

Summer School 2025 | *“Justice in an interlinked world: revisiting rural-urban and South-North relationships in sustainability transformations”*

Submit your applications now!



Picture credit: K. Ludewig/IOER Media

Questions of justice in rural-urban and Global South-Global North relationships are the focus of a summer school **“Justice in an interlinked world: revisiting rural-urban and South-North relationships in sustainability transformations”**. The summer school is hosted by the [Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development \(IOER\)](#) in cooperation with the [Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research \(ZALF\)](#), the Special Interest Group on Justice, Power and Transformative Action in Sustainability ([JUPITA](#), Utrecht University), the Thematic Group Equity and Justice (Ju-ST) ([Sustainability Transitions Research Network](#)), and the [Leibniz Research Network “Knowledge for Sustainable Development”](#).

The event will take place between **09.09.2025 and 11.09.2025** at the IOER in Dresden, Germany.

The Summer School is aimed at mid-career researchers*. Applications can be submitted until **15.03.2025 30.03.2025**. For inquiries and information, please contact: sustain@ioer.de.

[Direct link to the submission form](#)

Full Call for Applications

The burdens and benefits of, as well as the recognition and participation in sustainability transformations remain unequally distributed across rural/urban, global South/North communities, leading to spatial injustices and peripheralization. On the one hand, urban/Northern communities are lauded for rapidly moving towards renewable energy or vegan diets, seen as important aspects of sustainability transformations. On the other hand, rural/Southern lands and bodies are being increasingly engaged, willingly or unwillingly, to make transformations happen. The Summer School 2025 addresses this spatial unevenness from a diversity of justice perspectives, widening the focus from distribution, recognition and participation to especially intersectionality and restoration. We will develop a critical understanding of socio-spatial relationships through inter- and transdisciplinary exchanges, as well as analyse (in)justices arising from processes of socio-spatial transformations across diverse contexts and communities. Through contextualisation, the summer school aims to recognise the causes of (in)justices, ambivalences and paradoxes in rural-urban and South-North relationships, and the reproduction and reinforcement of (in)justices. By encouraging reflection, we aim at developing approaches to undo injustices.

We combine conceptual introductions with the presentations of empirical examples and interactive workshops to give participants the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the literature on (in)justices and spatial unevenness and learn methods of critical reflection on normative concepts (rooted in critical social science skills). Furthermore, participants will expand their knowledge of transdisciplinary research approaches and test methodological approaches to co-creation with societal actors, in particular artistic interventions. Such embodied practices can open up spaces for (un)learning and (un)doing. This will provide impetus for the design of just transformation processes.

The **guiding questions** for the Summer School 2025 would include (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- What do we know about rural-urban and South-North relationships in late capitalism?
- What is the relationship between activities within cores and peripheries, where sustainability transformations sometimes strengthen cores at the expense of peripheries?
- What are the drivers of injustices, and how can those injustices be undone?
- How to contextualise and historicize justice claims to recognise and address the role of colonialism, extractivism and dispossession?

Conceptual & empirical contributions of the Summer School 2025 will focus on:

- Understanding (in)justices in urban-rural relationships shaping and arising from sustainability transformations;
- Elucidating similarities and differences in relationships of (in)justice in the Global South & the Global North (urban-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural);

- Critically engaging with universalist notions of justice (informed by Western concepts and values) versus contextualised notions of justice.

In terms of **inter- and transdisciplinary training**, the school aims at:

- Bringing together diverse understandings and perspectives on justice (spatial, intersectional, restorative and many more);
- Taking further the critical debate on the drivers and causes, as well as complex and ambivalent dynamics of (in)justices;
- Learning methods to reflect on (in)justice (critical social science skills) to encourage dialogue and reflection on rural-urban relations and those dynamics within South-North communities;
- Developing participatory methods to open and encourage dialogue on universalist versus contextualised notions of justice;
- Providing knowledge on transdisciplinary research approaches and arts-based methods.

