow students and the online summer school lecturers. We will engage in networking speed dating, followed by a fun quiz. You will have the opportunity to exchange on your background, motivation, and interests, and to get to know each other better. Maybe you will already find out with whom you would like to collaborate on the student project (see Sessions 7a–d).

Session 7a: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – introduction to student projects (Part 1: Dare to shape)

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Problems of unsustainable development are manifold, and science has helped to identify and characterize many of them. But what can we do about them? We need to find solutions. During Sessions 7a to 7d, you will co-develop project ideas in student groups to tackle a sustainability challenge of your interest.

DARE TO SHAPE the outcome of the summer school. In Session 7a, you will get the opportunity to talk about a sustainability challenge you care about (optional; see preparatory task). If you dare, prepare a mini talk. The mini talks will serve as a basis for forming groups with a view to subsequent group work (Sessions 7c). The topic you present might be taken up by a group of students, who will continue working on it over the following days.

Session 8a: Sustainability projects in your local neighbourhood

[Dr. Brigitte Portner](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

All students will be invited to present a sustainability project or initiative of any kind from their local neighbourhood (different from the one selected in Session 7a). You can be actively involved in this project or just know about it. You will be asked to document the project over the weekend with pictures, video clips, and other material, in order to be able to present it in an online booth on Monday, 4 September (Session 8b).

Weekend: Saturday, 25 and Sunday, 26 January 2025

Task: Sustainability projects in your local neighbourhood

You will document an existing sustainability project or initiative of your choice in your neighbourhood, which you will present to your fellow students in an online booth in Session 8b.

Day 3: Monday, 27 January 2025

Session 9: Engaging on behalf of sustainable development

[Dr. Isabelle Providoli](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

[Dr. Brigitte Portner](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

The UN 2030 Agenda and the Global Sustainable Development Report call for a new form of science (see Session 5). In this session, we will reflect on what kind of research, tools, and competences can help advance sustainability transformations. How can your research field contribute, and what role might you play, as a researcher or in your future work outside academia? We will also discuss different pathways to impact associated with systemic and inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches.

Session 8b: Sustainability projects in your local neighbourhood

[Dr. Brigitte Portner](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

[Dr. Isabelle Providoli](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

All students will present a sustainability project or initiative of their choice in an online booth. You will discuss the different sustainability projects in small groups.

Session 10: Change agents

[Dr. Lilian Trechsel](#), Head of Transformative Education and Science Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

We will learn how students can act as change agents. Students are instrumental in shaping their surroundings, the communities they live in, and society in general: they play a crucial role in steering these spaces in a more sustainable direction. How can students assume this important responsibility, be aware of their role as boundary agents, and become agents of change? We will explore research results from a study in Switzerland on students in a semi-formal setting where they carry out research projects with different societal actors.

Session 11a: Introduction to group process and group reflection

How are successful interdisciplinary group processes organized? You will be working intensively on your group projects during the summer school. We will guide you through key elements for smooth group work and provide you with tools to reflect on your group process.

Day 4: Tuesday, 28 January 2025

Session 7b: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – introduction to student projects (Part 2: Get ready)

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

GET READY in this session to start your group work. You will learn about the methodology of *participatory visioning and scenario planning* and how you can use it to develop concrete action plans for your project ideas.

Session 12: Food systems and their role in sustainability transformations

[Dr. Theresa Tribaldos](#), Head of Just Economies and Human Well-Being Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Food systems play a key role in sustainability transformations. They cause and are affected by global change processes. Their connections to almost all aspects of human life are reflected in their relations to all Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda, and they are fundamental for human and nature health outcomes. This session will provide an overview of food systems, highlighting their importance – and levers – for sustainability transformations.

Session 13: Inequality, a tale of two stories – which do we tell?

[Dr. Christoph Bader](#), Member of the Executive Committee, Head of Transformative Education and Science Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

How can we alleviate poverty and inequality? What works, and what doesn't? We will discuss past, current, and potential measures and analyse the difference between the two concepts. When is inequality a problem, and do we really need economic growth in order to reduce poverty and inequality – or is *growth* the problem? This session will conclude with a discussion of what policies should be promoted for what purpose – and how to move forward.

Session 7c: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – individual group work

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Building on Sessions 7a–b, you will work on your student project in your group. Lecturers will be available at certain times to answer the group's questions.

Day 5: Wednesday, 29 January 2025

Session 14a: Sustainability governance – concepts and Case Study A (mega-infrastructure projects)

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

This session will focus on sustainability governance and its importance for sustainable development. First, you will be familiarized with the complex meanings of “governance”. In the second part of the session, we will take a closer look at mega-infrastructure projects such as deep-sea ports, highways, tourism development zones, and more. You will learn about the – mostly negative – impacts of mega-infrastructure projects on local communities and the environment. Further, we will explore how governance can be a lever for locally affected communities to respond more effectively to such mega-projects despite enormous power disparities.

Session 14 b: Sustainability governance – Case Study B (land governance in Myanmar)

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

In this session, you will learn about the role of power in land governance, using the case of Myanmar, Southeast Asia. We will look at how powerful actors shape the governance of land. We will explore the importance of social networks and formal and informal institutions, examine the role of actors’ resources and interests, and more. We will also take a glance at the connection between land governance and war strategies.

Session 7c: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – individual group work

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Building on Sessions 7a–b, you will work on your student project in your group. Lecturers will be available at certain times to answer questions of the group.

Session 4b: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

[Dr. Isabelle Providoli](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

[Dr. Brigitte Portner](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainable Land Systems Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

This session will circle back to the topic of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). We will reflect on the various elements of ESD and delve deeper into specific aspects, especially those that came up during the week. The session will also offer an opportunity for exchange and reflection on our individual learning journeys, as well as for discussing the aspect of learning in a group.

Day 5: Thursday, 30 January 2025

Session 7c: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – individual group work

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Building on Sessions 7a–b, you will work on your student project in your group. Lecturers will be available at certain times to answer questions of the group.

Session 11b: Group reflection and self-reflection

In this session, you will be guided to reflect on your group work process. In small groups, you will reflect on challenging as well as rewarding moments.

Day 6: Friday, 31 January 2025

Session 7c: Co-designing solutions to sustainability challenges – individual group work

[Dr. Lara Lundsgaard-Hansen](#), Senior Research Scientist, Sustainability Governance Impact Area, CDE, University of Bern

Building on Sessions 7a–b, you will work on your student project in your group. Lecturers will be available at certain times to answer questions of the group.

Session 7d: Presentation of student projects

In this session, you will present your student project and discuss it both with your fellow students and with the lecturers. Your fellow students will provide peer feedback. You will also reflect on the group work process and your interdisciplinary journey (focusing on challenges you faced during group work).

Session 15: Reflection and closing

In this session, we will reflect on your learnings and possible future actions you aim to pursue. This official closing of the online summer school will be followed by farewell drinks that we will share online – so please bring a drink!