

The Call for Abstracts for NorDev25 is now open!

We are calling for paper abstracts to the **Open Panel Sessions** listed below. Submissions of abstracts of no more than 250 words can be sent to conference-nordev25@nmbu.no.

Deadline: Friday, April 4th.

In order to be considered for inclusion in the program, please indicate clearly **the number and title of the panel** that you wish to contribute to.

We are also aiming to accommodate a limited number of panels for paper submissions that do not fit under the themes of the open panels listed below. *If your paper does not fit withing a pre-identified panel, please label your submission with “Undefined Panel”*

List of Open Panels inviting paper (abstract) submissions

Panel 1. Development Policy and Practice in the Era of Conservative Backlash

Conveners: Martta Kaskinen & Eija Ranta, University of Helsinki

In recent years, many parts of the world have been witnessing two contradictory processes. On the one hand, autonomous activist initiatives and social movements, such as feminist and LGBTQI+ mobilising, environmental struggles, and antiracism activism, have proliferated globally and rooted their claims to intersectional and decolonial frameworks. On the other, the global political environment has undergone drastic changes in which the anti-gender movement, conservative right-wing nationalism, and religious fundamentalism have become prominent features. In this panel, we invite scholars who conduct research on gender equality or other areas in development cooperation/policy that have become contested amidst the global conservative backlash, to share and discuss their ongoing or published research. The aim of the panel is to support networking, collaboration, and mutual learning among development researchers navigating the uncertain policy atmosphere in the Nordic countries and beyond. We also invite development practitioners, scholars working beyond academia, and activists to join the discussions in this panel.

Panel 2. Politics of extraversion and the governance of rural West Africa in a ‘post-development’ context

Convenors: Sergio Magnani, National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment, (INRAE), France, Véronique Ancey, French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), and Philippe Lavigne Delville, Research Institute for Development (IRD), France

For the past 40 years, West African rural areas have been described as in a state of permanent crisis: environmental crisis following the droughts of the 1970s, economic crisis since the 1980s, and a security crisis since the 2010s, with reference to the insurgency that has swept through the central Sahel as far as the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The 'security' label has justified military 'solutions' whose flagrant failure has fueled a series of coups that would mark the end of a historic cycle of 'unfinished decolonisation' (Mbembe, 2023). This panel invites papers that explore the political dynamics and effects of extraversion (Bayart, Ellis, 2000) associated with rural development policies and intervention schemes. These include: new players, changes in prerogatives, responsibilities, rules, legitimacy, the denunciation of social agreements, but also new forms of cooperation and alliance, for example between marginalised groups. We welcome analyses that focus on power, wealth and 'class' dynamics beyond stereotypes of farmers-pastoralists, scarcity related, ethnic conflicts, as well as case-studies on interventions that seek to anchor themselves in local social and political dynamics, and their effects, particularly those emerging in the current 'post-development' context.

Panel 3. Equitable Green Transitions in Urban Sub-Saharan Africa: Sustainability and Social Justice

Conveners: Babette Never & Alexander Stoecker, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

As the global green transition accelerates, urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) occupy a pivotal role in the intersection of economic transformation, social equity, and environmental sustainability. This panel examines how the transition to green economies in SSA's urban and secondary cities impacts employment, with particular attention to its implications for gender equity. Building on the conference theme of solidarity, social justice, and sustainability, the session will explore critical questions: How are green modes of production reshaping urban and peri urban labour markets in SSA, and what barriers prevent equitable access to these opportunities? How can circularity – through reuse, recycling, and sustainable resource flows – be leveraged to enhance both social equity and environmental resilience? How is the compatibility of environmental and social equity goals affected by the existing local policy mix? This panel emphasizes the crucial role of urban centres as hubs for innovation, labour absorption, and localized sustainability efforts. Case studies will explore the challenges and opportunities of aligning environmental and social goals in these contexts, with a focus on gender inclusion in green industries, and the potential of local policy initiatives to shape equitable urban futures. It aims to bridge knowledge gaps and identify pathways for inclusive green transitions that balance environmental sustainability with social equity, fostering dialogue among academics, policymakers and civil society leaders/development practitioners.

