



Designing Alternative Futures, Strategies, and Systems–Changes in the Anthropocene

Ideas Development Workshop



teaching and research chair
“strategy in the anthropocene”

PROCEEDINGS

Designing Alternative Futures, Strategies, and Systems–Changes in the Anthropocene

Ideas Development Workshop

30th September – 1st October 2025

emlyon business school

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Credit: emlyon business school

Context

We live in a world of uncertainty and interdependent crises, marked by climate disruption, biodiversity loss and soil depletion, geopolitical tensions and the rarefaction of natural resources, all mainly caused by the impact of human activity. As of 2025, seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been crossed.

The reality of this epoch, the **Anthropocene**, has consequences for all. It raises major issues for individuals but also companies, who must adapt to an environment in constant mutation where traditional approaches are no longer sufficient to ensure perennity. It also engages academics from fields spanning natural, social and management sciences, who study the Anthropocene from their different research lenses. One thing is certain: the Anthropocene affects us all and we must build solutions together to address its challenges.

The teaching and research chair of **emlyon** business school and Carbone 4 "Strategy in the Anthropocene" aims to do just that: bring technical expertise from across academia, business and industry to encourage collaboration and innovation and develop a strategic thinking framework for companies to address such crucial issues. It is in this context that we have decided to bring together researchers and business leaders for a two-day workshop to foster the development of new ideas and discussions grounded in the latest research and aligned with business needs.

Objectives

The aim of this two-day workshop is to provide a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder discussion platform to build bridges between sustainability, management and strategy researchers and business leaders.

Through a series of roundtable discussions and workshops, its objective is to enable the development of new research ideas and discussions based on the latest research and grounded in the needs of businesses.

For academics and researchers

- Exploring how different fields frame shared research interests and developing new research questions
- Learning from on-the-ground challenges and thought processes of decision makers
- Developing collaboration opportunities with practitioners and decision-makers

For practitioners and decision-makers

- Sharing and reflecting on own challenges and decision-making questions and exploring solutions with peers
- Challenging strategies and practices and identifying possible solutions
- Exploring concepts and research contents that can support and underpin efforts to transform their organizations

Organizing committee

emlyon business school

- Thomas **GAUTHIER**, Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization, Holder of the chair "Strategy in the Anthropocene"
- Amanda **WILLIAMS**, Associate Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization
- Brice **DATTÉE**, Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization

IF Initiative by Carbone 4

- Jacques **PORTALIER**, Co-head of IF Initiative by Carbone 4
- Pierre-Baptiste **GOUTAGNY**, Senior Development Officer at IF Initiative by Carbone 4, PhD candidate at emlyon School of Management, emlyon business school and Strate School of Design
- Marion **FERRAT**, Engagement Lead at IF Initiative by Carbone 4

Support team

Management & Staff (emlyon business school)

- Lila **D'HERMIES**, Corporate Partnerships Manager
- Pauline **BONIFACE**, Corporate Partnerships Project Manager
- Elisabeth **GELAS**, Faculty Coordinator

Study'o (emlyon business school)

- Marc **CAMPO**, Head of study'o
- Valérie **JOBARD**, Academic communications manager
- Pierre-Philippe **TOUFEKCHAN**, Audiovisual Content Manager

Facilitation team

emlyon business school

- Brice **DATTÉE**, Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization
- Federica **FUSARO**, PhD candidate
- Thomas **GAUTHIER**, Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization
- Vincent **GIOLITO**, Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization
- Etienne **LE MAROIS**, PhD candidate
- Fanny **VERRAX**, Associate Professor, Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship

- Amanda **WILLIAMS**, Associate Professor, Department of Strategy & Organization

IF Initiative by Carbone 4

- Luce **ENGÉRANT**, Senior Development Officer at IF Initiative by Carbone 4
- Marion **FERRAT**, Engagement Lead at IF Initiative by Carbone 4
- Pierre-Baptiste **GOUTAGNY**, Senior Development Officer at IF Initiative by Carbone 4
- Caroline **NOWACKI**, Manager at IF Initiative by Carbone 4

Introduction



We have entered an era in which the rules of business strategy and organizational management are being rewritten by the biophysical limits of our planet. The Anthropocene, an epoch in which human activity has become a geological force, forces companies, policymakers, and researchers alike to rethink the very foundations of decision-making. Traditional notions of growth, competition, and performance can no longer be detached from the stability of the Earth system on which all economic activity ultimately depends.

It is within this context that the **Designing Alternative Futures, Strategies, and Systems-Changes in the Anthropocene** workshop was jointly organized by [emlyon business school](#) and [IF Initiative](#) by [Carbone 4](#) on September 30 and October 1st 2025 in Lyon, France. The event convened over fifty participants, including academics, executives, consultants, and PhD researchers, who shared a common conviction: **addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene requires not only new knowledge, but new ways of collaborating across disciplines and sectors.**

The ambition of this workshop was twofold.

- First, to explore how organizations - from both business and research - can collectively imagine and design alternative futures that are scientifically grounded, and ecologically and economically viable.
- Second, to build a shared strategic language capable of aligning business decisions with planetary boundaries and social foundations.

Doing so requires bridging divides between foresight and strategy, between organizational design and systems transformation, and between the analytical rigor of science, the framework of academic research and the pragmatic constraints of managerial action.

Over two days of keynotes, spotlights, and facilitated discussions, participants examined three interrelated questions.

1. How can we **imagine, design, and learn from possible futures** that extend beyond dominant narratives of technological optimism or business-as-usual?
2. How can we **strategize and organize in the Anthropocene** and develop management frameworks that take into account ecological limits and foster long-term resilience?
3. And finally, how can we **design changes in a systemic way and mobilize collective intelligence** to trigger the transformative shifts our societies and economies now require?

The Anthropocene is not merely an environmental issue. It is a profound strategic and organizational challenge. Companies that ignore the biophysical foundations of their operations and the direct or indirect impacts of a destabilized Earth system expose themselves to existential risks. Integrating these physical considerations is necessary to build the conditions for a viable, prosperous and just future. Similarly, management research needs to be grounded in the realities of decision-making - remaining confined to disciplinary silos or abstract theorizing risks being irrelevant to those who have the power to implement the very changes that are called for. Research must now evolve into a form of engaged scholarship, which is co-created with practitioners, attuned to real-world dilemmas, and oriented toward impact.

These proceedings reflect this emerging ethos and summarize the key questions that were addressed during the workshop: **How futures thinking can strengthen strategic resilience, how science-based frameworks can guide corporate transitions, and how systems thinking can illuminate pathways toward transformation rather than mere optimization.**

The workshop is not an endpoint but a beginning. It is a call to deepen the dialogue between Earth system, social and organization sciences, and between those who carry out research and those who implement action. Only by combining scientific rigor with organizational responsibility can we hope to design strategies that are not just competitive, but compatible with life.

