

## General Topic

### **CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Cross-Border Concepts and Practices of Cultural Sustainability**

The Sustainable Development Goals, which are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, “are an urgent call for action by all countries (...) in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change” (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). The SDGs are generally grouped around the economic, social, and environmental objectives which thus constitute the three pillars of sustainable development. What needs to be stressed, however, is the fact that an always present cultural dimension permeates and forges way of thinking and acting with respect to these three pillars, too.

Universities have a huge responsibility in this respect. By means of scientific research, teaching as well as via knowledge transfer between the academia and society, they contribute substantially to the development of suitable concepts and methods underpinning sustainability. They also play a role in supporting students on their path towards working for an inclusive and equitable development in a reflexive, responsible, and creative way. The Bovec Summer School has always been a crucial part of such efforts.

Rooted in the unusual and at the same time typically European Alps-Adriatic region, the Bovec Summer School is not just located within the triangle border region of Slovenia, Italy, and Austria, but it is also the product of this region itself. In fact, it relies on the awareness that borders are not solely divisive factors, but also as a chance for encounters and exchange, and a cause of curiosity for the (presumed) ‘other’, residing beyond the borders. Since its establishment in 1994, the Bovec Summer School is the unique result of a cooperation between seven universities from four countries and it has always been inspiring cross-border space. Its specificity lies in the dynamic combination of multilingualism in practice, a transcultural approach, and a historical awareness of the devastating effects of war. In addition, of core importance are also the understanding of the fruitful impact of peace, democracy, and cooperation, as well as a reflexive attitude concerning the cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions of borders.

Given its own specificity, the 2024 edition of the Bovec Summer School aims to chiefly address the *cultural dimension of sustainability* by focussing, traditionally, on cross-border concepts, methods, and practices. At the same time, it will aim at providing substantial inputs related to the role cultural sustainability plays with respect to the other more widely acknowledged pillars of sustainability, with explicit reference to the *environmental* dimension of it.

Cultural sustainability is more than the preservation of cultural heritage, as it is also about doing culture, whether in everyday life, political life, science, education, or the arts. It is about thinking, talking, and acting within a transcultural, multilingual, intersectional framework that questions identitarian, biologicistic, and 'völkisch' positions, while promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is about opposition against racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. It is about education to democracy, human rights, respect for humans, animals, and the environment. It is about a reflexive, critical, and attentive attitude toward the language and politics of sustainability, how the way discourses on sustainability and domain specific communication emerge and are made. It is about peace-education and opposition to divisive narrow-minded nationalism, as current wars show once again that wars are not just about the annihilation of the bodies of the enemy, as they cause an immediate, and at the same time long-term destruction of the environment, too.

In times of dystopias and end-of-world scenarios, the idea of the Bovec Summer School 2024 is to provide its participants during its own 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary not only with language competence, inspiring concepts, and insights into practices of sustainability, but also with confidence and empowerment to tackle the substantial challenges we are confronted with.

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