

Discursive Imaginaries of Change

Heterotopias, PowerKnowledge, and the "*Great Transformation*"

19–21 July 2027 | Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany

In 1527, Philipps-Universität Marburg was founded as a space of intellectual rupture: the first Protestant university in the world, conceived as a heterotopia at the very moment of a great transformation. Five hundred years later, DNC 2027 comes to Marburg to ask: how do we discursively imagine, contest, and inhabit transformation today?

We live in a world of polycrisis: entangled climate emergencies, the rise of authoritarianism, growing inequalities, and the rapid transformation of the public sphere through AI and digital media. Yet the language and discursive practices with which we address these challenges matter. Academic discourse too often reproduces the very framings it sets out to critique. The DNC 2027 congress invites scholars to step beyond "problem talk" and to ask instead: what discursive fissures, counter-imaginaries, and heterotopian spaces are emerging? What futures are already being articulated — and by whom?

Rather than treating "transformation" as a goal to be achieved, we open it as a discursive site: a terrain of meaning-making, power, struggle, language, and imagination. Drawing on social imaginaries, discourse theory, and critical epistemologies, we invite researchers from across the humanities and social sciences (linguists, sociologists, media scholars, organizational discourse scholars, cultural theorists, gender and minority studies researchers, educational scholars, political scientists, philosophers, historians, and many others) to engage with the ways transformation is narrated, contested, and re-imagined.

Thematic Focus

The congress builds on a long tradition of DNC events that have analysed the discursive construction of social pasts, presents, and futures. This time, we are especially interested in the imaginaries that different actors, movements, disciplines, and epistemological traditions bring to the question of change. We do not assume that transformation is a settled concept, nor that it always points in progressive directions. Right-wing populisms and authoritarian movements offer their own powerful imaginaries of transformation. So do the counter-discourses of feminist care ethics, indigenous knowledge systems, commoning movements, degrowth advocates, and decolonial scholars. All of these deserve our critical, analytical as well as cocreational attention.

We are interested in four broad, overlapping dimensions:

- **Imaginaries and discourse:** How is the meaning of "transformation", "crisis", or "the future" discursively constructed, stabilised, and contested across political, media, and everyday registers? What social imaginaries shape collective understandings of economy, democracy, social life and ecology?
- **Power, knowledge, and epistemic struggles:** Whose knowledge counts, and whose is marginalised? We especially welcome contributions from Southern, decolonial, feminist, and indigenous perspectives that challenge Western-modernist frameworks. We encourage analysis of how educational systems, organisations and communicative practices normalise particular epistemic orders.
- **Heterotopias and counter-movements:** Where do alternative spaces, practices, and discourses emerge? How are commons, care, solidarity, and more-than-human entanglements articulated as alternatives to market logic? How do such spaces relate to — and potentially transform — hegemonic formations?
- **Methodological reflexivity:** How can discourse research itself reflect on its own positionings, avoid reproducing hegemonic closures or epistemic romanticism, and develop what some call "caring research"? What are the implications of engaged, transdisciplinary, or co-creative methodologies for our scholarly practices?

Topics and Suggested Panels

We invite 15 to 20-minute presentations (followed by 10 minutes of discussion) on topics related to the congress theme. Contributions that do not fit neatly into a **single theme** are warmly encouraged. Suggested panels include but are in no way restricted to the following perspectives:

1. **Philosophical:** Alternative epistemologies, ontological pluralism, and the politics of knowledge.
2. **Political:** Populism, democratic backsliding, postcolonial and feminist imaginaries of democracy.
3. **Economic:** From neoliberalism to plural economies; the discursive construction of The Great Transformation.
4. **Linguistic:** From Great to Small Narratives, Truth Telling, Post-Truth Orders.
5. **Societal and Spatial** — Social fragmentation, commoning, urban heterotopias, and community-based change.
6. **Ecological:** Climate discourse, more-than-human entanglements, buen vivir, and degrowth.

7. **Educational:** Onto-epistemologies of commoning education, institutional discourse, discursive perspectives on organizational learning and education, and pedagogical imaginaries.
8. **Methodological;** Reflexive, caring, and transdisciplinary research methodologies.
9. **Media and Digital Imaginaries** — AI safety and alignment, digital platforms, and the co-construction of social and political futures.
10. **Gender, Minority, and Postcolonial Studies** — Anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQ+ discourses, in-group/out-group constructions, and decolonial imaginaries.
11. and many more

Presentation Formats

DNC 2027 welcomes submissions in the following formats:

- Single papers - 20-minute presentations (please submit an abstract of no more than 250 words plus title and references, APA 7)
- Symposia - three thematically related papers in a 90-minute session (please submit as a single submission a framing of up to 400 words and 200 word abstracts for all papers linked to it plus titles & references, APA 7)
- Research Workshops with a methodological or / and research practical focus - 90 minute session (please submit a framing of 600 words, a methods section 400 words plus references (300 words)

You will find more information of the different congress formats at the [DNC 2027 website](https://discourseanalysis.net/DNC2027) <https://discourseanalysis.net/DNC2027>.

UnConferencing

We will organise a participatory and cocreational unconferencing format at the second afternoon of the congress. This format offers any kind of cocreational space to discuss book projects, research proposals, conferences, burning questions, and form connections with the university and regional partners such as the cooperating gender center and the democracy center of University of Marburg. Everybody is invited to suggest topics for unconferencing sessions.

Please submit suggestions for networking and cocreation on Tuesday afternoon (90 min sessions) into the congress conftool.

Congress Languages

Please choose in ConfTool, in which of the four congress languages you would like to present your work (English, French, Spanish or German).

Submission Guidelines

All Submissions are to be submitted via Conftool at <https://www.conftool.com/dnc2027/>

Important Dates

- **Abstract submissions open:** 15th of June 2026
- **Submission deadline:** 31st of October 2026
- **Notification of acceptance:** 15th of December 2026
- **Registration deadline:** 31st March 2027 (early bird fee) & 15 June 2027 (regular fee)

Fees and Registration

Participants are required to hold an active DiscourseNet membership (€60 for 2 years) and pay a congress participation fee: As we intend to apply a solidarity approach, the congress fee is differentiated:

Early Bird Rate (until 31st of march 2027):

- **Professors/full time academics with an institutional position:** €168
- **Doctoral students:** €83
- **Colleagues from the Global South / Students:** €43

Regular Rate: (until 15th of June 2027)

- **Professors/academics with an institutional position:** 253 Euro
- **Doctoral Students:** 153 Euro
- **Colleagues from the Global South** 83 Euro

Registration and payment details will be sent with the acceptance notification and are available via the [Conftool](#). The congress is also open to non-presenting participants with active DN membership. Non-presenting participants from the host institution (Philipps-Universität Marburg) are exempt from the DiscourseNet membership fee.

Venue: The congress will take place in person at Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany. Further details on travel, accommodation, and the full programme will be published at <https://discourseanalysis.net/DNC2027>. No online participation will be offered. The congress is prepared in cooperation with the gender centre and the democracy centre of Philipps-University of Marburg. Head of the local organizing team is Prof. Dr. Susanne Maria Weber.

Contact

For further information regarding the congress, registration, accommodation, or programme updates, please contact: DNC 2027 Organizing Committee dnccongress2027@gmail.com