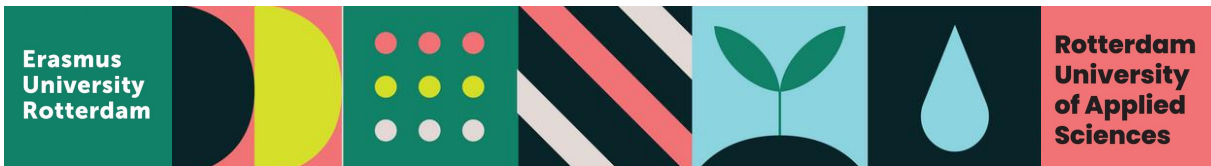# SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT 2024

CONFERENCE REPORT

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
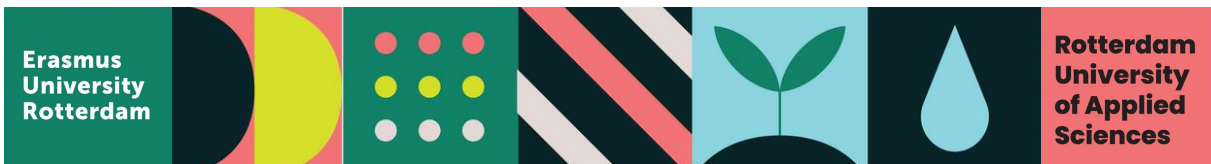
1.Introduction

Background and Purpose

Following the **declaration of a climate and emergency status early 2023**, EUR orchestrated a series of [11 school dialogues and 3 cross-school dialogues (Sustainability Dialogues)](#) throughout fall and winter 2023. Participants engaged in discussions centered on advancing sustainability within EUR and its schools, spanning research, education, and operational facets. Their collective expertise and perspectives were channeled into crafting policy proposals for individual schools and the central administration. Based on this collective experience and on the results, the organizers at EUR decided to **push this movement outside of its own borders**; a way to expand the newfound interest and energy in sustainability and to funnel this experience into a **movement that could benefit the whole Dutch academic environment**.

It is essential to acknowledge two significant contributions to the Summit. The **Design Impact Transition (DIT) Platform** spearheaded the organization of the Summit, bringing its expertise and drive to empower radically new approaches to research and education, demonstrating its commitment to integrating sustainability as a central factor in these transformative efforts. **Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS)** was a fundamental partner; beside providing an excellent venue, it played a key role in emphasizing the critical importance of collaboration throughout the event, ensuring that the conference could go beyond the walls of research universities, representing a broader range of perspectives.

Key Objectives

- **To gather students, academics and professionals involved in sustainability across the Netherlands in actively share and create new solutions to advance sustainability within academia and beyond.**
- **To connect (applied sciences) universities with external partners and initiatives deeply committed to sustainability.**

2. Agenda Overview

Behind the event agenda

The original plan for the Sustainability Summit saw the conference being split in two days, with one fully focusing on the EUR internal processes and the other on the collective experiences of Dutch academia. After the cancellation in May, though, it became a logistical imperative to hold the event during a single day. The organizing team reflected deeply on how to incorporate the feedbacks and the inputs received from the attendees in the previous online meetups, and how to make the day fruitful and relevant for everyone, even with the current constrictions.

This process led to several cornerstones:

- Through the "Disciplines Dialogues", to allocate part of the day in creating a space where the different academic disciplines could critically re-imagine their role in advancing sustainability and how to activate these changes.
- Through the "Thematic Workshops", to calibrate workshops content aiming at activating new skills and capabilities in the attendees, by offering concrete tools and methodologies to strenghten their involvement in sustainability projects and initiatives.
- Based on the feedbacks previously received, to open the conference more and give the possibility to as many initiatives as possible to be there and have space to showcase their efforts toward sustainability.
- To cross the boundaries of a standard, traditional academic conference, incorporating artistical and creative components in showing the complexity of the topic.

This setting was meant to create a stimulating and diverse agenda for the day, giving equal space to pressing instances, as well as long term concerns, accommodating the diversified crowd that was present at the event.

An analysis on improvement points and recommendations regarding a possible agenda 2.0 will be present in Section 7.

PROGRAM

9.00 - 9.30	**Welcome and registration**
9.30 - 10.00	**Opening Plenary**
10.00 - 10.20	**Keynote:** *The importance of new education and research for a thriving sustainable future*
10.20 – 10.50	**Panel discussion:** *Science, climate and future*
10.50 – 11.00	**Closing plenary**
11.00 – 11.10	**Break with snacks and drinks**
11.15 – 13.00	**Discipline Dialogues**
13.00 – 14.10	**Sustainability Future Fair Opening + Lunch**

PROGRAM

14.15 – 15.45	Thematic workshops	BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP: The Fossil Industry and Beyond
		TRANSFORMING RESEARCH: Creating contexts for meaningful transdisciplinary collaborations
		SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION: what future are we educating for?
		CONNECTING THE BUBBLES: a holistic vision for a sustainable academia in 2030
		ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES: designing sustainability initiatives
		SCALING FUTURES: Methods to deal with unknown futures and navigate different systems
		(UN)SUSTAINABLE OBJECTS

IMPORTANT NOTE: *the capacity of the workshops is limited. To ensure the best opportunity to join the sessions, we encourage participants to contemplate other workshops as well.*

|	
15.45 – 16.30	**Closing Plenary**
16.30 – 17.30	**Sustainability Future Fair and aperitif**

3. Participants Overview

The Sustainability Summit website has opened the applications during the last week of May. From then until the 2nd of October, the website has collected **446 applications**. Upon closing the applications due to capacity, we received an extra **23 applications for our waiting list**. In the days previous of the event and during the day itself, we received a total of 46 cancellations via email, bringing down the total number to 400. During the event, we hosted a total of **276 participants**. This number can be broken down as following:

204 ATTENDEES   **33 SPEAKERS**   **39 EXHIBITORS**

The event has registered a **51% of no-shows**, confirming a recurring trend related to free events in universities..