Panel 4. Food system transformations in a new political world situation

Conveners: Caroline Karlsson, Ola Westengen, Mallikarjuna Rao Kovi and colleagues at the NMBU Sustainable Food Systems Arena, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

There is growing awareness that food systems need to go through sustainability transformations to ensure better health, food security as well as environmental sustainability. As the global political landscape changes, this panel explores the prospect for such transformations in the current international political situation. Food systems are entangled in geopolitics and conflicts. Food sovereignty and national food sufficiency are now on the national political agendas with a different context than earlier. Are trade-wars and political instability reshaping global patterns of food commodity trade? From a consumer perspective, these changing geopolitical dynamics may lead to higher food prices, limited availability of essential items, and growing disparities in access to nutritious food. Disruptions and changes in food systems will also have consequences for food safety, an area where our understanding remains limited. Supply chain vulnerabilities and reduced regulatory oversight can increase the risk of contamination from heavy metals and food spoilage, further exacerbating food insecurity. We invite contributions from across the natural and social sciences to explore these important challenges to food systems internationally. We aim for an interdisciplinary panel presenting and discussing research from across the world, from the local to the global level.

Panel 5. Navigating the Era of Indicators in Development

Conveners: Paul Beaumont, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Morten Jerven, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

Most policy fields in global governance have an abundance of country performance indicators (CPIs) and new CPIs proliferate apace. States are now measured and ranked on a dizzying array of cross-cutting metrics. Prima facie, the era of indicators promises a revolution: armed with ever improving data, policymakers can better allocate scarce resources to address global challenges. Yet, the era of indicators generates a problem and a paradox: while each individual CPI strives to simplify complexity, an abundance of CPIs on the same issue multiplies complexity and thus generates ambiguity. Moreover, while it would be reassuring if we could assume only the soundest CPIs would thrive, many high-profile CPIs remain in widespread use despite well-known shortcomings. Crucially, the paradox begets a major puzzle that remains under researched: How do private and public bodies navigate policy fields populated with multiple indicators, each portending to measure the same phenomenon? How do these bodies adjust and adapt when faced with evidence that their favoured indicators suffers from major shortcomings or that its use generates perverse consequences? This problematique is particularly pressing in the field of development, which has long embraced the era of indicators: most clearly, MDGs and SDGs have long guided global development efforts. At the same time, the data underpinning even key indicators (e.g. GDP) suffers from major data-deficiencies, “governance by numbers” is well-known to generate policy-myopia, and prone to gaming. Indeed, the World Bank’s flagship Ease of Doing Business index has recently terminated following an external inquiry into state-interference. This panel

thus invites scholars to submit papers exploring how development actors of different kinds are navigating the era of indicators amidst the challenges that this so-called data revolution brings with it.

Panel 6. Solidarity and Sustainability: Creating Inclusive Solutions for Persons with Disabilities Impacted by Climate Change

Convener: Rosemary Nakijoba, Muteesa I Royal University, Uganda

This participatory workshop aims to promote academic-civic solidarity and create inclusive, sustainable solutions for persons with disabilities (PWDs) impacted by climate change. The panel discussion that forms part of it draws on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which calls for full inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of society, particularly in climate-related challenges. Persons with disabilities face unique barriers during climate-related disasters, including difficulties accessing shelters, evacuation routes, and emergency communications due to mobility impairments, sensory disabilities, cognitive impairments, and mental health conditions. The CRPD advocates for removing such barriers and ensuring equal participation and accessibility. Papers focused on identifying and addressing societal barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities are warmly invited.