The pages that follow offer an early glimpse into this collective effort. They are an invitation to continue learning, experimenting, and building together the capacities our time demands.

Agenda

Three discussion tracks

The workshop brought together over 50 participants from academia and business, including 13 PhD students and early career scientists. Discussions were organised around three complementary tracks:

1. **Future(s)-making in the Anthropocene.** This track explored how to imagine, design and learn from alternative, possible and desirable futures.
2. **Strategizing and Organizing in the Anthropocene.** This track focussed on how to develop a shared science-based strategy framework for the Anthropocene.
3. **Designing Systems-Change in the Anthropocene.** A third and final track tackled systemic questions of how to foster systems transformations.

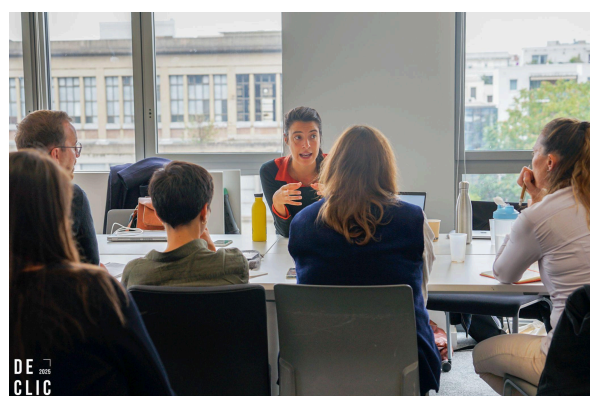
Key formats

→ Keynotes

Introductory talks to tracks by either experienced practitioners or decision-makers within organizations or senior scholars to share **a state-of-the-art** of themes with key questions, research findings and ongoing conversations within scholarly communities as well as from-the-ground perspectives and challenges from organizations leaders.

→ Spotlights sessions

Parallel **ice-breaking presentations** within each track by either PhD candidates and early-career researchers to share **findings from ongoing research projects** and collect feedback from peers and practitioners ; or by practitioners and business leaders to share **insights from their experience** and initiatives within their organizations.



Credit: emlyon business school

→ Subgroups discussions

Facilitated break-out mixed groups discussions where participants dive into key strategic questions and collectively discuss key challenges around subtopic for each track.

Crossing perspectives from managerial issues to research insights, these sessions aim at **strengthening research-practice collaborations** through identifying research ideas and proposals that echo with challenges from practice.



Credit: emlyon business school

Detailed agenda

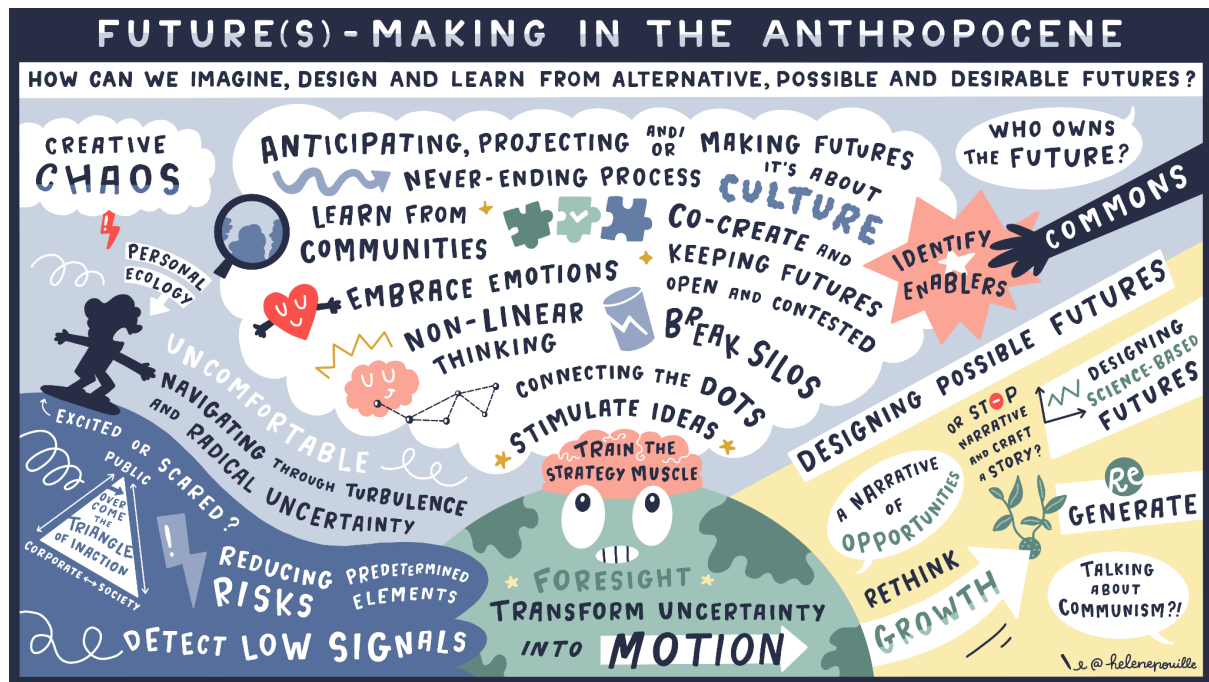
DAY 1 - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th, 2025			
9:00 – 9:50	Introduction - Foreword, Prof. Thomas Gauthier (emlyon business school) and Jacques Portalier (IF Initiative by Carbone 4) - “Building Academic-Practitioner Collaboration”, Prof. Amanda Williams (emlyon business school)		
9:50 – 12:15	TRACK 1 - Future(s)-making in the Anthropocene <i>How can we imagine, design and learn from alternative, possible and desirable futures?</i>		
9:50 – 10:05	Keynote: “Making the future matter” Laure Jaubert (Foresight Director, Michelin)		
10:05 – 10:45	Spotlight sessions		
10:45 – 11:00	Break		
11:00 – 12:15	Parallel working groups		
	Designing possible futures	Navigating through turbulence and radical uncertainty	Anticipating, projecting and/or making futures
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch		
13:30 – 16:00	TRACK 2 - Strategizing and Organizing in the Anthropocene <i>How can we develop a shared science-based strategy framework for the Anthropocene?</i>		
13:30 – 13:45	Keynote: “Towards science-based business strategies” Prof. Amanda Williams (emlyon business school)		
13:45 – 14:25	Spotlight sessions		

14:25 – 14:40	Break		
14:40 – 16:00	Parallel working groups		
	Organizing and organizations	Strategizing at organizational level	Strategizing collectively / across organizations
16:00 – 16:30	Break		
16:30 – 18:15	Report-out and facilitated discussion		
18:15 – 18:30	Group Photo		
18:30 – 19:15	TRACK 3 - Designing Systems-Change in the Anthropocene <i>How can we foster systems transformations?</i>		
18:30 – 19:15	Keynote: "Systems Thinking for Business Sustainability" Prof. Tima Bansal (Ivey Business School)		
20:00 – 22:30	DINNER		

DAY 2 - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1st, 2025			
9:00 – 9:15	Introduction		
9:15 – 10:00	Spotlight sessions		
10:00 – 10:10	Break		
10:10 – 11:00	Parallel working groups		
	Systems thinking in/for sustainability	Socio-ecological systems and organizations	Organizing systems transformations
11:00 – 11:30	Break		
11:30 – 12:15	Report-out and facilitated discussion		
12:15 – 12:45	Keynote: "Accounting and Accountability in the Anthropocene" Prof. Alexandre Rambaud (AgroParisTech)		
12:45 – 13:00	Closing remarks		

Track 1: Future(s)-making in the Anthropocene

How can we imagine, design and learn from alternative, possible and desirable futures?