Others 4.9%
Students 13.7%
Academic Staff 28.4%
Professional Staff 52.9%
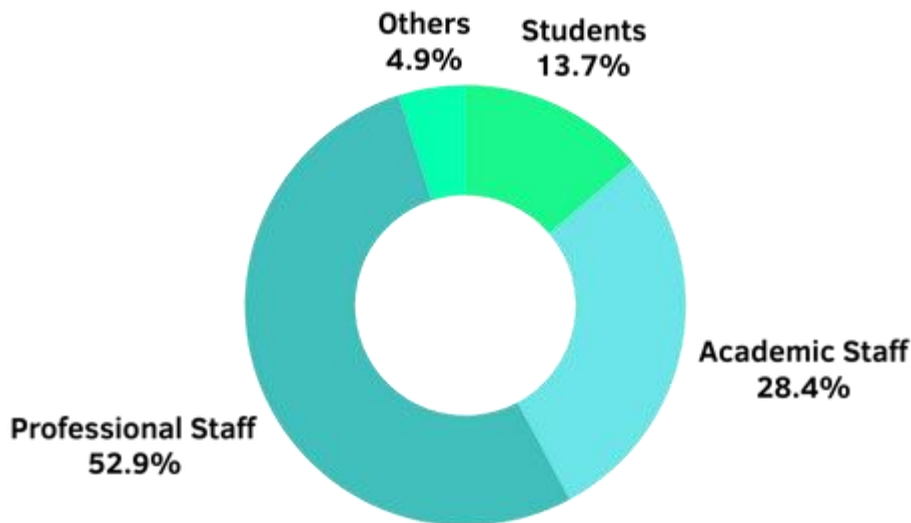
The breakdown shows another recurring trend, based on the **low attendance from the student component**. Even though related to a more academic audience, the program was equally aimed at students and counted in their participation to enrich the discussion. As a possible explanation, student often can't see their impact and influence in these processes, usually lowering their interest in joining these conversations.
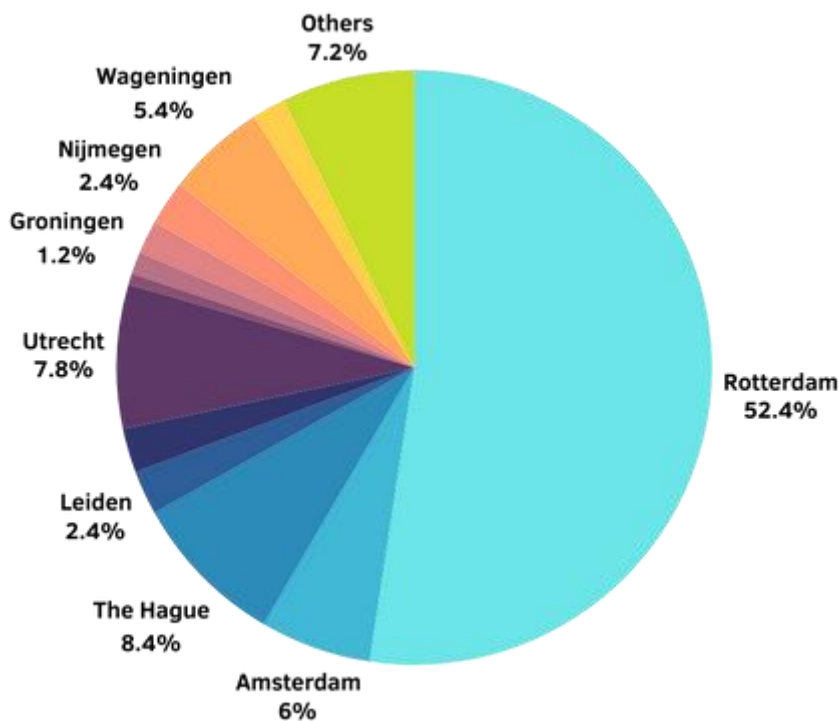
3.1 Institution Type and Origin

135 PARTICIPANTS from RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

46 PARTICIPANTS from APPLIED SCIENCES UNIVERSITIES

23 from OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Pie chart:
- Rotterdam 52.4%
- Others 7.2%
- Wageningen 5.4%
- Nijmegen 2.4%
- Groningen 1.2%
- Utrecht 7.8%
- Leiden 2.4%
- The Hague 8.4%
- Amsterdam 6%

One of the main goals of the Sustainability Summit was to bring together as many institutions as possible to share common experiences and challenges in advancing sustainability. To do so, participation from allover the country was a must, aiming at a good balance between Rotterdam-based institutions and others. The statistics of the event show that this goal was achieved, and that **more than 15 different educational bodies** joined us for the first Sustainability Summit. The partnership with Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences has been a key factor in amplifying the reach to Applied Sciences Universities across the country, adding another dimension to the overall event.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Opening Speech

The conference began with **opening remarks from Derk Loorbach**, director of DRIFT and academic lead of DIT, **and Ginie Servant-Miklos**, Assistant Professor at Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. They welcomed attendees by **reflecting on the Summit's challenging path**, from its cancellation in May due to campus closures over protest concerns, to logistical hurdles at EUR, which at times cast doubt on institutional support.