Panel 7. Land Dispossession and Development in the Sahel

Convenors: Ibrahima Poudiougou and Elieth Eyebiyi, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

Sahelian countries are now more than ever facing multifaceted crises that undermine their prospects for improving their livelihoods: political instability, rebellions, jihadist insurgencies, self-defence militias, organised crime, and other phenomena that generate violent dynamics. These trends favour the emergence of armed groups and the exodus of populations seeking a better future within the region or beyond. Research in social science examines how conflict impacts global development, often viewing it as a cause rather than a consequence of development processes. Nonetheless, certain development programmes, such as those promoting irrigated agriculture and cash crops, have led to the dispossession of smallholders and pastoralists from their land. This has forced many to become agricultural labourers, migrate, or, in some cases, resist. Despite this, the issue of land dispossession has received little attention in the political landscape of the past decade in the Sahel as a potential underlying factor contributing to armed uprisings and migration. The ERC-funded LANDRESPONSE project at NMBU is investigating how various forms of land dispossession can be key drivers of jihadism, other forms of violence, and migration. Drawing on ongoing studies within the project, this panel examines how dispossession influences violent conflict and migration in the Sahel. In addition to contributions from members of the Landresponse team, this panel invites

submissions of papers addressing the various manifestations of response (resistance, migration, adaptation, etc.) to land dispossession in Africa.

Panel 8. Towards Decolonizing African History and Visions of Development

Convenor: Geoffrey Nwaka, Abia State University, Nigeria

The panel takes the position that African independence will only begin with the decolonization of the continent's history and visions of development; that independence goes beyond the removal of colonial administrations, with the local elite taking over as mere gatekeepers of the colonial heritage. We shall discuss the trends in African studies and historiography that challenge the unjust traditions, prejudices and exclusion rooted in the colonial legacy. The panelists are invited to consider ways to restore the distorted image of Africa and renegotiate new international partnerships that will promote a fair globalization and a more equitable pattern of global development. We welcome papers that consider how Africa can respond in a balanced way to the colonial experience, and to the unfolding forces of modernity and globalization. In the writing of African History, bold attempts have been made by local chroniclers and academic historians of Africa to counter the misrepresentation of the continent as a 'dark continent', with no history or civilization worthy of study. New sources and methods have been adopted in reconstructing and interpreting the African past. As well, there is a new trend in Development Studies to re-center Africa, and to rethink the system that views the continent wholly through the lens of the West. This movement for African intellectual decolonization is now complemented by growing decolonial activism such as the Rhodes-Must-Fall epistemic revolts in Southern Africa against unfair and unjust educational and related systems, and the widespread agitation in the continent and elsewhere to return and restore priceless items of Africa's cultural heritage plundered during the colonial period. There is of course little consensus on how best decolonization and rethinking of the colonial legacy and Western modernity can be attained, without throwing out the baby with the bathwater. The panel will draw insights from the recent studies published by the EADI: *Challenging Global Development: Towards Decoloniality and Justice*; and *Building Development Studies for the New Millennium*; as well as Olufemi Taiwo's provocative new book *Against Decolonization: Taking African Agency Seriously*, and other works that advocate a more nuanced and balanced approach in responding to the colonial experience, Western modernity and globalization.

Panel 9. Public Policies and Public Utility in Developing Countries: Beyond the "Principal-Agent" Problem

Convenors: Mahamadou Bassirou Tangara, Université des Sociales et de Gestion de Bamako, Mali and Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka, Université de Mons, Belgium

This panel builds on the observation that the rise of capitalism (and the development of the private sector) has often been accompanied in developing countries by debt—sometimes labelled "odious debt"—and capital flight (Ndikumana and Boyce, 2013). It has also led to a decline in public interest and the common good, a loss of confidence in

public institutions regarding their capacity to act, as well as the outsourcing, privatisation, or franchising of public services, all under the pretext of pursuing economic efficiency (Mazzucato, 2021). The intended goal of strategies to “outsource, franchise, or privatise public services” was to resolve the “principal-agent” dilemma (Mazzucato, 2021, p. 58). However, in practice, the “Principal-Agent” problem has become more the rule than the exception. In this context, this panel aims to explore the extent to which the “principal-agent” problem acts as a barrier to the provision of common goods. It will also discuss, as a secondary objective, how to overcome this issue and restore the focus on public utility at the core of development policies. Focusing specifically on West Africa and the Great Lakes region, contributions should draw upon approaches rooted in development studies, development economics, critical analyses of privatisation, and the NGO-isation of public sectors, as well as critical studies of public policies. While the emphasis is on these regions, the panel is receptive to related experiences from other areas, such as Asia, Latin America, and beyond. We welcome contributions from doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, social science scholars, and development practitioners, including those from international organizations, cooperation agencies, and NGOs.