Objectives

- Stimulate critical and creative thinking to **move beyond dominant future narratives** and explore plural, desirable, and science-based imaginaries of the future
- Build **collective capacities for anticipation and future literacy** by engaging in shared sensemaking processes across disciplinary, organizational, and sectoral boundaries
- Identify **levers and constraints for embedding future thinking** within organizational and strategic practices, in ways compatible with planetary boundaries and social foundations

Keynote by Laure Jaubert, Foresight Director at Michelin - **Making the future matter**

Spotlights session

Name	Institution or organization	Spotlight title
Urszula Ayache	University of Oslo	<i>Fractured Imaginaries in the Energy Transition</i>

Ilaria Durante	Politecnico di Milano	<i>Making interorganizational desirable future narratives through boundary objects</i>
Claire Meunier	Bouygues Construction	<i>Leveraging foresight to guide and enrich corporate strategy</i>
Caroline Nowacki	IF Initiative by Carbone 4	<i>Imagining possible futures within planetary boundaries</i>
Rossella Rocchino	IMD Business School	<i>How local communities co-create desirable futures through collective action</i>

Subgroup discussion points

Designing possible futures

- Explore how to design **science-based and value-driven futures** that integrate both **ecological feasibility** (planetary boundaries) and **social desirability** (just and inclusive outcomes)
- Reflect on the **role of foresight** in transforming strategic and organizational thinking, and how to use it as a lever for influence, innovation, and advocacy inside and outside the organization
- Identify **enabling conditions and practical methods** to build shared "**future commons**" across teams or ecosystems, and to evaluate the transformative impact of foresight processes

Navigating through turbulence and radical uncertainty

- Discuss how **foresight tools and future-making practices** can help organizations remain resilient, adaptive, and purpose-driven in **volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments**
- Examine ways to strengthen **futures literacy and anticipatory capabilities** at individual, team, and organizational levels to better navigate disruptions and unexpected futures
- Challenge **dominant worldviews and strategic assumptions** that prevent organizations from acting on early signals, preparing for systemic shocks, or embracing transformational change

Anticipating, projecting and/or making futures

- Clarify the distinctions and complementarities between **anticipation, projection, and active future-making**, and explore what it means for organizations to "make" the future rather than merely predict it
- Debate the responsibility of organizations in **opening up new futures** (e.g. regenerative, just, degrowth-oriented) and **closing down futures** that are no longer viable or ethical.

Keynote by Professor Amanda Williams, emlyon business school - **Strategizing and Organizing in the Anthropocene: How can we develop a shared science-based strategy framework for the Anthropocene?**

Spotlights session

Name	Institution or organization	Spotlight title
Jozef Cossey	ESCP Business School	<i>The Adaptation Project</i>
Brice Dattée and Thomas Gauthier	emlyon business school	<i>Prospective sensegiving and the circulation of organizational power</i>
Sarah Dubreil	circl.earth	<i>The regenerative shift : 7 attributes and archetypes to inspire action</i>
Julie Ezan-Zecca	Université Paris Dauphine-PSL	<i>Mobilizing Imaginaries for Organizational Anticipation in the Anthropocene: Towards Strategic Futures-Making</i>
Pierre-Baptiste Goutagny	iaelyon School of Management	<i>From Sciences-Based Future-Making to Inter-Organizational Coalitions</i>
Michael Haddad	Alstom	<i>Critical Metals: convincing the organization to act now to prepare for future shortages</i>
Justine Loizeau	Aalto University	<i>Alternative valuations for alternative organizations in the Anthropocene. A Comparative Ethnography from France</i>
Fabian Maier	Université Paris Dauphine-PSL	<i>Seeds of Degrowth? The Politics of Scaling and Working in Community-supported Agriculture Co-operative</i>
Niccolò Maria Todaro	Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna	<i>Co-Creating Knowledge with Managers: Moving Beyond Research-Practice Tensions to Generate Impact</i>
Arnaud Marquis	Tarkett	<i>Sharing the experience of a major flooring and sports surfaces manufacturer: Defining and implementing the company's transition strategy, including its current progress and limitations</i>
Sara Ratti	IMD Business School	<i>Exploring Materiality Assessments as Tools for Distant-Future Strategy in the Anthropocene</i>

Subgroup discussion points

Organizing and organizations

- Explore **alternative organizational models** (e.g. mission-driven enterprises, cooperatives, limited-profit structures, or Nature as stakeholder) that can enable post-growth and regenerative strategies
- Examine how internal structures, cultures, and governance mechanisms need to evolve to support systemic change and long-term **socio-ecological objectives**
- Discuss the strategic role of **corporate political activity** in shaping regulatory environments and public discourse in favor of socio-ecological transitions, and how to mobilize it responsibly

