

The background of the top section is a photograph of a brick building with several windows, some of which are partially covered by green ivy. The MESH logo is overlaid on the left side of the image. The logo consists of the word 'mesh' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a thin white line forming a semi-circle around the 'e' and 's'.

mesh

multidisciplinary
environmental studies
in the humanities

MESH Leaf IV

Research Brief
June 2026

Photo by Tanya Gaultam

Cologne UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Thematic Hub for Planetary Wellbeing

Exploring Multispecies Wellbeing and Ecological Flourishing

The UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition works worldwide through regional and thematic hubs, including the one at the University of Cologne (see p. 2). Focused on Planetary Wellbeing, the Cologne BRIDGES Thematic Hub addresses the interconnections amongst human health and wellbeing, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and ecological regeneration.

Bringing the insights and understandings of the environmental humanities to the One Health concept, the Cologne BRIDGES Hub approaches wellbeing from a perspective that prioritises multispecies conviviality and ecological flourishing in a shared Planet Earth for present and future generations.

Situated within a capacious network of European research partners, the Cologne BRIDGES Hub also extends its scope and reach to include collaborators from the Global South in order to advance North-South-South eco-humanities interventions.

The Cologne BRIDGES Hub explores and connects diverse concepts, methodologies and policies connected to Planetary Wellbeing, including intergenerational justice and mental health, art and literature, spirituality and value systems, indigenous and local knowledges, foresight and futures thinking, as well as discursive and other practices of more-than-human conviviality and collaboration.

The Cologne BRIDGES Thematic Hub for Planetary Wellbeing is anchored in two leading research institutions at the University of Cologne (UoC): The research hub for [Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities \(MESH\)](#) and the [Global South Studies Center \(GSSC\)](#).

It is also supported by the [European University for Wellbeing \(EUniWell\)](#), the [Sustainability Research Hub](#) and the [Global Responsibility Unit](#) at the UoC.

UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES

BRIDGES is a global sustainability science coalition launched within [UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation and Foresight \(MOST\)](#) in 2021.

It promotes a humanities-driven, trans-disciplinary approach to addressing urgent social and environmental challenges outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By integrating insights from the humanities, arts, and sciences, BRIDGES fosters inclusive, community-centred solutions that prioritize cultural diversity, indigenous and local knowledge, and equitable collaboration between the Global South and North.

The coalition operates through regional hubs worldwide, including the one at the University of Cologne, focusing on planetary wellbeing and multispecies coexistence.

The BRIDGES Flagship Hub is located at Arizona State University and connected to the [Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory](#).

The three key partners in BRIDGES' founding history are [UNESCO](#), the [International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences \(CIPSH\)](#), and [Humanities for the Environment \(HfE\)](#). While UNESCO provides the broader international policy framework, CIPSH played an instrumental role in developing BRIDGES. HfE's global network of observatories was pivotal for establishing the BRIDGES global coalition, together working to mobilize the arts and humanities to address social and environmental challenges in civil society and academic life.

CIPSH and HfE continue to shape BRIDGES through ex officio seats on its Governing Council, helping guide strategy and evaluate projects seeking BRIDGES endorsement.

BRIDGES Objectives

1. [Implement humanities-driven sustainability science](#), as formulated in the UNESCO Guidelines for Sustainability Science in Research and Education, in a range of international contexts.
2. [Build local capacities](#) to support effective and impactful humanities-driven sustainability science research and education.
3. [Develop international scope and impact](#) of BRIDGES through cross-regional expansion of member organisations.
4. [Establish a growing family](#) of BRIDGES Hubs to increase capacities and opportunities for funding of BRIDGES-led projects and activities.
5. [Establish a global network](#) of BRIDGES-endorsed projects in all regions, building on the networks of the founding partners (UNESCO, CIPSH, and HfE) and the existing coalition member organisations.
6. [Launch high-impact international projects](#) promoting humanities-driven sustainability science knowledge and models of effective co-production that can be fed to policy.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the [Objectives, Principles and Aims of BRIDGES](#):