Panel 10. Global crisis, conflicts and injustice. Landscape role and responsibility in a contested world

Convener: Maria Gabriella Trovato, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

Global catastrophic events have posed significant challenges to territories and cities worldwide, transforming them into arenas for the spatialisation, reproduction, and mutation of crises and disasters. In response to these challenges, planners, governments, and international development agencies have made a concerted effort to foster more resilient environments. This panel highlights the pivotal role and potential of landscape architecture to contribute to the development of environments that transcend conflict and promote collective well-being by meticulously designing spaces that cater to the needs of both human and non-human species. It invites contributions from both theoretical and applied research that critically reflect upon strategies for achieving socio-environmental justice in regions impacted by disasters and conflicts. Contributions that address the following questions are particularly welcome: How do we effectively manage territories enduring protracted conflict and disaster? How do we oversee the recovery, care, and reconstruction process throughout the various phases of governmental responses? In what ways can we foster socio-environmental equity through landscape research and practices that address the pressing challenges currently confronting the global community while acknowledging the landscape’s fundamental role and responsibility in shaping the future of our territories?

Panel 11. Cultivating Collaborations: Development Research on, for, with and by Civil Society Organizations

Conveners: Tiina Kontinen and Judith Kahamba (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a significant role in development cooperation from Nordic countries and elsewhere. Moreover, CSOs in their different forms, are an important part of institutional landscapes in the global South engaged with “development” through practices such as service provision, livelihood enhancement, innovation, advocacy, civic education, citizens engagement and mobilization. Consequently, a wealth of development research is conducted on, for, and with civil society organizations, as academics have collaborated with Nordic organizations, INGOs, South-based CSOs, and CSO-private sector partnerships. There is also a wealth of studies conducted by CSOs, often facilitated by the “pracademics” involved in continuous boundary spanning. While the joint commitments to social justice, mutual interests, and complementary competencies can facilitate collaborations, the extent of critical analysis on CSO practices might create disputes. This panel invites reflections on the potentialities and challenges concerning, for instance but not limited to, negotiating a variety of understandings of “civil society”, legitimacy vis-à-vis diverse audiences, normative commitments, knowledge interests and practices, conceptual and methodological priorities, timeframes, relationships, funding mechanisms, and expectations from the part of research participants in cultivation of academic-CSO collaborations. We invite both conceptual reflections and case examples, after which we wish to have a forward-looking joint discussion on the issues emerged in the presentations.

Panel 12. Citizen and Refugee Led Aid: Exploring Relational Humanitarianism

Convenors: Hilde Refstie, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Hanne Haaland, University of Agder (UiA), Norway

Citizen and refugee-led aid has long been an integral part of crisis response. These grassroots efforts—ranging from informal support networks to organised community initiatives—have historically filled critical gaps during crises. However, such contributions have often been less visible compared to the formal, top-down humanitarian structures that dominate both academic discourse and policymaking. This panel will explore concrete examples of how citizen and refugee-led community groups, associations, and global solidarity initiatives operate within and beyond formal humanitarian systems, negotiating access to resources, forging collaborations with external actors, often drawing on local practices in crisis response.

