

ESPPRIT Workshop: Spatialising Alternative Imaginaries of Planning and Development for Prosperity Beyond Growth

Date: June 18-19, 2025

Location: Kellogg College, University of Oxford, UK

The Regional Studies Association Research Network on Eco-Social Policy and Practice for Innovation and Transformation (ESPPRIT), invites contributions for our thematic workshop, which will explore the spatial dimensions of eco-social transformations and alternative imaginaries of development beyond growth. We welcome contributions that address the workshop's core themes and align with the network's broader objectives of fostering interdisciplinary discussions.

Theme of the event:

Submission deadline extended until 24 Feb 2025, 23.59 pm

In the face of escalating ecological and social crises, progressive ideas are urgently needed to foster development pathways that respect ecological boundaries while addressing human needs. Diverse visions and imaginaries have emerged, rethinking how eco-social risks can be managed and transformations designed. While visions provide frameworks for desired futures, imaginaries are collectively held and institutionally stabilised constructs of desired futures, rooted in social norms and scientific progress (Rohracher & Konrad 2024). These structures guide collective efforts and resource alignment, particularly in complex, uncertain fields.

Progressive economic development models, including the Wellbeing Economy, Doughnut Economics, the Foundational Economy, and Community Wealth Building, exemplify these approaches, prioritising human needs within planetary boundaries and shifting focus from GDP growth to social and ecological wellbeing. Similarly, the concept of a 'just transition' highlights equitable eco-social transformations, with national and international visions addressing sectors like energy, food, and transport. However, translating these visions into action often encounters challenges at the intersection of local and global scales.

Particular in their spatial implementation, visions and imaginaries are often contested, reflecting societal power struggles and competing (local or contextualised) narratives. As Feola et al. (2023) observe, such a mismatch often exists between future imaginaries and collective memories of place, highlighting the need to integrate local histories and cultures, e.g. in urban development models like the 15-minute city, Transition Towns, or Garden Cities. Greater attention to the geography of transitions (Coenen et al. 2012) - how place, space, and scale shape imaginaries and their implementation - is thus vital for understanding the challenges and opportunities in shaping development beyond growth.

This workshop will address these and related issues, focusing on, but not limited to the following questions:

- What are the imaginaries and visions of progressive development models and how can they be operationalised to balance ecological boundaries and human wellbeing in diverse socio-spatial contexts?
- How do spatial factors (e.g., material-economic such as infrastructures, political-institutional such as competence division, cultural-discursive such as planning discourse etc.) influence the development, contestation, and implementation of eco-social visions and imaginaries, particularly in urban contexts?
- What mechanisms enable or prevent these types of transitions across different scales, and how can they be adapted to address local challenges and opportunities?
- How can mismatches between future imaginaries, realities, and collective memories of place be navigated to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of eco-social transformation initiatives?

Submission Guidelines:

We invite conceptual and theoretical contributions as well as empirical case studies and actionable examples of how these imaginaries and visions play out in specific socio-spatial contexts of transitions. Submissions are welcome in different formats (e.g., video abstract, written abstract of 250-300 words etc.), but should clearly outline the research focus, methodology (if applicable), results, relevance to the workshop theme and what the author(s) would like to get out of the workshop.

Submission deadline: Submission deadline extended until 24 Feb 2025, 23.59 pm

Submission process: Please email your submission to astrid.krisch@kellogg.ox.ac.uk with the subject line: ESPPRIT Workshop 2025 – Contribution Submission

Why participate?

This workshop offers a unique opportunity to showcase your research, gain insights into ongoing projects, and engage with pressing research questions at the intersection of research, policy, and practice. Through diverse formats – including keynote presentations that challenge us to rethink eco-social transformations, lightning rounds, and interactive discussions – the workshop will foster collaborative learning and help shape future agendas for eco-social policy and practice in urban and regional transformations.

A highlight of the event will be the involvement in a GCHU Public Seminar, that brings together academics, policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public to reflect on the relevance and impact of current research. Informal networking opportunities during coffee breaks, lunches, dinner and a site visit will further enhance connections and facilitate dialogue with peers while grounding discussions in real-world examples of transformation.

Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of current research challenges, expanded networks that span countries and disciplines, and inspiration and momentum for collaborative initiatives. A written report documenting the workshop will further capture the insights and research directions discussed, supporting continued engagement beyond the event.

Costs:

Over the two days, catered workshop lunches, a group dinner on June 18, snacks and coffee during scheduled breaks will be provided by the organisers. Participants are responsible for arranging their own accommodation, travel, and additional meals. Travel bursaries are available for Early-Career Researchers who are members of the RSA – please contact us for more information. Childcare services can also be arranged upon request with advance notice.



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For more information visit <https://www.regionalstudies.org/network/espprit/>



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Further Information and Contact Details

Dr Astrid Krisch
Global Centre on Healthcare and Urbanisation
University of Oxford, Kellogg College, OX2 6PN

e: astrid.krisch@kellogg.ox.ac.uk
t: +44 (0) 1865 612 037