Strategizing at organizational level

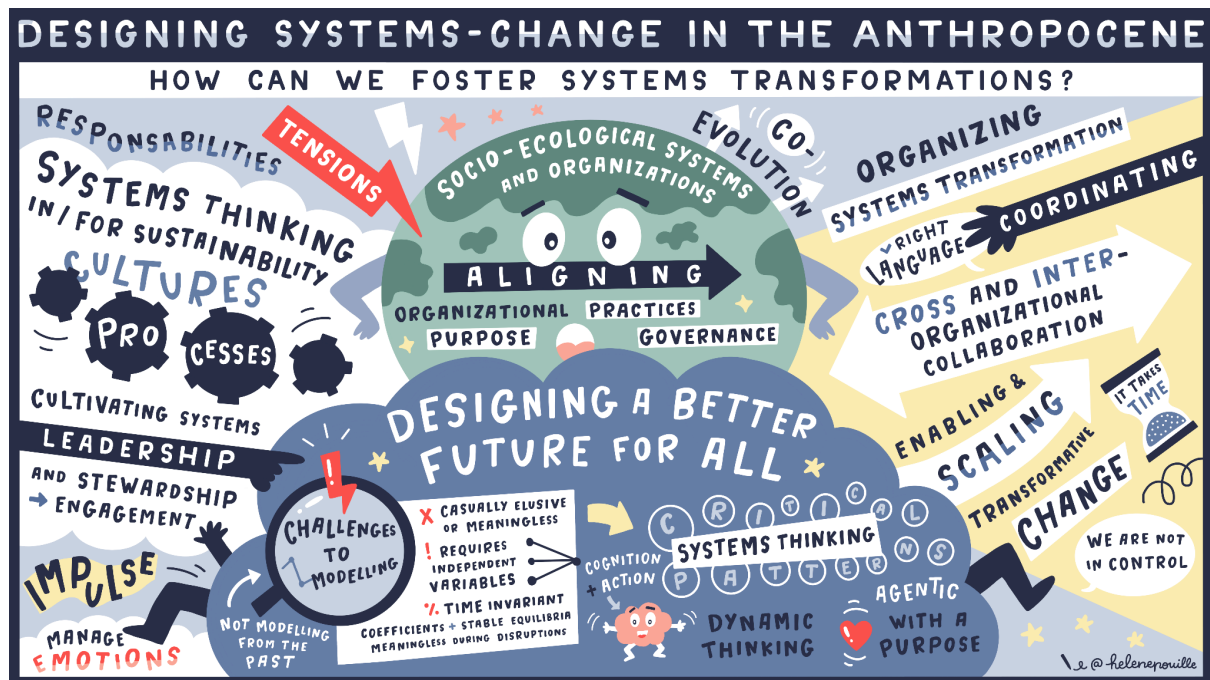
- Reflect on how to reframe strategy to embed socio-ecological realities, moving beyond the "**ecological fallacy of strategy**" and aligning with planetary boundaries and intergenerational responsibilities
- Examine how organizations can navigate **intertemporal tensions, trade-offs, and paradoxes** (e.g. short-term performance vs. long-term resilience) in the design and execution of strategy
- Discuss how to redefine **firm-level success metrics and outcomes** to reflect the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems

Strategizing collectively / across organizations

- Investigate how to build and govern **inter-organizational strategies**, particularly in ecosystems or value chains where coordination is needed to drive system-wide transformation.
- Explore the tools, frameworks, and governance mechanisms needed to **align strategy across** sectors, jurisdictions, and time horizons, especially in fragmented or adversarial contexts.
- Discuss the conditions under which **cooperation between organizations** can become a strategic advantage, particularly when facing complex challenges that no actor can solve alone

Track 3: Designing Systems-Change in the Anthropocene

How can we foster systems transformations?



Objectives

- Foster **systems thinking and leadership capabilities** to understand and act on the complex interdependencies between organizational, social, and ecological systems
- Identify **intervention points and systemic leverage** for triggering positive tipping points, while navigating co-evolutionary dynamics and multi-scalar complexities
- Map and share **emerging ecologies of transformation**, including strategies, alliances, and governance models, that support coordinated transitions across sectors and institutions

Keynote by Professor Tima Bansal, Ivey Business School - **Designing Systems-Change in the Anthropocene: How can we foster systems transformations?**

Spotlights session

Name	Institution or organization	Spotlight title
Estelle Berger	Strate School of Design	<i>Becoming robust by design: an integrative and multidisciplinary approach to organizations as relational ecosystems</i>

Giulio Berruti	BSR	<i>The Center for Redefining Business Models : prototyping, enabling, and mainstreaming transformation through collaboration</i>
Yann Chazal	sys-Volution	<i>Designing Transformational Change requiring Strategic Alignments between actors</i>
Melissa Escobar Cisternas	Ecole des Mines de Saint-Etienne	<i>Implementing Strong Sustainability in a Design Process</i>
Corentin Gariel	Grenoble Ecole de Management	<i>Organizing social responsibility of multinational corporations (MNCs): the case of plastic pollution</i>
Pierre-Éloi Gay	ESSEC Business School	<i>International political coalitions to resist environmental pushback</i>
Karen Lemasson	Laboratoires Expanscience	<i>How to influence and transform a market: towards socio-ecological regeneration</i>
Tessa Melkonian	emlyon business school	<i>Leadership Academy for New Futures</i>
Marija Roglic	MBS School of Business	<i>Orchestrating Cross-Sector Transformations: A Framework for Managing System-Level Change</i>
Thinley Tharchen and Tao Wang	emlyon business school	<i>Sustainability research in management: the evolution of its conceptual space</i>
Nicolas Roussignol	LUMIÅ	<i>Towards regenerative business model innovation</i>

Subgroup discussion points

Systems thinking in/for sustainability

- Identify practical approaches to **embed systems thinking into organizational cultures**, processes, and decision-making frameworks to better grasp complex interdependencies
- Explore how to cultivate **systems leadership and stewardship**, including the mindsets, roles, and capacities needed to lead beyond organizational boundaries
- Discuss how organizations can broaden their scope of responsibility from isolated entities to active participants in interconnected systems, contributing to collective resilience and transformation

Socio-ecological systems and organizations

- Explore **how organizations are embedded in, and co-evolve with, socio-ecological systems**, and how this perspective shifts the way we define value, impact, and accountability

- Discuss how to navigate **tensions and paradoxes** arising from the misalignment between ecological timescales and organizational rhythms (e.g. fiscal quarters vs. planetary tipping points)
- Identify ways to align organizational purpose, practices, and governance with the **dynamics of living systems** to support regenerative and adaptive trajectories

Organizing systems transformations

- Investigate how to design and coordinate **ecologies of transformation**, combining diverse actors, strategies, and scales to enable systemic and just transitions
- Examine the role of **cross- and inter-organizational collaboration** in fostering collective agency, unlocking positive tipping points, and avoiding fragmentation of efforts
- Discuss enabling conditions and governance models for **scaling transformative change** while maintaining contextual relevance and legitimacy

Appendix

PhD candidates and early-careers research: selection from call for proposals

Ilaria Durante (*Politecnico di Milano*)

→ **Making interorganizational desirable future narratives through boundary objects**

The urgent need to tackle grand challenges such as climate change and social issues (Bansal et al., 2024; van Elk et al., 2024) is calling for innovative ways to imagine and enact desirable futures (Gumusay & Reinecke, 2022). Desirable futures are “value-based exploration into what it [the future] could be” (Gergen, 2015, p. 287; Gumusay & Reinecke, 2024). In strategizing and organizing, future-making encompasses “the specific ways in which actors produce and enact the future” (Wenzel, 2020, p. 1443). Current research on future-making has raised scholarly attention on the role of materiality in sparking desirable future narratives within single organizations and industries (Comi & Whyte, 2018; Rindova & Martins, 2022), while emerging studies have recognized the value of narratives to mobilize stakeholders belonging to different organizations and industries to tackle grand challenges (Drori et al., 2025). Given that boundary objects are “sort of arrangement that allow different groups to work together without consensus” (Star, 2010, p.602), they could facilitate collaboration between interorganizational actors with different sets of past experiences, interests and worldviews (Nathues et al., 2024). Thus, we explore how boundary objects enhance the making of interorganizational narratives about desirable futures. We conduct a 9-months exploratory engaged scholarship study involving different organizations and industries by setting up a Future-making Lab, a “site of hyperprojectivity” (Mische, 2014) through which we highly stimulated practitioners to produce narratives of desirable futures through boundary objects.