Panel 13. Inclusive and Equitable Food Systems in Refugee-hosting Contexts in East Africa: Conceptual and Empirical Explorations

Convenors: Darley Jose Kjosavik (Norwegian University of Life Sciences - NMBU), Sarah Khasalamwa-Mwandha (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and RURALIS Institute for Rural and Regional Research, Norway) and Solomon Olum (Gulu University, Uganda)

Conflict and protracted displacement are major causes of food insecurity, inequality and related exclusions. This panel invites paper proposals that address how to best organize food systems to meet diverse goals and outcomes related to food security, environmental degradation, and climate change, social equity, inclusiveness, and poverty alleviation in contexts of forced migration and protracted displacement. Paying special attention to the interrelated nature of food systems of refugees and host populations, we welcome paper proposals related to small-scale food producers in different food production systems (crop, livestock, and fisheries) in refugee-hosting contexts. Paper proposals within the broad thematic area focusing on women and youth are particularly encouraged. We welcome both theoretical/conceptual and empirical papers, particularly related to East Africa but not exclusively, including work-in-progress papers.

Panel 14. 20 years of REDD+: lessons learned, lessons to be learned, and lessons not learned

Conveners: Arild Angelsen, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and colleagues associated with the NMBU Tropical Forest Arena

Over the past two decades (since UNFCCC COP11, 2005), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) has emerged as a key mechanism for addressing global climate change through increasing forest carbon stocks. The initiative raised global awareness about the critical role of forests in mitigating carbon emissions, mobilized significant financial investments (with Norway playing a leading role), and fostered multi-stakeholder collaborations. The REDD+ framework has brought NGOs, governments, indigenous peoples, private sectors and academics to work together. Along the way, REDD+ has navigated significant challenges, yielding key lessons such as the need to integrate social safeguards to protect the rights of indigenous communities, aligning national policies with local contexts, and emphasizing capacity-building to enhance implementation. Nevertheless, persistent issues—including equitable benefit- and cost-sharing, governance deficits, and weaknesses in monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems—continue to highlight the necessity for ongoing innovation and commitment. This session will reflect on the two decades of REDD+, exploring: (i) lessons learned, i.e., key lessons identified and widely adopted; (ii) lessons to be learned, i.e., findings from research and practices not widely adopted in practices, and (iii) lessons not learned, i.e., areas where the evidence base is too thin to draw robust lessons, or lessons that must be relearned considering evolving national and global contexts. For instance, to look ahead REDD+ need to deepen its integration

within broader climate and biodiversity frameworks, strengthen incentives for sustainable outcomes, and balance ecological conservation with socio-economic development. By revisiting these experiences, the session aims to suggest or inform future debate and initiatives on forest-based climate solutions.

Panel 15. Sustainable Hunting - protecting tropical biocultural diversity

Conveners: Aida Cuni-Sanchez, Rodrigue Batumike and Andrea F. Vallejo-Vargas (all NMBU); Torsten Krause & Carlos Hernandez Velez (Lund University)

Tropical forests landscapes are the world's most culturally and biologically diverse region. Millions of people, particularly indigenous and local communities, traditionally rely on wildmeat as a critical source of protein. For centuries, hunting has been deeply embedded in the cultural and social practices of these communities. At the same time, tropical biocultural diversity is in decline worldwide because of a combination of forest loss and cultural change. Specifically, the stability of vertebrate populations is increasingly threatened by overhunting due to the growing accessibility of forested areas, advancements in hunting technologies, erosion of local cultural norms that regulate hunting, population growth, and the lack of alternative protein resources. Overhunting jeopardizes both biodiversity, forest integrity and resilience, and human food security. This panel will present findings of recent research on how sustainable hunting, underpinned by local and traditional management practices, can meet the protein needs of human populations while ensuring the long-term persistence of vertebrate species. It will examine the justice dimensions of wildmeat hunting and consumption, particularly how to equitably involve communities in research and policy-making processes, as well as methodologies for research. This session aims to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and suggest (or inform) paths to balance human livelihoods with biodiversity conservation.

Panel 16. Global Orders, Security and Crisis

Conveners: Ingrid Nyborg & Shai Divon, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

The Global Orders, Security and Crisis research cluster at the Department of International Environment and Development Studies focuses on the complex processes surrounding an array of crises emerging across the globe. These crises can relate to climate change, food systems, governance and democracy, diplomacy, violence and conflict, social justice, and global and local institutions to name a few. These crises are often interlinked and protracted, and lead to changes that challenge us in terms of response, prevention and innovation in social, political, environmental and economic orders. This panel invites papers on a broad range of topics from different disciplines and perspectives under three thematic areas:

1) *Crisis response and Governance*. Topics addressing food systems and food security; crisis preparations and response; disaster risk reduction; international institutions and

crisis governance; populism and climate policy; linked crisis response; climate-food-injustice-energy.