The speakers addressed the climate crisis as a systemic issue with deeply personal stakes. They **urged participants to move from a state of panic to "transformation mode,"** recognizing that while a movement for change is growing, it lacks the **critical mass required for large-scale impact**. They framed the day as **an exploration of collapse versus transition** on a systems level, but also of **despair versus hope** on a personal level. Setting a "red thread" for the day, they encouraged attendees to bridge analysis with action, and to find a sense of hope, trust, and agency in the **journey from systemic understanding to personal commitment.**

Following these remarks, **Annelien Bredenoord, Executive Board president at EUR,** and **Wijnand van den Brink, member Executive Board member at RUAS**, took the stage to address the concerns raised. They emphasized the challenges of mobilizing people and the **importance of patience in leadership**. Bredenoord recognized the need for urgency but stressed that significant change requires time and sustained effort. Loorbach countered this perspective by arguing that waiting for widespread buy-in is not a viable solution. He expressed frustration that **despite decades of warnings, little action has been taken, showing the risks of inaction**.

Bredenoord noted that while the university's leadership is on board, not all students are fully aligned yet, and **progress can feel slow**. Van den Brink, a member of the Executive Board at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, agreed, adding that all students are taught courses on sustainability as part of their programme.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Keynote and Panel

The opening speech is directly followed by the beginning of the keynote. **Kees Klomp**, an activist-researcher from **Windesheim University of Applied Sciences**, took the stage to emphasize the alarming lack of urgency surrounding the climate crisis, particularly within academic institutions. He argued that the **real issue is not whether the current ecosystem is collapsing, but the fact that it is indeed in the process of collapse**. Researches were cited, indicating that a temperature increase of 2.5 °C could shrink the global economy by 19%, a contraction four times greater than that caused by the 2008 housing crisis and twice as severe as the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. What is needed, Klomp suggests, is that **Economics programmes should be redesigned to move away from traditional neoclassical theories and instead engage students with real-world issues**. The emphasis should shift from **teaching students solely how to generate profit for companies to fostering a sense of activism**. This approach would encourage students to consider the social impact of their future work, preparing them to make meaningful contributions beyond financial success.

The morning panel brought together **Michiel van den Hout**, Director of Klimaat Initiatief Nederland (KIN); **Aniek Moonen**, a recent graduate in Societal Transitions from EUR and former chair of the Young Climate Movement; **Heleen de Coninck**, socio-technical innovation expert and IPCC co-author; and **Ted Veldkamp**, Lecturer in Climate and Water at RUAS. They discussed the **urgent need for immediate climate action and the psychological impact of climate change**, including the rise of climate anxiety, along with ways to help individuals and communities manage these emotional challenges. The panelists also emphasized the **need for structural shifts within academia** to support effective climate action. They highlighted the importance of transforming research funding structures to **prioritize work that directly supports climate transition practices**. The speakers argued for a **rethinking of education itself**—not only what is taught but also why—to prepare future generations for the realities of a transitioning society. Additionally, they called for academia to **adopt a transdisciplinary and transformative approach**, integrating diverse fields and practical applications to tackle the climate crisis with the urgency it demands.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Disciplines Dialogues

The Sustainability Summit featured **8 Discipline Dialogues**, offering a **collaborative space for participants to explore how to transform their disciplines** for greater sustainability. Each discipline faces unique challenges in addressing sustainability, raising **key questions** about **how to approach the topic**, the **role of researchers**, **organizational structures**, and **methodological implications**. "How do we handle normativity and subjectivity, and for whom do we work?", these questions framed the conversations, guiding participants as they developed strategies and actionable steps.

Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship (Economics and Business Track):

1. **Prioritize Transformation**: Focus on transformative approaches rather than mere mitigation. Shift from a conservative, neoclassical approach in programs to better prepare students for real-world sustainability issues.
2. **Emphasize Human Perspectives**: Ensure inclusivity by leaving no one behind.
3. **Promote Self-Awareness**: Help students understand their positionality in society and the environment.
4. **Enhance Trans-Disciplinarity:** Foster collaboration across multiple disciplines to develop innovative solutions to complex challenges related to sustainability.
5. **Empower Student Action**: Equip students with the skills and motivation to take meaningful action. Incorporate diversity and case-based studies to provide practical, relevant learning experiences that focus on sustainability.

Engineering, Planning and Built Environment:

- **Shift from How to Why**: Emphasize understanding the values behind methods.
- **Foster Hope and Courage**: Inspire optimism while encouraging a culture that embraces mistakes.
- **Additional Key Topics:** Break the Techno-Fix Mindset, Coping Strategies, Collaboration, Inter-Vision, Transparency, Systems Thinking.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Disciplines Dialogues

Sustainability health care: more and better now!

1. **Action Over Change:** Emphasize immediate action rather than just advocating for change.
2. **Lead by Example Now:** Highlight the importance of current leadership, not just youth involvement.
3. **Post-Growth Economy:** Focus on strategies that support a post-growth economic model.
4. **Adapt Generative Working Conditions:** Foster work environments that promote sustainability.
5. **Organizational Infrastructure:** Establish necessary support systems.
6. **National Network for Sustainable Health:** Coordinate and connect existing networks for greater impact.

