

lassalle institut



Call for papers

Hope in Action: Community-Engaged Scholarship and Practice for Integral Ecology, Environmental Justice and Sustainability

4th Biennial International Transdisciplinary Conference

August 19-23, 2026, Switzerland

Host:

Lassalle-Institut, Zürich (CH)

Partners (in alphabetical order):

Arihanta Institute; COMPARTE network (COL); ESSC Institute of Environmental Science for Social Change (PHL); Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich (CH); Institute of Geography, University of Berne (CH); Jesuit Worldwide Learning (CH); Jesuitenweltweit, Zürich (CH); Laudato Si' Research Institute, University of Oxford (UK); Leuphana University of Lüneburg (D); Munich School of Philosophy (D); Newman Institutet (SWE); Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (BR); Santa Clara University, Santa Clara (USA); Ukama Centre, Nuremberg (D); Universidad Iberoamericana Ciudad de Mexico (MEX); University of Fribourg, Environmental Sciences & Humanities Institute (CH)

The biennial international transdisciplinary conference on Environmental Justice at Lassalle-Institute (Switzerland) offers an inter- and transdisciplinary platform for an exchange between engaged scientists and reflective practitioners concerned by social-ecological transformation. As hosting organization operated by the Society of Jesus (religious order of the Catholic Church), Lassalle-Institute builds bridges between spiritual and cultural traditions as well as between sciences, fields of practice and civil society.

Grounded in Jesuit and *Laudato Si'* principles, the conference highlights *Integral Ecology* as a shared framework connecting disciplines and communities of practice. It fosters dialogue between faith and science and builds on collaborations among universities, research institutes, and global partners.

This biennial conference on environmental justice will explore how transdisciplinary, action-oriented collaboration can make hope possible amid the deepening crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, global injustice, and migration. Inspired by the environmental and social encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we seek to hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. As Raymond Williams said, “To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.”

Coming from approaches such as “engaged scholarship” (van de Ven 2007, Barge & Shockley-Zarabac 2008) and transdisciplinarity (Mittelstrass 2003, Hirsch Hadorn et al. 2008, Rigolot 2020, Merçon 2022), our discussions will focus on concepts such as transformative science (Schneidewind & Singer-Brodowski 2014), active hope (Macy & Johnstone 2012/2022) and on the crossing of the impossible (Pelluchon 2023). In 2026, our conference will be dedicated to the **investigation of these concepts and their scientific as well as their practical consequences.**

Main questions

Hope is central to building sustainable and socioecological justice (*Laudato Si'*, §61). But hope must go beyond passive optimism: it requires personal resilience and active solidarity in communities of practice that foster dialogue, reflection, and sustainable strategies.

Social-ecological transformation depends on shared visions and pragmatic hope, replacing dystopian images with realistic utopias and feasible practices. These practices—scientific, political, organizational, spiritual, or artistic—need communities of practice (Wenger, E., 1998/2015) held together by regular interaction, critical reflection, and shared narratives of a desirable future.

Based on the previous Conferences on Environmental Justice, the conference in 2026 will be centered on the following key questions and connect to relevant fields of inquiry:

- *How can “active hope” be understood and shaped as a legitimate, intercultural, and transdisciplinary concept to foster ecological transformation, reduce injustice, and strengthen collaboration between science, policy, practice, and the economy?*
- *How do different disciplines (e.g., economics, ecology, ethics, political and communication sciences, governance studies, theology, arts) address evidence for optimism and pessimism, and how can these perspectives contribute to shared learning, realistic utopias, and sustainable strategies?*
- *Which practices, formats, networks and communities of practice enable science and practice to cultivate hope effectively, embed it participatively, and thereby strengthen individual and collective resilience in the face of complex crises?*

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 crises.*
- **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.

Formats of interaction

As formats of interaction, please choose and prepare one or two of the following categories:

- Keynotes** on scaling up engaged scholarship for socio-ecological transformation
- Presentations of papers** on main topics (see above)
- Sessions/Panels/Roundtables** on main topics (see above)
- Presentations of posters** on activities or case studies

Submissions by January 31st, 2026

Abstracts (<500 words) should be uploaded on the conference website www.lassalle-institut.org/en/environmental-justice by January 31st, 2026, along with a short bio (<200 words each) of all contributing authors. All material must be in English. The abstract must outline the connection of the contribution to the *main questions* and at least one *main field of inquiry* of the conference. Furthermore, they should contain the **issue, main research question, methodological approach, and key outcomes**. All abstracts will be reviewed by the academic committee and specialists from the conference partners. Notifications of acceptance will be announced by March 2026.

Where and When

The Conference will be held at the [aki Zurich](#), Hirschengraben 86, 8001 Zurich, the student chaplaincy accompanied by the Jesuits. It will take place from Wednesday, August 19, 18:00 to Sunday, August 23, 2026, 09:00, beginning with dinner and ending after breakfast.

The **participation fee** is CHF 400. This includes attendance at the conference as well as shared lunches and dinners. For accommodation, we recommend the [Hotel St. Josef](#) right next to the Jesuit Community or the hotel [City Pop 2Night Zürich City](#). A total of 20 single bedrooms have been reserved at City Pop for conference participants, and these can be booked [here](#) using the code "Lassalle" until April 30. There is also a limited number of spots available for **online participation**.

For participants from the **Global South**, a **limited number of stipends** is offered in order to enable the submission of a paper. A maximum amount of CHF 4'000 per stipend can be used to cover the costs of field research, reflection and elaboration of a paper, as well as travel and accomodation.

If you are interested, please submit an abstract, a detailed budget plan, and a short note explaining why you cannot cover the costs by your own means by January 31st, 2026.

For all further information and contacts, please use the conference website:
www.lassalle-institut.org/en/environmental-justice.html