2) *Power and Global Orders*. Topics addressing social differentiation and oppression; gender colonial and post-colonialism; land reform and economic redistribution processes; international relations; shifts in global governance orders and institutions; diplomacy, democracy and authoritarianism; ocean and polar governance.

3) *Conflict and Security*. Topics addressing gender violence, human security, human rights and protection of civilians; post-conflict police reform; local institutions and community-oriented policing; military-civil security transitions; maritime security; counter insurgency; rebel governance; radical movements.

Panel 17. Problematizing Solidarity, Social Justice and Sustainability: Partnerships Beyond Epistemic Gatekeeping

Convenor: Anuprita Shukla, School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

This panel addresses the need to nurture academic solidarity as a foundation for social justice and sustainability. Drawing on the French social scientist Émile Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity concepts, the panel seeks to problematise the concept of 'solidarity'. While solidarity is often invoked as a guiding principle for collective action, it is fundamental to interrogate its complexities and potential limitations. Solidarity can unintentionally reinforce power imbalances when dominant narratives overshadow the voices and needs of marginalised or differentiated groups. The assumption of shared goals or values may moreover mask underlying tensions or divergent stakeholder priorities. By critically examining the processes through which solidarity is constructed, this panel invites contributions that highlight the importance of reflexivity, inclusivity, and the ongoing negotiation of power dynamics to ensure that solidarity efforts truly advance equity and justice. Papers that showcase real-world examples with a view to fostering dialogue are particularly welcome.

Panel 18. Transitional Justice in the Aftermath of Violent Conflicts: A Search for Sustainable Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa

Conveners: Ikem Godspower Ujene (Achievers University, Nigeria), Glory Oscar Etim (SBM Intelligence, Nigeria) and Oluwadamilola Adeola Oyadeyi (University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

As in most parts of the world, Africa, especially the sub-Sahara, faces numerous conflicts, including armed resistance in Sudan, the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region, and the ongoing civil war in the Central African Republic. These conflicts, driven by various socio-cultural, political, religious, ideological, and economic factors, have created a significant number of victims and worsened the already fragile living conditions of vulnerable populations. The widespread human rights violations associated with these

conflicts highlight the urgent need for transitional justice, as peace cannot exist without justice. This panel invites papers from scholars in and on Africa addressing the following sub-questions:

1. What are the key barriers to implementing transitional justice in regions where it is absent, and how can these challenges be addressed?
2. How do different actors in the conflict cycle perceive justice in sub-Saharan Africa?
3. How are human rights and justice conceptualized and studied in the context of conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa?
4. What approaches are taken to implement transitional justice after violent conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa?
5. What impact has the application of transitional justice had on conflict resolution efforts in sub-Saharan Africa?
6. To what extent has transitional justice contributed to the resettlement and reintegration of victims in Africa?
7. How can transitional justice support the achievement of sustainable peace and development in conflict-affected areas of Africa?

Panel 19. Geopolitical Ecology – When Geopolitics and Political Ecology Meet

Convenor: Katharina Glaab, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

In our times of growing polarization and fascism, war, diminishing resources, and environmental tipping points, it is easy to announce the ‘return of geopolitics’. It highlights the importance of territory, the role of militarization, and puts attention on great power rivalry. While the focus on geopolitics shows the broader structural changes, it often takes politics as a site of great power conflict for granted. Political ecology has been an important corrective to that perspective and has focused on power relationships as root causes of social marginalization and environmental degradation. The two perspectives offer however often competing perspectives that structure how conflicts are perceived. This panel aims to bring the two approaches together and set a focus on geopolitics in conversation with a political ecology perspective through the lens of a merged concept: geopolitical ecology. This foregrounds a conceptual lens that studies great power politics and geopolitical transitions while also giving great weight to political conflicts with attention to environment, context, and people. Through this conceptual reflection, the panel aims to address more nuanced discussions on conflicts, environmental changes, and injustices.