Green Offices

- **Enhance Student Engagement:** Foster active participation in sustainability efforts.
- **Integrate Sustainability:** Incorporate sustainability teaching into various subjects.
- **Core Curriculum Theme:** Make sustainability a central focus in educational programs.
- **Engage Local Government:** Involve local authorities in sustainability initiatives.
- **Build Empowering Communities:** Support networks that drive individual and institutional change.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Hold universities accountable through their student and staff bodies.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Disciplines Dialogues

Natural Sciences: what is the obligation of Dutch academic institutes towards the biodiversity crisis?

- **Avoid Tech-Fix Promises**: Focus on interdisciplinary contributions rather than relying solely on technological solutions.
- **Express Concerns:** Encourage sharing of emotions and concerns to foster a supportive community.
- **Shift Mindset**: Move from an individual to a community perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness of disciplines.
- **Planet-Centered Teaching:** Promote planet-centered approaches across various disciplines.
- **Equitable Research Funding:** Advocate for fair distribution of research funds for climate and biodiversity, extending beyond natural sciences.

Humanities: from a humanities perspective, how can art and different mediums be used to instill sustainability in education?

- **Encourage Diversity:** Promote genuine diversity and interdisciplinary approaches in teaching.
- **Explore Embodied Learning:** Prioritize storytelling and understanding narratives to connect individuals and their motivations.
- **Address Challenges:** Recognize the burdens of time pressure and the lack of a shared sense of urgency as significant obstacles.
- **Next Steps:** Focus on small changes within our immediate influence, exchange best practices between institutions, and foster ongoing conversations.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Disciplines Dialogues

Social Sciences:

- **Normative Research and Education:** Acknowledge that objectivity is an illusion; education should be normative.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Emphasize collaboration over individualism, promoting interdisciplinarity.
- **Break Boundaries:** Move beyond academic and personal disciplinary boundaries.
- **Social Science Leadership:** Social sciences should drive the agenda, with technology following; scale ideas while supporting grassroots movements.
- **Address Environmental Emergency:** Recognize the urgency of the environmental crisis despite existing movements toward regeneration and restoration.
- **Transformative Social Sciences:** Urgently adapt social sciences to facilitate change on both personal and systemic levels.
- **Focus on Collective Change:** Explore how to live and transform together through education and research.
- **Promote Multidisciplinary Education:** Foster collaboration for personal and systemic change.
- **Scale Solutions in Business:** Implement scalable solutions for commerce and industry.
- **Converge Social Science Disciplines:** Unify social sciences to enhance our relationship with the environment.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Thematic Workshops

The Sustainability Summit featured **6 thematic workshops** designed to address a range of topics—from external partnerships to transdisciplinary research—that can enhance sustainability across our disciplines, institutions, and society. These workshops were meant to raise awareness about specific issues and ongoing strategies while providing active knowledge that participants can apply both individually and collectively.

Building Sustainable External Partnerships: The fossil fuel industry

At Erasmus University, we face challenges in assessing our collaborations with the fossil fuel industry. A committee has been formed to analyze and establish guidelines for evaluating potential and existing partnerships, considering diverse interests within the university.

Drafted Guidelines Overview:
1. **Formal Collaborations:** Focus primarily on formal partnerships, while allowing for consideration of informal ones.
2. **Criteria Levels:**
   - **Partner-Level Criteria:** Use reliable data sources to evaluate partners.
   - **Project-Level Criteria:** Assess the impact of projects, particularly regarding their role in fostering sustainability.
3. **Exceptions:** Define conditions under which exceptions to the guidelines may be granted, including who qualifies for exemption.

Crucial Dilemmas:

- **Data for Partnership Decision-Making**: What criteria should be used to determine which data is most reliable and how should it be interpreted?
- **Balancing Individual and Institutional Responsibility**: How can a university effectively balance the need for academic freedom with the necessity of institutional protection?
- **Guideline Exceptions**: In cases where an ethics committee permits exceptions, who should qualify for exemptions from the established guidelines?
- **Collaboration in Research Consortia**: what criteria should be used to evaluate partners? What should happen if one partner fails to meet these criteria?
- **Promoting Positive Societal Impact**: What strategies can the university implement to foster partnerships that lead to beneficial societal outcomes?

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Thematic Workshops

"Scaling Futures" focusing on methods to deal with yet unknown futures and navigate between different systems

Key Takeaways:

- Participants explored **various perspectives on the future**, fostering empathy for one another's viewpoints.
- The exercise provided **insights into each other's values**.
- **Collaborating together**, participants generated ideas they felt they could not have created individually.
- This highlights the **valuable role of art and fiction in facilitating societal transitions**.

Engaging Local Communities: Designing sustainability initiatives

Key Takeaways:

- **Rethink Our Approach to Local Communities:** shift from seeing communities as passive recipients to active partners. Involve local members in decision-making and initiatives that affect their lives.
- **Empower Communities to Pursue Sustainable Actions:** provide resources and training to help communities implement sustainable practices. This includes workshops and access to funding for local projects, enabling innovative solutions tailored to their specific needs.
- **Initiate a Pilot Project to Enhance Engagement Through High Schools:** launch a pilot program in high schools where students work on community projects, like environmental clean-ups. This fosters a sense of responsibility and connection to their community.
- **Emphasize the Importance of Biodiversity in Urban Areas:** educate communities about the benefits of biodiversity, promoting initiatives like community gardens and wildlife habitats to enhance local ecosystems.
- **Move Beyond Bureaucratic Structures Typically Found in Universities**: explore more flexible models for collaboration that break down bureaucratic barriers, allowing universities to respond more effectively to community needs and foster genuine partnerships.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Thematic Workshops

Sustainable Education: what future are we educating for?