We gathered and analysed the narratives produced in conversations and reported in the diverse boundary objects developed across time by the interorganizational participants in the study. Our research proposes a process model that unpacks three different types of narratives about desirable futures: (i) disentangling, (ii) metamorphosing and (iii) deliberating, enhanced by different boundary objects (repositories, methods and maps) in interorganizational future-making. First, by providing a process model for constructing interorganizational narratives of desirable futures using different boundary objects, our study advances knowledge on future-making in strategizing and organizing, expanding beyond prior research that has focused on individual organizations (Comi & Whyte, 2018; Pettit et al., 2024; Thompson & Byrne, 2022) or single industries (Rindova & Martins, 2022; Augustine et al., 2019). Second, by revealing how organizational actors prospectively create narratives of desirable futures through boundary objects, our study advances previous research on retrospective narrative accounts of future-making (Augustine et al., 2019; Dries et al., 2024).

Third, by proposing an exploratory engaged scholarship approach to future-making research, we build on recent calls for innovative approaches to investigate future-making (Gümüşay & Reinecke, 2024). Finally, it informs practitioners on how to adopt boundary objects to create interorganizational narratives of desirable futures.

Rossella Rocchino (*University of Geneva and IMD's Center for Social Innovation*)

→ **How local communities co-create desirable futures through collective action**

In a time of profound transformation, collective action among diverse actors is recognized as an essential response to today's pressing challenges (Rayner, Otoo, & Bonnici, 2025; WEF, 2025). Among the different types of actors involved (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019), local communities play a crucial role in shaping context-sensitive responses through future-making processes. This research focuses on exploring future-making processes initiated by a local community, aligning with Track 1, by exploring how actors imagine, design, and experiment with possible and desirable futures in response to local and global challenges.

Through an inductive qualitative investigation of a Swiss case study, this research focuses on ecovillages—intentional communities committed to regenerating their social and natural environments through locally owned, participatory approaches across four dimensions of sustainability: social, cultural, ecological, and economic (GEN, 2025). Established as a global movement in 1995, ecovillages serve as “living laboratories” where citizens collectively imagine and enact desirable futures (Fonseca, Irving, Nasri, & Ferreira, 2022). Three key features make ecovillages a particularly compelling context for studying future-making. First, their place-based nature allows for the study of local agency in shaping futures (Wickert, 2025). Second, their strong environmental orientation enables the exploration of interactions between humans and non-humans—such as natural environments and places—in the process of future-making (Comi, Mosca, & Whyte, 2025). Third, their pluralistic values and participatory governance practices (Fonseca et al, 2022) offer a rich setting to examine how values and visions of the future are negotiated and prioritized, which is increasingly relevant in today's polarized world (Comi et al., 2025).

Participation in the workshop at the early stage of the project (data collection is ongoing) will provide a unique opportunity to both shape the research and engage in dialogue with scholars and practitioners about community-led future-making processes. This project aims to unpack these processes by examining the different stages and practices through which community members experiment with desirable futures. Investigating this bottom-up, collective efforts is crucial for understanding how communities affected by societal challenges actively initiate and shape pathways toward more desirable futures, becoming a vital locally based form of organizing that contributes to broader societal transformation in the Anthropocene.

Urszula Wiszniowska Ayache (*University of Oslo*) and **Birthe Soppe** (*University of Innsbruck*)

→ **Fractured Imaginaries in the Energy Transition**

The research addresses how sustainability imaginaries become fractured within energy transitions. Despite urgent climate challenges, narratives around sustainability and net-zero commitments from major energy corporations have shifted, increasingly emphasizing pragmatic realism and energy security. The study investigates how individuals and organizations rationalize and emotionally cope with disruptions to these previously dominant imaginaries. The central research question is: What happens when future imaginaries of the energy transition are disrupted?

This qualitative study integrates semi-structured interviews and media coverage analysis. The focus is on the Norwegian context, but it is anchored in a broader EU context.

This research provides critical insights into how fractured imaginaries influence strategic decisions, corporate legitimacy, and stakeholder engagement during sustainability transitions. Understanding the personal, organisational, and systemic implications of these disruptions is vital for policymakers and businesses navigating climate commitments amid geopolitical and economic instability.

Jozef Cossey (*ESCP Business School*) and **Aurélien Acquier** (*ESCP Business School*)

→ **The Adaptation Project**

The Adaptation Project is an action research initiative investigating how organizations make sense of and strategically respond to escalating ecological uncertainty. With climate-related disruptions becoming a persistent feature of the Anthropocene, the project aims to understand how businesses navigate and adapt to extreme events that defy conventional risk frameworks.

In collaboration with seven multinational companies, the research explores how adaptation strategies are cognitively and socially constructed, and how these influence organizational responses to ecological disruption. This collaborative action research project is set up in collaboration between an academic institution and a private actor and supports eight large multinational companies—spanning sectors such as banking, logistics, retail, telecom, and insurance—in strengthening their organizational strategies for ecological adaptation. Through a 6 months-long support cycle, each company participates with a pair of representatives, typically one from a strategic or operational function (strategy, finance, or risk) and another from a sustainability-oriented role (CSR, impact, or sustainability). The project involves a variety of structured activities: guest sessions with scientists and foresight experts, co-development workshops, peer exchange, and field visits to observe local adaptation and mitigation practices. These engagements are designed to stimulate internal reflection, challenge dominant narratives, and build cross-functional alignment around adaptation goals.

Action research is a research design commonly used to bridge theory and practice and

enable collaborative, real-world inquiry into urgent organizational challenges. Moreover, it offers exceptional access to ongoing sensemaking processes and enables understanding gaps between formal strategies and actual practices. By challenging established routines and assumptions, it also is an avenue to support critical reflection and the co-creation of adaptive responses. Preliminary findings suggest that while companies increasingly acknowledge the urgency of climate adaptation, many struggle to move beyond compliance and disclosure toward transformational strategies. Differences in time horizons, language, and priorities between sustainability and finance teams often hinder coherent responses. Furthermore, while scientific input is valued, translating it into actionable strategy remains a major bottleneck—highlighting the need for improved internal sensemaking and sensegiving practices. The project contributes to a deeper understanding of how strategy work unfolds in the Anthropocene—where stable assumptions about the future can no longer be taken for granted. It explores how companies grapple with not only “what to do” in response to ecological risks, but also “how to think” and “who to involve.”

