

Call for Participation: International Conference
Shaping Future Society. Future-oriented Communitization in Times of Crises
06.-08.05.2026
University of Applied Sciences Fulda



Contemporary society is characterized by multiple insecurities which are often experienced as crises. This is closely linked to questions about the future because crises make the future appear less tangible and more uncertain for many people. Nevertheless, imaginations of (different) futures may serve as blueprints for action in times of crises. As the social sciences have been dealing with mutually influencing crisis topics (see Matern 2018, Kutter 2020, Krasni 2017), the debate surrounding the term itself and the fuzziness of its meaning thus increasingly involves a variety of future-related questions and draws attention towards the ways in which future is experienced and shaped in contemporary society. A classical sociological conceptualisation of such future plans has been provided by looking at approaches to utopia (f.e. Zuk 2020), which provides useful insights into the relevance of the temporal dimension of future visions and future-oriented practice (Dinerstein 2015, Wright 2010, Daniel 2022). Current academic debates focus on future orientations and temporalities (Bryant/Knight 2019), the future of (racial) capitalism (Beckert 2016; Milanović 2021), challenges to human and non-human survival (Haraway 2016; Tsing 2015), or on concepts like prefigurative politics as a tool for analysing how a particular end is being 'shaped' in different realms of society (Yates 2021; Maekelbergh 2016).

The DFG-funded research impulse "Shaping Future Society" (SaFe) investigates the mutual constitution of future-oriented practices and community processes and invites contributions for a conference, which aims to explore and evaluate alternative visions and practices that mobilize societal change, critically assess the impact of community-driven initiatives in fostering social transformation, and advance methodological debates that enrich transformative research. We assume that community, as a basic element of social order, acts as a nucleus of social change in everyday life. Therefore, we are particularly interested in how communities are produced and reproduced through future-oriented practices and how they enable and act towards productively responding to envisaged future challenges.

The conference is organized in seven thematic fields, six of which correspond directly to one of the research projects within the SaFe initiative (see below). We welcome submissions from scholars across disciplines that address the conference themes through one of the seven thematic fields. Contributions may include case studies, theoretical discussions, methodological contributions, or interdisciplinary approaches that open new avenues for understanding and enacting future in community.

**We invite participants to submit their abstract of max. 300 words until
September 30, 2025 to safe@hs-fulda.de.**

**Please include a short biography, your current institutional affiliation, and make sure to
highlight to which of the thematic fields you would like to contribute.**

Thematic Fields

GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS In line with the central theme of our research initiative, we invite contributions that explore how communities adapt to crises through everyday practices guided by alternative visions of the future. Focusing on the diverse processes in which communitization is initiated, sustained, and adapted in response to societal challenges we welcome conceptual impulses that address questions such as:

How do communities conceptualize utopias amid current and future challenges? How are prefigurative practices employed by social movements to redefine utopian visions and societal norms? How can methodologies be transformative, impacting not just academic findings but also social practices? How can interdisciplinary approaches enhance our understanding of future-oriented processes?

BIOGRAPHY How do we conceptualize future as a dimension of biographical time in context of social change? Biographical research often focuses the biographical past; the importance of future orientations for life stories has seldom been investigated. Nonetheless, they play a crucial role for the construction of the self, social relations and the conduct of life. This poses several empirical and theoretical challenges that we want to discuss:

How does »the future« as an individual and collective projection sediment in life stories and affect conduct of life? How can we conceptualize »future« in a non-prognostic but reconstructive sense? Which implications does »the future« have for explaining social action and reality?

HEALTH Public health and climate science are pivotal in imagining and shaping collective futures. Climate scientists create models predicting future environmental conditions, while public health experts advocate for health as a collective good, emphasizing prevention and salutogenesis. Both fields actively generate knowledge and enact future scenarios through daily activities. Amid global uncertainties, this panel examines how these professions initiate, sustain, and adapt communitization processes to shape future societies. Topics for exploration include:

How are communitization processes enacted and sustained within public health and climate science epistemic communities? How does communitization enable transformative, future-oriented societal practices in these fields? How do shared epistemic frameworks influence strategies for managing uncertainties?

HOUSING This thematic field is dedicated to discussions about forms of communal living and housing as an expression of social innovation, democratic negotiation and solidarity-based future planning. The focus is on everyday practices through which people in communal living projects or informal organized neighborhood networks (as caring communities) handle their living together, take responsibility, negotiate conflicts, and build social infrastructures.

How to concrete practices, such as new forms of participation, care, or resource use emerge in these contexts? What are social, spatial, cultural, or political dimensions of these transformation processes? How can critical perspectives on exclusion, power relations, and implicit norms be implemented?

INDIGENEITY Indigenous communities around the world practice future-making in ways deeply embedded in place, kinship networks, and more-than-human relations. This thematic field explores how Indigenous communities, situated at the intersections of multiple crises induced by historical injustices, ongoing sociopolitical marginalization, and ecological crisis, envision their futures and practice future-making. We are particularly interested in contributions addressing topics such as cultural-linguistic politics/revival, agricultural innovation, biodiversity conservation, climate change, Indigenous governance, temporality, migration, and cultural transmission.

How are indigenous futures enacted through everyday practices? How do such practices contribute to community (re-)formation? How do resistance and revival play out in such practices?

NUTRITION Contemporary food systems are increasingly criticized for their unsustainability in terms of ecology, economy, public health, and animal welfare. We invite contributions that explore how community-based initiatives along the entire food value chain – such as community-supported agriculture, food sharing, or food cooperatives – contribute to driving the socio-ecological transformation towards more sustainable forms of nutrition.

Which nutritional practices are proclaimed and considered sustainable? What effects do alternative food practices have on values, infrastructures, and imaginaries? How, and to what extent, can collective action foster the creation of resilient and sustainable food systems? What challenges arise and how are they dealt with?

PROTEST Within the thematic field of protest we invite contributions that explore the heterogeneous manifestations and dynamics of so-called “counter-communities” (Loick 2024) within protests, moments of dissidence and insurgence as well as contentious everyday life practices.

What is the role of contention and socio-political dissent within prefigurative practices of counter-communities? To which extent do these practices provide a glimpse on alternative and utopian collective futures? How do these practices of communitization challenge anthropocentric human-nonhuman relations with regards to a collective survival in times of multiple and interconnected crises? What future-oriented practices of communitization, such as caring or commoning, are involved in the contentious everyday life of these counter-communities?

For more information about the research impulse visit

<https://www.hs-fulda.de/en/research/shaping-future-society-safe>

If you have further questions don't hesitate to contact us via safe@hs-fulda.de