Ideas for Improving Educational Content:

- **Adopt a Holistic, Transdisciplinary Approach:** shift the curriculum to integrate various disciplines, focusing on real-world human experiences. This encourages students to make connections across subjects and understand issues in a broader context.
- **Implement Experience-Based Learning:** design learning experiences where teachers act as facilitators or guides, helping students navigate their own learning journeys. This approach promotes critical thinking and self-directed learning, allowing students to engage with the material in meaningful ways.
- **Eliminate Grading:** remove traditional grading systems to alleviate pressure on both students and teachers. This shift encourages a focus on learning and personal growth rather than performance metrics, fostering a more supportive educational environment.

Ideas for Educational System Change:

- **Explore the Escuela Nueva Model:** consider the Colombian Escuela Nueva approach, where students take an active role in teaching themselves and each other. This model promotes collaboration and fosters a sense of responsibility for one's own learning.
- **Emphasize Learning Through Practical Application:** encourage hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. This not only enhances retention but also prepares students for practical challenges they may face outside the classroom.

Ideas for Enhancing Wellbeing for Students and Teachers:

- **Recognize and Discuss Challenges:** create an open dialogue around the challenges faced by students and teachers. By acknowledging these issues, we can foster a culture of support and understanding.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Thematic Workshops

Transdisciplinary Research: Creating contexts for meaningful transdisciplinary collaboration

Key Aspects:

- **Time for Collaboration:** more time is needed for cross-disciplinary collaboration, as balancing education, research, and administration is challenging.
- **Recognition Beyond H Index:** the current H-index structure is not suited for transdisciplinary work. New recognition models should focus on real-world impact and collaboration, such as a Theory of Change approach.
- **Proposal Writing Skills:** skills in crafting proposals that emphasize impact are essential, as funders increasingly prioritize this aspect. Getting the language right is crucial.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** institutions should create spaces and events that foster collaboration, discussion, and ideation.
- **Inclusive Consortiums:** change rules and regulations to allow societal partners to co-lead research consortiums.
- **Knowledge Ownership:** ensure that societal partners have ownership of the knowledge produced through collaborations.
- **Funding on Trust:** shorter, more focused proposals centered on societal change are needed, with greater trust placed in applicants.
- **Simplified Proposal Process:** streamline the proposal process to reduce length and eliminate unnecessary details.
- **Onboarding for Funders:** funders should offer onboarding to familiarize applicants with staff, expertise, and guidelines.
- **Funder Guidance:** provide support through FAQs, ethical advice, and clarification on overlooked budget categories (like VAT).
- **Emotional Support:** researchers receiving funding could benefit from emotional support groups or buddy systems to share experiences and navigate challenges.
- **Funding/Grant Advisors:** access to grant advisors is essential to assist researchers with applications.
- **Address Real Problems**: research funding should prioritize applied science that tackles real-world challenges.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Thematic Workshops

Connecting the bubbles: A holistic vision for sustainable academia in 2030

The Academic Green Deal, led by Dutch Young Academics of KNAW, outlines how higher education, through a comprehensive and collaborative approach, can address the climate crisis by reducing its environmental footprint and creating positive impact through education and research.

Key Aspects:

- **Reducing Institutional Footprint:** the Deal should focus on minimizing the environmental impact of university operations, from energy use to waste management, promoting sustainability across all levels.
- **Creating Positive Impact through Education and Research:** it should actively leverage the power of higher education to address the climate crisis, integrating sustainability into curricula, research, and community engagement.
- **Collaboration, Not Competition:** the Deal must be developed through collaboration among a diverse range of students, faculty, researchers, and professional staff, ensuring inclusivity and shared ownership rather than fostering competition.
- **Clear and Actionable Targets:** the Green Deal must set specific, measurable targets beyond vague ambitions or visions, focusing on concrete actions and results.
- **Systems Approach and Storytelling:** it should take a systems-based approach to tackling the climate crisis, addressing interconnected issues, while also sharing impactful stories that inspire action and bring the challenge to life.
- **Alignment with Existing Green Deals:** the Academic Green Deal should be aligned with other national and international Green Deals to ensure consistency and coordination across sectors and initiatives.
- **Actionable and Accountable:** the Deal is designed to help institutions, their leadership, and individuals take actionable steps, with clear mechanisms for accountability and progress tracking.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** in line with the Dutch Universities' Recognition and Rewards Programme, the Deal emphasizes the importance of recognizing and compensating individuals for their contributions to sustainability efforts within the academic sector.

4. Highlights and Key Sessions

Closing Plenary

During the closing session, a reflective dialogue unfolded among key figures. Presented on stage were **Arwin van Buuren, Strategic Dean for Impact & Engagement at Erasmus University**, **Arjen van Klink, Director of the Knowledge Center for Business Innovation at Hogeschool Rotterdam**; and **students Anna Abad Kolotouchkina** and **Giuliana di Dato from Erasmus University**.

This discussion illuminated a **range of perspectives while revealing significant tension regarding the state of sustainability in higher education**. Both van Buuren and van Klink highlighted the considerable progress that has been made and the transformative initiatives currently underway. However, both struggled to respond to questions from the audience and students about the underlying values and motivations guiding their use of power in advancing sustainability.