Julie Ezan-Zecca (*Université Paris Dauphine PSL - DRM M-Lab*)

→ **Mobilizing Imaginaries for Organizational Anticipation in the Anthropocene: Towards Strategic Futures-Making**

As organizations face growing uncertainty and complexity in the Anthropocene, traditional strategic planning tools increasingly fall short in enabling meaningful engagement with long-term, systemic transformations. This research explores how imaginaries, shared symbolic representations and narrative constructions of the future, can be mobilized as strategic resources to foster anticipatory capabilities within organizations. Grounded in organization theory (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977), futures studies (Poli, 2024; Bell, 2004), and design inquiry (Minvielle & al., 2022), the study investigates the following research question: How can imaginaries contribute to the design of desirable futures and support strategic transformation in organizations confronted with planetary boundaries? Using a qualitative, multi-case research design, the project draws on empirical data from innovation and foresight practices in both public and private organizations, including futures literacy labs inspired by UNESCO's approach (Miller, 2018). Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, and narrative analyses of strategic and cultural artifacts such as vision statements, scenarios, and design fictions. Preliminary findings highlight the role of imaginaries as boundary objects that enable cross-sectoral dialogue, facilitate the integration of long-term thinking into strategy, and catalyze organizational learning in contexts of radical uncertainty.

This research contributes to ongoing debates in strategic management and sustainability by proposing a conceptual framework for imaginaries-based anticipation. It also offers actionable insights for practitioners aiming to design reflexive and adaptive strategy processes. Theoretically, the work draws on the anticipatory systems theory (Miller, 2007), the design of strategic narratives and use of narrative foresight (Milojevic & Inayatullah, 2015), and the sociology of imaginaries (Castoriadis, 1975; Ricoeur, 1984; Durand, 1992; Durand,

1996; Legros, 2006). Practically, it aims to co-develop participatory tools that integrate strategic foresight with futures-making.

Justine Loizeau (*Aalto University*) and **Clarence Bluntz** (*Maastricht University*)

Alternative valuations for alternative organizations in the Anthropocene.

→ A Comparative Ethnography from France

In the face of the grand challenges of the Anthropocene, alternative organizations experiment with new ways of organizing (Acquier et al., 2024; Ergene et al., 2020). While many studies have characterized these organizations by their values (e.g. Alakavuklar, 2020; Farias, 2017; Parker et al., 2014), few have investigated how valuation processes themselves — such as pricing or costing—actively contribute to enacting alternative worldviews. This research addresses that gap. We ask: How do the valuation processes of alternative organizations make them alternative? Drawing on a pragmatist perspective (Muniesa, 2011; Lorino, 2018), we frame valuation not as a neutral, instrumental tool but as a situated, collective, and political inquiry that continuously negotiates the relationship between means and ends. Our analysis compares two French cases: *C'est qui le Patron?! (CQLP)*, a consumer cooperative embedded within market infrastructures that enables citizens to co-determine food prices; and the ex-ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, a commons-based occupation organized outside market and state logics.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork and comparative analysis, we explore how valuation practices unfold as situated, collective processes shaped by measurement, attachment, and judgment. These practices—taking place in moments such as online surveys, general assemblies, and distribution rituals—allow organizations to reflect on what they collectively hold dear, rather than treating goals as fixed or valuation as purely instrumental. This ongoing reflection generates organizational rationalities that diverge from dominant economic logics. While *C'est qui le Patron?!* pursues a symbiotic strategy that recalibrates pricing within existing market frameworks, the ex-ZAD adopts an interstitial logic that decouples valuation from price, privileging relational and pluralistic modes of assessment. By shifting the focus from values to valuation, we show how alternative organizations act as laboratories to identify 'what we hold dear' collectively (Hache, 2011). Our research contributes to understanding the role valuation plays in alternative organizing as an ongoing, dynamic process—"alternating"—rather than a static category. It also clarifies how open, situated, and intersubjective valuation supports the emergence of alternative futures in the Anthropocene. This work aligns with Track 1, "Future(s)-making in the Anthropocene," by demonstrating how futures are continuously shaped through present-day collective experimentation, rather than distant strategic planning. Valuation thus becomes a practical tool for negotiating priorities, adjusting goals, and embedding alternative social and ecological commitments—making future-making an embodied, ongoing process of organizing. Practically, this study highlights how concrete tools such as participatory pricing, cost transparency, and distributed deliberation can foster accountability, inclusion, and experimentation. These insights are valuable for businesses and institutions seeking to rethink

strategy amid socio-ecological constraints. The paper is in development – all data has been collected and analysed. A first draft has been presented at international conferences including ICMS Manchester, the International Degrowth Conference in Oslo, and the Sociology of Consumption Midterm Conference in Prague. Participation in the Idea Development Workshop offers an opportunity to refine the conceptual framework further and explore collaborations between practitioners and researchers.

Fabian Maier (*Université Paris Dauphine PSL, Chair in Management and Ecological Transition*)

→ **Seeds of Degrowth? The Politics of Scaling and Working in Community-supported Agriculture Co-operatives**

As an organisational researcher, my research interests are centred around the central question of how organizations may prefigure alternative forms of social provisioning that do not rely on ever-expanding patterns of production and consumption, in order to operate within planetary boundaries while meeting social needs. Within my PhD research, I have connected this question to broader social imaginaries emerging from the burgeoning transdisciplinary fields of degrowth and postgrowth, and how these ideas may impact alternative forms of organising. Specifically, I have been utilising a qualitative case study design to explore how two community-supported agriculture (CSA) co-operatives in Germany are aiming to transform the agri-food system by prefiguring more socially just and ecologically sustainable forms of organization and work. Based on a cross-case analysis, my analysis found that: 1) There is often a disconnect between broader political imaginaries of degrowth and organisational practice at an operational level ; 2) Various existing transformative imaginaries contribute to salient organisational ruptures within market-insulated forms of organising aiming to scale their transformative impacts beyond the individual organization ; 3) The pursuit of less alienated forms of labour in CSAs constitutes a struggle on a continuum between de-alienation and re-alienation which is contingent on the extent to which diverse transformative imaginaries of work can be materialised in relation to more ecologically embedded and community-based forms of work

My doctoral research has recently been 'highly commended' by the Academy of Management Critical Management Studies Division. Building on my doctoral research, I am continuing to explore the ways in which degrowth activists and practitioners are trying to build alternative livelihoods, forms of organization and work. On the one hand, I believe my research is particularly relevant for cooperative businesses, particularly in relation to the often tight connection between work and consumption, and how a sense of alienation often motivates young employees to pursue alternative career pathways outside of conventional corporate environments. On the other hand, I believe my research also speaks to public policy, in giving insights into the struggles of CSA practitioners to prefiguring more sustainable and just forms of social provisioning and work, while often being undermined by existing policy frameworks giving prevalence to expansion-oriented and industrialised forms of agri-food provisioning. In participating in this workshop, I believe I can gain valuable insights

into the challenges decision-makers and other practitioners are facing, while also offering insights into the ways practitioners in alternative organizations transform forms of production, work and consumption in the context of the Anthropocene. Here, my previous work in a worker cooperative context may also offer a fruitful avenue for discussion.