Panel 20. The political economy of transitions, green and grey

Convenors: Kenneth Bo Nielsen (University of Oslo, Norway), Patrik Oskarsson (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) and Siddharth Sareen (Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Norway)

It is eminently clear that the world drastically needs to reduce carbon emissions. Yet how and why transitions to reduce or completely remove such emissions occur in certain contexts and not in others remains only partially understood. In this panel we explore the political economic underpinnings which enable or inhibit transitions toward less, but also at times, more carbon emissions in different contexts and across increasingly intertwined sectors. In the panel we ask: how do economic rationales in existing budgets, financial constraints and sought profits influence different transitions? How do different political actors and interest groups seek solutions? And finally, how do the political and the economical inter-relate and unfold across spatial and temporal axes of analysis?

Panel 21. Achieving energy for all: just transitions to electricity and clean cooking

Conveners: Lars Kåre Grimsby (Norwegian University of Life Sciences - NMBU), Kirsten Ulsrud, Karina Standal, Mikkel Vindegg, Borgar Aamaas (CICERO Center for International Climate Research)

Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) has a two-pronged objective: Access to electricity and access to 'clean fuels and technology for cooking'. Access to clean cooking energy is challenging with 1.8 billion people worldwide relying on biomass for cooking. In provision of electricity shortcomings and injustices also persist. More than 600 million people do not have access. While technical solutions bring opportunities, energy transitions also risk exacerbating socio-economic disparities. Achieving a just energy transition demands attention to equitable distribution of benefits and costs alongside socially inclusive and participatory decision-making processes as part of energy system innovation. Transition dynamics vary widely across contexts, necessitating a nuanced understanding of local specificities and social practices. Local practices may be perceived as barriers to clean energy transition by developers and planners. But policies and solutions are more likely to succeed if recognizing and aligning with people's lived realities and competent ways of maneuvering difficult life conditions. Expert narratives may be 'locked in' on particular technologies which are not necessarily aligned with household practices. Gender plays a central role in energy transitions but may be poorly understood. Research is often distinctly placed within either access to electricity or clean cooking, though these two bodies of research have many common themes. We aim to stimulate cross-fertilization between them and invite studies and perspectives on cooking energy or off-grid electricity provision. The panel will be an opportunity for comparisons across different geographical contexts with their own contextual conditions.

Panel 22. Plant diversity for sustainable food systems

Conveners: Sarah Dalle and Ola Westengen, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

Many disciplines and interdisciplinary fields from ethnobotany to crop science and development studies shed light on the important role of plants in our food systems. In this panel we invite papers presenting studies from around the world examining practices, threats and opportunities for the use of plant diversity in food systems. We encourage submissions from a range of (inter) disciplinary approaches, from local to global scales. We particularly encourage submissions exploring the nexus between traditional knowledge on plant use and the broader political and economic factors that shape the food systems they are part of.

Panel 23. Resistance in Solidarity against Global Conservative Nationalism

Convenors: Vegard Bye, Scanteam, Norway, and Aase Mygind Madsen, Association of Danish Development Researchers

This panel is based on the Swedish anthology “Egentligen är världen full av hopp: Det solidariska motståndet mot den globala konservativa nationalismen” to be published medio May 2025. The session will include short presentations by four of the book authors, who will present their research focusing on solidaric alternatives to the crises outlined in the book. We invite further presentations from scholars and activists on current international efforts to combat environmental and poverty related global crises. Presentations must be based on research that can provide empirical knowledge and theoretical insights into obstacles and possible alternative pathways - respecting economic equality, human rights, the natural environment and democracy.