The students underscored that **current sustainability efforts frequently overlook the critical importance of integrating diverse voices and perspectives**, especially those of women and marginalized groups. The dialogue was marked by palpable tension, as **audience members voiced their disagreements with the administrators' assessments**, which felt overly optimistic and disconnected from the realities faced by many stakeholders. The looming threat of budget cuts further compounded these concerns, raising fears that advancements in inclusivity could be stalled, thereby exacerbating existing disparities. Ultimately, the **closing reflections underscored the complexities of advancing sustainability within academic institutions**.

As the conference ended, a **mix of hope and despair filled the atmosphere**. The day had been **inspiring, offering new connections, encouragement, and a sense of empowerment**, demonstrating that the transformation of academia is not only possible but already underway. The organizers announced **three concrete initiatives** to ensure the continued momentum, along with **commitments from other institutions to host future Summits**. However, the **pressing climate crisis, political resistance, and institutional inertia**—along with a lack of genuine commitment to transformative change—remained **undeniable challeng**es. Thankfully, the drinks and vegan snacks provided a much-needed respite, allowing most attendees to leave with **a sense of renewed optimism and energy to tackle the road ahead**.

More details on the initiatives in Section 8.

5. Sustainability Future Fair

Sustainability Future Fair

The Sustainability Future Fair brought together a total of **25 participants** from various institutions. Among them, **10 initiatives were presented by Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR)**, while the remaining **15 came from other institutions across the Netherlands**, including **8 research universities** and **7 external organizations**. The Fair had 2 dedicated time slots during the Summit, for a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Originally, this component was not part of the event's initial planning. However, the high demand for an expanded program and the desire to provide more opportunities for participation and connections resulted in the creation of the fair. This addition gave a **fresh perspective to the typical conference format** and allowed for a more interactive experience.

The Fair featured numerous booths where **attendees could explore innovative projects and initiatives focused on sustainability**. It served as an excellent platform for participants to discover what's happening in the field and to **explore potential collaborations and opportunities**. Attendees had the chance to engage with various projects, gaining insights into the latest developments in sustainable practices within higher education. The fair not only highlighted ongoing efforts but also fostered connections among participants, paving the way for future collaborations that can further advance sustainability initiatives in academia.

An analysis on improvement points and recommendation regarding the Fair will be present in Section 7.

6. Artistic Contribution

Artistic Contributions

In addition to the Sustainability Future Fair, the Sustainability Summit also featured **4 artistic contributions**, highlighting the vital role that art plays in addressing contemporary social issues. Art serves as a fundamental medium through which complex challenges are analyzed and confronted, offering unique perspectives that can deepen our understanding of sustainability and societal change.

The integration of artistic expression into our discussions reinforces the idea that **addressing these multifaceted issues requires diverse voices and approaches**. We must ensure that everyone recognizes the importance of this interdisciplinary collaboration; without contributions from various fields—including art, science, and community engagement—we risk falling short in our efforts to create meaningful solutions. This commitment to embracing a wide range of perspectives is essential for fostering resilience and driving impactful change in our society. The event served as a reminder that to navigate these challenging times, we must be open to insights and contributions from all sides.

These artists and creative contributed to the Summit:
- **Rik van der Linden**, documentary and program maker, presented a short clip out of the series **"Grijsgroen"**, focused on the local dimension of ecosystems and sustainability.
- **Greta Windfuhr**, alumni at Willem de Kooning Academy, presented her installation **"Nachruf auf den Baum"**, an ode to trees and a warning to their exploitment.
- **Marin de Heij,** alumni at Willem de Kooning Academy, presented her project **"Gathering Ecology"**, a connection between neurodivergence and ecological visions.
- **Karlfancy,** illustrator and designer, spent the day observing and listening to the different sessions of the Summit, and produced an illustration that graphically summarizes the event itself.
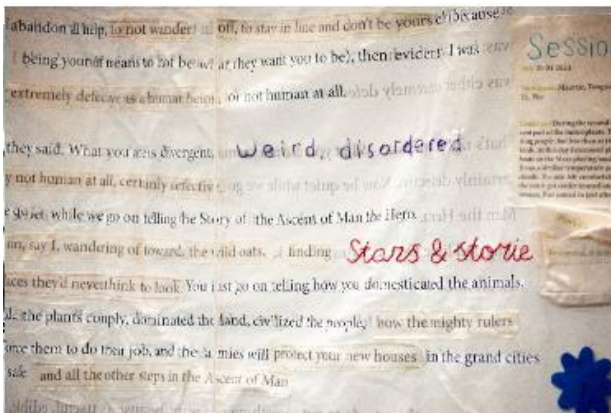
In the next page you will find some pictures of these artistic representations. For contact and info of the artists, please refer to Section 7.
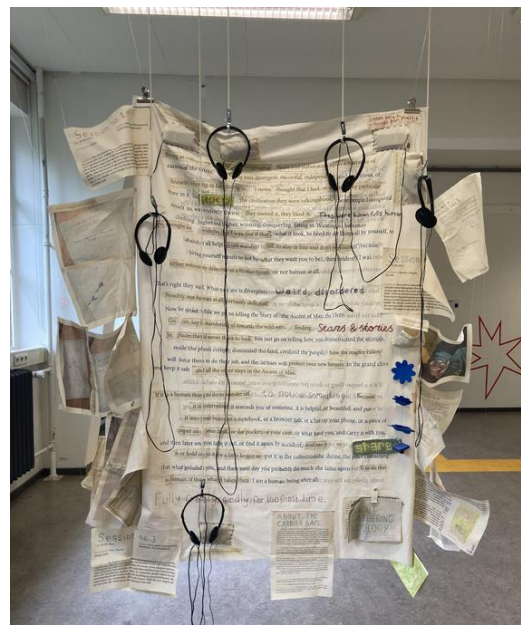
6. Artistic Contribution

Greta Windfuhr

Marin de Heij

Karlfancy

7. Challenges and Recommendations

Before the Summit

The Sustainability Summit faced significant challenges from the outset. **Just a day before the two-day conference in May, the event was canceled due to the closure of the campus by the Executive Board of the university**, driven by concerns over potential violent protests related to the Palestinian struggle that were announced on campus.

