

Alternet Conference 2022 - Session Proposal

Name and Institutions of Chairs and Co-Chairs

Sara Atienza Casas (NINA); Jomme Desair (INBO); Nico Dendoncker (ILEE); Josephine Dalimier (ILEE); Camille Calicis (ILEE); Sara Atienza Casas (NINA); Thomas Fickel (ISOE); Eirik Finne (NINA); Fiona Nevzati (IAES); Lobsang Tsering (BC-CAS); Oleksandr Mialyk (University of Twente); Tyler Kulfan (Alternet); Sebastian Candiago (Ca' Foscari University of Venice/ Eurac Research); Fabiola Espinoza Cordova (LUCSUS); Christine Frison (UCLouvain); Maria Haensel (University of Bayreuth); Malte Hinsch (Leibniz University Hannover); Joy Kumagai (Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Center); Maximilian Nawrath (University of Leeds); Moa Ohlsson (Stockholm Resilience Centre); Carla Washbourne (UCL); Thea Wuebbelmann (Climate Service Center Germany (GERICS), Hereon)

Session Title

Transdisciplinary education: A leverage point for transformative change

Session Abstract

This session is proposed by an alumni group of the 2021 Alternet Summer School. This consortium formed following the programme in Peyresq to produce a paper for a special issue of Biodiversity and Conservation on Transformative Change and has since held a research workshop in February 2022. In their paper and proposed session, this group explores the potential of dynamic, integrative approaches to education that transcends the conventional boundaries of discipline and educational structures—and exploration that is carried into both the content and format of the proposed session.

Using the group's own collective experience at the Alternet Summer School as a case study, this session considers: how education can serve as a leverage point to foster transformative change.

Global challenges caused by anthropogenic pressures are rapidly increasing. To counter the threatened integrity of socio-ecological systems, transformative change that supports long-term human well-being and biodiversity conservation is needed. As the limited success in tackling these challenges demonstrates, fostering such changes in our complex global society is anything but straightforward. Transdisciplinary approaches, however, have a proven ability to facilitate the development of an integrative understanding of socio-ecological systems. They aid in the disentanglement of complex relationships and thereby highlight solutions that may foster new ways forward for a system-wide transformation. Nonetheless, transdisciplinarity is not yet

broadly adopted in science, policy or practice. One way to overcome this gap in implementation is transdisciplinary education.

In this session we illustrate how the use of transdisciplinary education for early-career researchers can serve as a key leverage point to foster transformative change in science education and biodiversity conservation. To this end, we draw upon the practical experience of a summer school focusing on transformative change for biodiversity. We argue that this transdisciplinary and immersive learning experience contributes to transformative change on three levels. On a personal level, the learning process helps researchers to identify their own role in this transformative change. On a research level, its collaborative approach, using knowledge integration and co-creation, can improve research outcomes which address the complexity of socio-ecological problems. And on a societal level, it enables researchers to mobilize this knowledge for vital contributions to transformative change.

As transformative change is long past due to address society's compound crises, we will demonstrate the importance of equipping young researchers with the tools of transdisciplinarity so they can embrace their responsibilities in tomorrow's society.

Type of Session

Blended structure, including:

- Introductory presentations
- Interactive panel
- Participatory activity

By bringing together experts from diverse fields, practitioners, local actors, traditional knowledge, and—above all—a broad range of perspectives, the Altnet Summer School provided students with an integrated and transdisciplinary experience of science education. In this proposed session, the 2021 alumni research group will simulate the Altnet Summer School experience for session attendees as a model of a transformative approach to science education.

The initial stage of the session will include two brief talks introducing (a) the present research project on science education and transformative change and (b) the educational model and culture of Peyresq and the Altnet Summer School.

Following these introductory talks, the session hosts will “transport” the attendees to Peyresq and involve them in an interactive systems mapping activity that recreates in abbreviated form the work performed by the alumni themselves during the Summer School programme. Session hosts roleplaying different knowledge holders and stakeholders (e.g. local shepherds, tourism industry representatives, nature conservation experts, etc.) will be situated in the session room for consultation; and the self-organizing, communal approach to research will be emphasized in the structure of the activity as the participants work collectively to determine the best method of

balancing conflicts, representing interests, and integrating the knowledge of the actors within the system at hand. Following the conclusion of the activity, participant groups will present their system maps in an interactive panel and a concluding message will be given. At each stage of the session, the alumni group will infuse the key unique elements of the Peyresq experience: transdisciplinarity, knowledge integration, communal living and education, self-organization, and play.

Intended Outputs:

- Session summary news article (photo blog format) for the Alternet website
- Short video of interactive activity with panel interviews and participant feedback
- Associated output: journal article for a special issue of Biodiversity and Conservation on Transformative Change

Duration

- 2 hours

Note: It is recommended that this session be held immediately following that of the 2019 Summer School alumni/AHIA group.