Panel 24. Advancing Aquatic Food Systems for a Sustainable and Just Future

Conveners: Hans Magnus Gjøen, Stephen Mutoloki and colleagues (NMBU)

The panel will address the multifaceted benefits of focusing on aquatic food resources, aquatic animal and environmental health and breeding improvements in the context of global development, social justice, and sustainability. Aquatic food systems are vital for addressing global malnutrition and food insecurity, providing livelihoods for millions of people worldwide, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Aquatic foods provide over 3.3 billion people with 20% or more of their animal protein intake globally and deliver essential nutrients like fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals that are crucial for human health. Aquatic food production generally has a lower environmental footprint compared to terrestrial animal-source foods, and sustainable aquaculture practices can help to reduce overfishing and preserve marine biodiversity. Aquatic animal and environmental health play key roles in ensuring sustainability of aquaculture. Selective breeding can also enhance sustainability by producing species that grow faster and are more disease resistant. We invite contributions from across the life sciences and social sciences that explore and address local and international collaborations as well as other efforts to develop and scale up sustainable and inclusive aquatic food systems. The aim of this session is to foster cross-border collaboration, shared knowledge and best practices to achieve sustainability and equity.

Panel 25. How are Public- Private Partnerships transforming development?

Conveners: Paul Beaumont & Jon Harald Sande Lie Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly in vogue in development projects. Indeed, Agenda 2030 identifies public private partnerships as both an objective of and means to implement the SDGs. While PPPs vary to such an extent that it is not always easy to see the family resemblance, their proponents tend to speak from a common script. Indeed, wherever these partnerships are found and whatever ends they serve, they are almost always said to harness the efficiency, innovation, and capital of the private sector in the pursuit of sustainable development and/or the provision of public goods. Often puncturing this hype, scholars from multiple disciplines have critically examined and provided valuable perspectives on the multiple configurations, practices and uneven effects such arrangements have in very different contexts. This panel seeks to further this research agenda by bringing together and into dialogue scholarship from multiple disciplines that critically examines the new PPP agenda across different contexts in the global south. The panel thereby aims to deepen our empirical and theoretical understanding of how PPPs work (or not) and how the invitation of private actors to public development aid are changing established development policy discourse and practice.

Panel 26. AI and Sustainable Development: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ethical Considerations

Convenor: Meley Mekonen Rannestad, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

Artificial intelligence (AI) holds transformative potential in advancing sustainable development by offering innovative solutions across society, the economy, and the environment. However, significant challenges accompany these opportunities, potentially hindering progress toward sustainability. These challenges highlight the urgent need for ethical governance, capacity building, and collaboration among governments, industries, academia, and civil society to ensure responsible AI deployment. This panel invites abstracts for oral and poster presentations, as well as lightning talks, that explore AI's dual role in sustainable development. Contributions should address AI's opportunities, risks, and/or strategies to overcome challenges across different sectors, such as agriculture, education, energy, environment, and healthcare. Submissions may include case studies, policy insights, interdisciplinary perspectives, or innovative frameworks emphasizing ethical governance, explainable AI, and inclusive applications aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Panel 27. One Health One World

Conveners: Ann-Katrin Llaena and colleagues at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Norwegian University of Life Sciences - NMBU

This panel calls for empirical, applied, comparative and policy-focused papers addressing 'One Health' approaches to managing human, environmental and animal health risks in an interconnected world. A 'One Health' approach underscores the deep interconnections between human, animal, and environmental health, a relationship that is increasingly critical in the face of global food safety and sustainability challenges. Animals are vital to global nutrition, yet they also serve as conduits for hazardous contaminants and infectious agents that threaten ecosystems and public health alike. Zoonotic pathogens, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, heavy metals, and pesticide residues—often originating from intensive agriculture and industrial pollution—can bioaccumulate and spread through food systems, exacerbating health risks, particularly in regions with weak regulatory oversight. The risks are especially acute where human-animal-environment interactions are intensified, making targeted intervention crucial. In an era of rapid globalization, disruptions in one region—whether through emerging zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, or environmental contamination—can have profound and far-reaching consequences globally. In this context there is a clear need for robust, globally coordinated monitoring and management strategies that span the entire food production chain—from terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to consumer tables.