We regrouped and rescheduled for October, determined to reignite our efforts and maintain high motivation among our team.

Compounding the initial difficulties, we encountered logistical challenges as **Erasmus University Rotterdam had no available space for the event** on the Woudestein campus. With an already reduced budget due to the prior cancellation, this presented yet another significant barrier. Fortunately, Rotterdam School of Applied Sciences stepped in to help, generously agreeing to host the event. **While the new location was fantastic** and the organizational team received a great degree of support, it also meant **collaborating with an external processes**, which increased the complexity of our organizational and logistical efforts.

The summer break in between also proved to be a challenging period, as it was not initially planned and inevitably slowed down our progress immediately following the cancellation.

Throughout this process, we worked hard to keep the momentum high, re-engaging all the participants who had been disheartened by the last-minute cancellation, **offering 2 online meetups** to assess the situation and hear people out. It was crucial for us to demonstrate the serious commitment and efforts behind the organization of the Summit.

We migrated all communication regarding the new location to ensure that participants were well-informed about the change, but that **inevitably created some confusion** among those that were not following the updates too tightly.

7. Challenges and Recommendations

During the Summit

On the day of the event, we encountered several challenges. To better understand these issues, we conducted an analysis using two primary sources: a feedback session with the organizing team and a feedback form that participants were invited to complete.

One of the main challenges was a **significant no-show rate**, with nearly half of the registered participants absent before the event even began. This posed problems for some workshop leaders, who had tailored their sessions to accommodate larger groups.

We also faced **logistical difficulties in orienting attendees**. The size of the venue and the positioning of the rooms made it hard for participants to navigate, resulting in delays. For future events, a more comprehensive room layout plan and enhanced guidance through dedicated signs and pathways would be beneficial.

While the catering service provided excellent food quality, featuring a vegan and vegetarian-only menu, there were **challenges in addressing dietary restrictions and other needs**. Stricter controls and increased awareness from catering staff are essential to ensure that all attendees feel accommodated.

Additionally, the **Sustainability Fair**, which was designed as a vibrant space for testing ideas and networking, **did not receive as much traffic as anticipated**. This was partly due to its division into two parts and the timing during lunch and the aperitif, which distracted attendees from exploring the fair. For next time, we recommend consolidating the Fair into a single location and scheduling dedicated time in the agenda where participants can fully engage without competing distractions.

The agenda for the day was ambitious, aiming to include a wide range of activities. However, **tight timing and short breaks made it challenging for participants to relax and fully enjoy the experience**. For future events, we recommend extending break times and considering a two-day format, as originally planned.
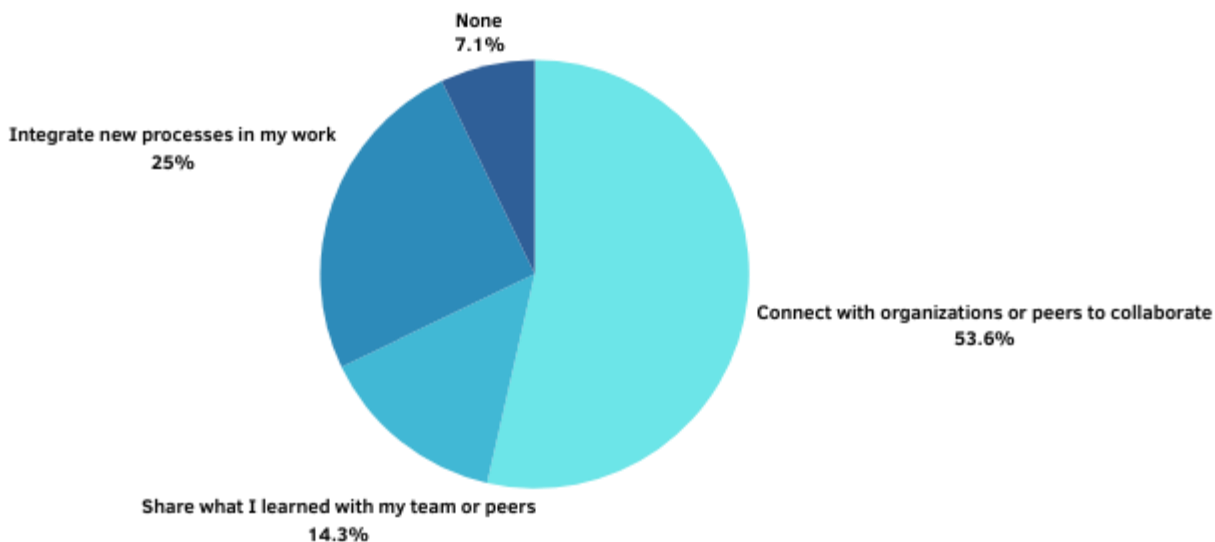
7. Challenges and Recommendations

Insights from the feedback form

Overall, the event achieved a solid **evaluation score of 7.5**, with over **60% of respondents rating it between 7 and 8**. Participants particularly valued the high quality and content of the workshops, the level of engagement throughout the day, and the opportunities for networking with peers from across the country. Key phrases from attendees included "**Activistic,**" "**Inspiring,**" and "**Pressing,**" highlighting the impactful discussions and activities that took place.