Affiliated Projects

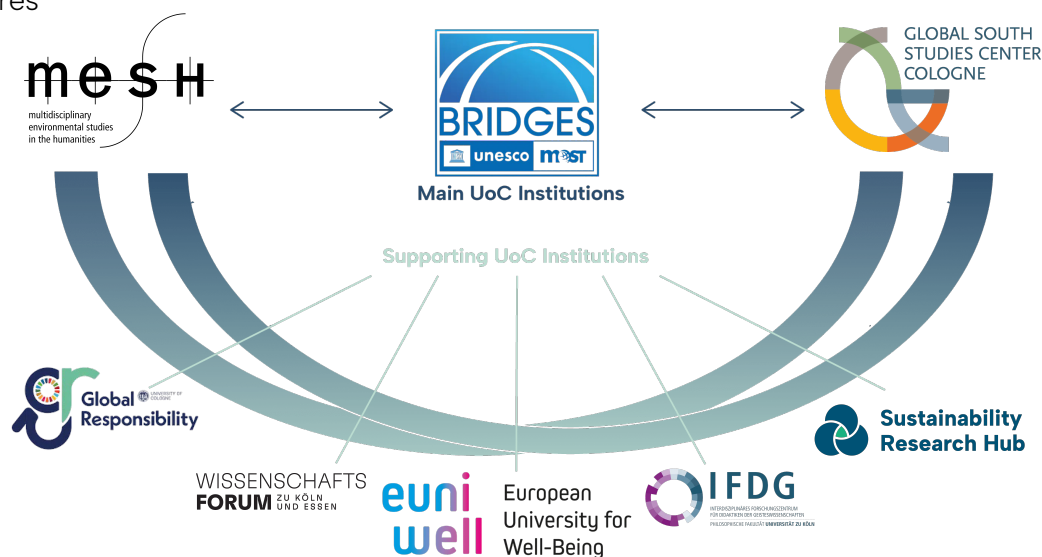
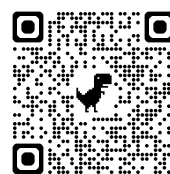
Cologne-based affiliated projects align with the BRIDGES objectives and aim to map humanities-informed transdisciplinary sustainability initiatives and research, identifying hotspots, gaps, shared challenges, and policy-relevant insights to support collaboration, decision-making, and strategic planning.

- **SAPP** – Sharing a Planet in Peril
- **HESCOR** – Cultural Evolution in Changing Climate: Human and Earth System Coupled Research
- **EcoLit** – Eco-critical Literacy in Musical and Literary Practices of Arts Education
- **CCM** – Just Futures? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Cultural Climate Models
- **Rewilding the Anthropocene** – Human-Animal Assemblages in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area
- **CCMed** – EUniWell Research Initiative on Crisis and Conviviality in the Mediterranean Region
- **CRC TRR 228** – Future Rural Africa: Future-making and social-ecological transformation
- **Commodifying the Wild** – A DFG Research Consortium
- **#CongoBasinFutures** – Exploring Alternative Climate and Environmental Futures

BRIDGES Cologne Policy Insights

- **BCPI #1: Co-Benefits of Ancillary Infrastructure Accompanying Renewable Energy Projects** by Nsah Mala with Clemens Greiner (University of Cologne), Britta Klagge (University of Bonn) and Evelyne Atieno Owino (University of Bonn)
- **BCPI #2: Towards the Authorship of Nonhuman Animals** by Nsah Mala (University of Cologne) with Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne) and Julia Kessel (FernUniversität Hagen)
- **BCPI #3: Science-policy platforms for more inclusive Nature-based Solutions** by Gerda Kuiper (University of Cologne), Daniel Olago (University of Nairobi), and Juliet Wanjiku Kamau (University of Bonn)
- **BCPI #4: Moving Beyond SDG 6: Recognizing the Plurality of 'WaterS'** by Nsah Mala (University of Cologne) with Franz Krause (University of Cologne)

Scan the QR code for accessing our **Cologne Policy Insights** and learn more about our affiliated projects, activities and events at the **Cologne BRIDGES Blog**:



Apply for BRIDGES Recognition



Photo credit: www.bridges.earth

The BRIDGES Coalition invites researchers, educators, practitioners, and community-based organisations to submit initiatives for consideration and validation under the BRIDGES Recognition Programme. The programme highlights projects that advance transdisciplinary sustainability science and foster co-produced knowledge across academic and non-academic knowledge systems.

Submissions should address sustainability challenges linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reflect BRIDGES principles, including arts and humanities-inclusive, ethically grounded, and collaborative approaches to socio-ecological transformation. Eligible initiatives may include research projects, educational programmes, or community-led actions at local, regional, or global scales.

If your work bridges disciplines, sectors, or knowledge traditions or support meaningful change, you are encouraged to apply for BRIDGES Recognition.

Join a global coalition committed to strengthening impactful sustainability initiatives and informing policy-relevant action worldwide. Contact us for more details or visit the BRIDGES website:

<https://bridges.earth/projects/validation>

Funding and Support

The Cologne BRIDGES Hub is a joint initiative funded and supported by the [GSSC](#), [MESH](#), and [EUniWell](#).

If you want to get involved and support us, please contact our Cologne BRIDGES Hub Coordinator Nsah Mala:

Email:

bridges-hub-cologne@uni-koeln.de

BRIDGES Cologne website:

<https://bridges-hub.cologne/>



BRIDGES International website:

<https://bridges.earth/>



Alexander von
HUMBOLDT
STIFTUNG



UNIVERSITÄT
ZU KÖLN

Contact

Email: info-mesh@uni-koeln.de

Phone: +49(0)221 470 1293

Instagram: [mesh_research_hub](#)

Bluesky: [mesh-research-hub.bsky.social](#)

LinkedIn: [MESH](#)

YouTube: [MESHuniKoeln](#)

Address: Weyertal 59 (Back building,
3. + 4. floors) 50937 Cologne



www.mesh.uni-koeln.de

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