To reflect upon and deepen our collective understandings of justice in an interlinked world, we invite you to a **three-day summer school**. This interdisciplinary training and networking event provides an excellent opportunity for engaged researchers to learn about, and co-develop new robust transdisciplinary and transformative research approaches that address aspects of justice comprehensively. We will explore this through a mix of lectures, creative formats and group work, involving exciting speakers:

Prof. Dr. Flor Avelino

Prof. Dr. Flor Avelino is a researcher and lecturer on just sustainability transitions and social innovation currently working at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University. With a background in political science, she specialises in power theories and has a particular interest in how people, organisations and networks are (dis)empowered to contribute to just sustainability transitions. She is currently a full professor of Organisations & Sustainability at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University. Previously, she worked at the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT) as senior researcher and lecturer in the politics of sustainability transitions and social innovation, and as associate professor at the Department of Public Administration & Sociology (DPAS) at the Erasmus School of Social & Behavioural Sciences (ESSB, Erasmus University of Rotterdam).

Dr. Elia Apostolopoulou

Dr. Elia Apostolopoulou is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Environmental Policy, at Imperial College London. She is a human geographer and political ecologist whose research focuses on three core themes: first, the transformative impact of infrastructure projects on spaces, sionatures, and livelihoods; second, the disproportionate effects of these processes on

communities based on class, gender, and ethnicity; and third, the potential of community struggles to promote social-environmental sustainability and justice. Between 2012 and 2022, Dr. Apostolopoulou held postdoctoral and lectureship positions primarily at the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge, as well as at the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford (2016-2017). From 2022 to 2024, she has been based at ICTA, Autonomous University of Barcelona. She has won several prestigious international fellowships and grants, including a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship, a Carson Fellowship and a Ramon y Cajal Fellowship. She serves as an editor for *Dialogues in Human Geography* since 2020 and she is also a Senior Associate at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL).

Neha Mungekar

Neha Mungekar's work lies at the intersection of urban water governance and transition studies, with a keen focus on power dynamics in water distribution and allocation. She recently submitted her PhD at the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT), where she developed a reparative transformative framework for the Water4Change programme in India. This framework critically challenged Western-centric transition theories, interrogating how transformation mechanisms should be understood in post-colonial, resource-constrained, and politically complex contexts. Rooted in restorative justice, her work aims to strengthen governance capacities for water-sensitive urban transitions in India.

She spent six years at the World Resources Institute (WRI) India, leading projects on spatial planning, consensus-building, and participatory governance across various Indian cities. She later pursued research at IHE Delft, Netherlands, where she examined water access through the lenses of political ecology and gender studies.

***Target group**

This summer school is designed to accommodate the often-overlooked needs of mid-career scholars who do not fit typical PhD or early career summer school training (anymore). We use mid-career as a boundary object to the degree that career paths can be very heterogeneous and depend on many individual but also national academic system aspects. We roughly define mid-careers as academic professionals who have progressed beyond the early stages of their career but have not yet reached senior or leadership positions. They usually have: several years (often more than 5) of research or teaching experience, completed their PhD, have established reputation in their area of expertise, and often hold mid to senior positions in their institutions. *But most importantly: They are looking for a summer school in which they can bring their work to be discussed and critically reflected on with their peers!*

To participate, please send us your applications briefly describing:

- your motivation for applying to the summer school, how it relates to your work, and what you hope to gain from this summer school (150 words);

- perspectives, concepts, literature, thoughts, feelings and ideas that you would bring to the summer school (100 words);
- some thoughts on what you would want others to know about you both professionally but if you like, also beyond (narrative CV style) (100-150 words).

Please submit these by ~~15.03.2025~~ 30.3.2025 using the following [submission form](#).

Participation in the Summer School is free of cost. However, participants will have to cover their travel and accommodation.

Key dates

14.02.2025 – Call for Applications opening

~~15.03.2025 – Application submission deadline~~

30.03.2025 – Extended application submission deadline

30.04.2025 – Anticipated notification of application acceptance

05.05.2025 – Registration opens

15.06.2025 – Registration deadline

09.09.2025 – 11.09.2025 - Summer School 2025

Organisers



Leibniz Institute of
Ecological Urban and
Regional Development

Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER)



Leibniz-Zentrum für
Agrarlandschaftsforschung
(ZALF) e.V.

Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)



**Utrecht
University**

Special Interest Group on Justice, Power and Transformative Action in Sustainability (JUPITA, Utrecht University, Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development)

Thematic Group: Equity and Justice (Ju-ST) ([Sustainability Transitions Research Network](#))

Co-organised and supported by:



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