While exploring various forms of alternative economic exchange and strategies of socio-ecological transformation, my future research interests also cover the ways in which policy makers and more conventional business leaders are navigating a postgrowth world.

Niccolò Maria Todaro (*University of Milano-Bicocca*), **Francesco Testa** (*Institute of Management, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies*), **Emilio Passeti** (*University of Padua*)

→ **Co-Creating Knowledge with Managers: Moving Beyond Research-Practice Tensions to Generate Impact**

The increasing complexity of societal challenges and the demand for impactful research underscore the pressing need to bridge the gap between academia and managerial practice (Williams et al., 2024). Despite a long-standing debate on the research-practice (R-P) gap within management scholarship (Bansal et al., 2012), tensions persist between the production of rigorous academic knowledge and its relevance to real-world problems (Hamann et al., 2024). While various explanations of this gap have been offered – communication barriers, misaligned incentives, and epistemological divides (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014) – scholars increasingly advocate for engaged forms of scholarship that involve tight collaboration between researchers and practitioners (Slawinski et al., 2024). Among these, academic-practitioner (A-P) co-creation partnerships have emerged as a promising approach to generate actionable, prescriptive knowledge and achieve dual impact, both scientific and societal (Sharma & Bansal., 2020).

This ongoing research project investigates how A-P co-creation partnerships unfold in practice and how persistent tensions are navigated to enable impactful research addressed at societal and environmental challenges. The following research questions are addressed: how do A-P co-creation partnerships evolve over time to generate impact through rigorous and relevant research? How are persistent tensions between research and practice navigated within the co-creation process, and what mechanisms support their management? To address these questions, the project draws on a six-year process study of a long-standing academic-practitioner partnership in Italy – namely, the LabHSE, a collaborative research initiative bringing together management scholars and managers from 18 large Italian businesses across the manufacturing, logistics, and utilities sectors.

Conceptually, the study builds on extant literature on impact-driven research and R-P knowledge co-creation within the framework of grand challenges (Sharma et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2024). Methodologically, the study draws on diverse qualitative data sources, ranging from participant and non-participant observation of co-creation events, interviews with researchers and practitioners involved, and content analysis of materials produced during the project. Analytically, the study adopts an abductive approach

to delineate a four-phase process model of R-P knowledge co-creation that illustrates the progressive deepening of A-P collaboration and mutual learning, culminating in the formation of a “community of inquiry” where traditional boundaries between academic and practitioner roles are blurred, and impact is achieved through iterative cycles of problem framing, research co-design, knowledge co-development and implementation.

The preliminary results of the study offer multifold contributions to extant literature. First, the study provides a processual model of R-P co-creation that details how collaboration evolves and intensifies over time, offering an actionable roadmap for navigating the R-P interface. Second, the study identifies mechanisms that help researchers and practitioners manage R-P tensions productively. In doing so, the research addresses the paucity of empirical research on how co-creation unfolds in practice and how impact is co-constructed over time.

Sara Ratti (*IMD Business School*)

→ **Exploring Materiality Assessments as Tools for Distant-Future Strategy in the Anthropocene**

This research explores how companies interpret and respond to sustainability impacts, risks, and opportunities (IROs) under the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), with a focus on how these assessments influence corporate strategy formulation in the context of distant futures - those that extend beyond traditional planning horizons and challenge conventional organizational planning and decision-making (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). Many of the sustainability issues companies must address - such as biodiversity collapse, climate tipping points, or systemic resource depletion - are manifestations of distant futures: complex, ambiguous, and uncertain scenarios that extend beyond immediate business cycles (Augustine et al., 2019). As noted in the literature, organizations often lack the cognitive, temporal, and institutional capacity to engage meaningfully with such futures (Ferraro et al., 2015), leading them to rely on stylized or fictional representations that are difficult to translate into concrete strategic actions (Hernes & Schultz, 2020).

The ESRS, mandated under the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), require companies to undertake a “double materiality” assessment - evaluating both their impacts on environmental and social systems (impact materiality) and their dependencies on those systems (financial materiality) (European Parliament and the Council, 2022). For example, two companies in the beverage industry may both identify water as a material issue yet diverge in their framing: one company may emphasize its impact on water scarcity as an environmental concern, while another may prioritize the financial risk posed by future water shortages. These framing differences point not only to methodological ambiguity but also to deeper tensions in how organizations conceptualize their place within long-term ecological systems. The research aims to explore whether and how materiality assessments serve as cognitive and strategic tools in organizational efforts to engage with distant futures. Specifically, the project examines whether, and how, science-based frameworks can enhance the interpretive and anticipatory capacity of materiality assessment processes - enabling companies not only to meet regulatory expectations but also to inform the

development of forward-looking strategies that are aligned with long-term ecological and social thresholds.

Research Questions : (1) How do companies identify and prioritize their impacts on environmental and social systems and their risks and opportunities emerging from their dependencies with ecological systems, and how do these processes reflect or neglect distant-future considerations? ; (2) What strategic and organizational implications arise from differing approaches to materiality, particularly regarding the temporal scope and conceptualization of long-term futures? ; (3) To what extent can science-based frameworks help harmonize materiality assessments with the formulation of strategies that incorporate abstract and uncertain future states?

A document analysis of annual reports will provide evidence into how distant futures are engaged (or neglected) in formal materiality assessment processes. Then, a qualitative practice-based experiment will be conducted in collaboration with a practitioner partner (e.g., a sustainability consultancy). The experiment involves a foresight-based materiality exercise or scenario planning simulation, hosted on the partner's internal training platform. Participants will be exposed to structured decision-making tasks based on different materiality framings (e.g., financial, impact) to examine how these frames influence strategic perception -especially when confronted with distant-future scenarios that demand imaginative and future-resilient thinking.

The study contributes to both scholarship and practice by questioning the limits of existing materiality practices in engaging with distant futures. For firms, it offers guidance on how to navigate uncertainty through more imaginative and science-aligned foresight methods. For regulators and standard-setters, it highlights where the current sustainability reporting framework may fall short in fostering the kind of long-range, systems-informed thinking needed in the Anthropocene.

Melissa Escobar Cisternas (*Ecole des Mines de Saint-Etienne*)

→ **Implementing Strong Sustainability in a Design Process**

My subject research, explained in the article "Implementing Strong Sustainability in a Design Process", addresses the critical question of how to translate Strong Sustainability principles into actionable design practices and propose a new methodology called Design for strong sustainability© Methodology. Its central research question is: How can design processes be restructured to reflect Strong Sustainability — i.e., operating within ecological limits and promoting intergenerational equity? This directly aligns with the Anthropocene track "How can we foster systems transformations?" by proposing a systemic redesign of how sustainability is incorporated into innovation, challenging the dominant "weak sustainability" approach (which assumes substitution between natural and human-made capital), and introducing a method that treats ecological boundaries as non-negotiable.

The goal is not to optimize current systems(Hamant, 2022) but to transform how we design, anchoring it in regenerative, interspecies relationship and long-term thinking — essential for true systems change.

The state of my research is conceptual and methodology-focused, grounded in an extensive literature review of Strong Sustainability principles and design theory. It outlines a step-by-step process for integrating these principles into design practice. Empirical case studies are being conducted in an ecohamlet case study and in a telecommunications company with a CIFRE thesis, proving its basis for application in real-world design and innovation contexts.

This methodology allows users to rethink innovation from the ground up, proposing a Strong sustainability business model. In the public policy sector, my research offers a potential reference framework for sustainability guidelines, regulations, or procurement standards that align with planetary boundaries.

Corentin Gariel (*Grenoble Ecole de Management*)

→ **Organizing social responsibility of multinational corporations (MNCs): the case of plastic pollution**

Research rationale and questions: For the past fifteen years, plastic pollution has become a critical issue across emerging countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Local consumption of plastics soared and overloaded waste management infrastructure (Cottom et al., 2024; Jambeck et al., 2015). While governments already struggle to collect and treat other types of waste, European and North-American MNCs, such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Unilever and Danone have been pointed and even accused of being the biggest plastic polluters in the world (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019; Castelló & Lopez-Berzosa, 2021). These MNCs responded by committing to reduce their plastic footprint through recycling and circularity. My PhD dissertation starts with this practical question: how can these MNCs reach their commitments in emerging countries with limited infrastructure?

Theoretically, this practical question brings my dissertation to discuss corporate strategies develop to tackle unprecedented problems, such as climate change, biodiversity loss or spatial pollution (Berkowitz et al., 2024; George et al., 2016). Because of the complexity and worldwide scope of these issues, I focus on how MNCs engage with collective action to manage their responsibility regarding this type of novel problems (Ferraro et al., 2015).

My PhD work draws upon on qualitative research methods, having built a multiple case-study in five countries in West Africa and South-East Asia (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia). Through two field trips, I conducted 80 interviews of a diversity of stakeholders (MNCs, NGOs, governments, international organizations), visited different places dedicated to the management of plastic pollution and collected documents shared by interviewees and their organizations.

My dissertation highlights three main findings: (1) Unilateral and voluntary strategies of MNCs produce limited effects on the management of plastic pollution ; (2) To maintain both their legitimacy and competitiveness, these same MNCs co-develop together meta-organizations (organizations of organizations) whose main goal is the implementation of a mandatory regulation of their own industry (fast moving goods consumer, FMCG); (3) To reach this goal of a mandatory regulation (expected to organize their own responsibility regarding plastic pollution), MNCs strongly depend on multistakeholder processes at the national level.

Following the end of my PhD, I am eager to make my research useful and relevant for both academia and practitioners. My conviction is that the last part of my findings (3) needs to be developed as it shows how the framing of plastic pollution by national governments produces (or not) effects on MNCs and the management of plastic pollution. A very interesting element for me is the fact that governments adopting a systemic framing of plastic pollution leads to business-as-usual practices by MNCs on the short and medium terms (Wright & Nyberg, 2017). At the opposite, a narrower framing can bring MNCs to start developing waste management infrastructure in spite of "taming" the problem (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016).

Pierre-Eloi Gay (ESSEC Business School)

→ **International political coalitions to resist environmental pushback**

I am an early career researcher specializing in climate change politics, with a particular focus on how corporations shape and limit the range of responses to the climate and ecological crisis. My PhD research explored the role of agribusiness corporations in Brazil in shaping national and international environmental and climate policies. Using qualitative methods, including interviews, archival research, and non-participant observation, I investigated how these corporate actors construct and disseminate narratives around sustainability, climate responsibility, and environmental governance. My work has shown how agribusiness actors in Brazil actively promote a vision of "climate-smart" agriculture that often masks extractive practices and undermines more transformative environmental reforms. Through coordinated lobbying, they have successfully delayed or diluted regulatory initiatives, such as the European Union Regulation on deforestation-free products, demonstrating the power of transnational corporate influence in shaping climate governance.

To date, my research has primarily focused on diagnosing the contradictions, ambivalences, and discursive strategies within corporate sustainability agendas. However, I am increasingly interested in developing a more applied and strategic orientation. I aim to explore how progressive coalitions, including NGOs, business actors, and transnational advocacy networks, can respond to corporate pushback and co-produce more ambitious regulatory and policy frameworks and open for more desirable futures.

Marija Roglic (Montpellier Business School, Chair COAST)

→ **Orchestrating Cross-Sector Transformations: A Framework for Managing System-Level Change**

My research examines why system transformations fail and how orchestration capabilities can prevent this collapse. I aim to develop this work into a practitioner essay for the "Making it Better by Working Together" special issue.

In Brandenburg, Germany, stakeholders envision a sustainable pig farming system. Two years later, it remains a vision. Meanwhile, 1,000 kilometers away, a Global Head sits alone

managing €50 million in transformation programs across 5,000 farms. While our direct evidence comes from programs ranging from €10k to €260M, industry reports suggest similar patterns in billion-euro initiatives. Both failures share the same root cause: orchestration collapse.

Despite growing calls for collaboration and stakeholder alignment, we lack frameworks that explain how orchestration differs from coordination and what capabilities enable successful transformation across sectors. This gap leaves managers navigating billion-euro transformation initiatives without evidence-based guidance on orchestration design. Through comparative analysis of fifteen transformation initiatives—nine experimental cases and six corporate programs—we uncover four orchestration failures that consistently undermine transformations regardless of scale or sector: boundary blindness (missing essential actors while overrepresenting others), time ignorance (excluding operational actors through unrecognized opportunity costs), action paralysis (strategic planning that never transitions to implementation), and single-point thinking (isolated interventions rather than system leverage). These patterns emerged whether examining grassroots experiments or Fortune 500 sustainability programs. Based on these findings, we develop an Orchestration Framework comprising four interdependent capabilities that should work as a continuous cycle.

We contribute to transformation theory by distinguishing orchestration—strategic alignment of diverse actors maintaining different objectives—from coordination, while providing managers with actionable tools for building orchestration capabilities within existing resources and constraints.

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