In response to the question, "Were you able to make any new connections during the summit that could lead to new collaborations or initiatives?" **82% of attendees answered yes**. This outcome is a clear success for the event, as networking and fostering connections to develop new solutions was one of its primary goals.

Another question on our feedback form asked participants, "What is one action you plan to take as a result of attending the event?" Below is a graphic illustrating the results of this analysis.

None
7.1%

Integrate new processes in my work
25%

Connect with organizations or peers to collaborate
53.6%

Share what I learned with my team or peers
14.3%

8. Final Remarks

The Sustainability Summit emerged as a **valuable platform for fostering collaboration and dialogue around pressing sustainability issues**. Despite significant challenges, the resilience of the organizing team and support from external partners allowed us to create a meaningful experience.

A key aspect of the event's success was the **contribution of our speakers, who shared their valuable experiences and insights**. Their presentations, along with the inspiring panel discussions and keynote addresses, provided participants with thought-provoking perspectives on sustainability.

Additionally, the **efforts of the Fair exhibitors** in creating a creative and innovative space for sharing ideas greatly enhanced the overall experience.

The summit served as a platform for presenting **three interuniversity initiatives**: the **Academic Green Deal**, which outlines how higher education can effectively respond to the climate crisis with guidelines for achieving climate-neutral campuses and enhancing teaching and research practices; the **Network of Sustainable Educators in the Netherlands**, aimed at writing a book on pedagogy for a sustainable future; and the **Community of Practice for Transdisciplinary Work**, an initiative that emphasizes collaboration across disciplines.

Feedback from participants was positive, with many appreciating the **quality of the workshops, the level of engagement, and the networking opportunities provided**. The number of attendees who reported making new connections underscores the event's success in facilitating collaboration and inspiring new initiatives.

Key takeaways emphasized the **need to address logistical challenges**, such as navigation and dietary accommodations, and suggested incorporating longer breaks and potentially a two-day format in the future. By implementing these insights, we can enhance the participant experience.

Overall, the Summit not only **highlighted the urgent need for collective action in sustainability but also showcased the power of interdisciplinary collaboration**, marking a significant step forward in our efforts to create innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

We can't stop now, and we won't.

This inaugural national multidisciplinary and multimedia event in the Netherlands, centered on sustainability advancement, has set a vital precedent.

While this first edition was a success, we are eager to build on this momentum and act soon.

The initial wave of change has begun, and we hope that each of you will help carry this movement forward.

Together, we can continue to drive impactful conversations and foster meaningful actions for a sustainable academia and a sustainable future.

9. Contribution List

Sustainability Summit Team

EUR Team

Constanze Binder - associate professor in philosophy
Derk Loorbach - Director DRIFT and DIT Academic Lead
Domenico Gabriele Federico - Project Manager & Event Coordinator
Dorota Falkowska - Sustainability Officer
Emma Daanen - Project Manager EUR
Emma Tram - Communication Manager and Graphic Designer
Ginie Servant-Miklos: Assistant Professor Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Giuliana di Dato - Student Assistant
Hayley Bagnall - External Communication Advisor
Katharina Bauer - associate professor of practical philosophy
Lena Baunker - Communication Advisor
Levi Hunter - Former Board Member Erasmus Sustainability Hub
Marieke de Wal - Senior Advisor at DRIFT and DIT Organizational Lead
Romina Hamel - Student Assistant

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Monique van der Salm - Policy Officer for the "Sustainable Together" Programme and Green Office Coordinator at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
Myrna van de Water - Manager of the "Sustainable Together" programme of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

9. Contribution List

Plenaries, Keynote and Panel

Aniek Moonen - EUR student Master Societal Transitions and former chair of the Young Climate Movement

Annelien Bredenoord - Rector Magnificus of Erasmus University Rotterdam

Heleen de Coninck - Professor of Socio-Technical Innovation and Climate Change at Eindhoven University

Kees Klomp - Activist, Researcher, and Developer at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences

Ted Veldkamp - Professor of Applied Sciences Climate-resilient and Water-sensitive City and Society at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Wijnand van den Brink: Executive Board member Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Artists

Greta Windfuhr - [Nachruf auf den Baum](#)
Karlfancy - [Illustrator and designer](#)
Marin de Heij - [Gathering Ecology](#)
Rik van der Linden - [documentary and programme maker](#)
[Erasmus Student Koor](#)

Interuniversity Initiatives - Get in touch!

Academic Green Deal - Sanli Faez (s.faez@uu.nl) | [Linkedin Group](#)
Community of Practice for Transdisciplinary Work - Laura Termeer (laura.termeer@hetgroenebrein.nl)
Network of Sustainable Educators in the Netherlands - Rosa Groen (r.s.groen@hhs.nl) | [Participation Group](#)

9. Contribution List

Discipline Dialogues

Business, economics & entrepreneurship - Bas Karreman, Erasmus School of Economics, and Dirk Schoenmaker, Rotterdam School of Management

Engineering, planning, built environment - Arjan van Timmeren, TU Delft, and Charlotte Heesbeen, Hogeschool Rotterdam

Green Offices: how to create sustainable communities on campus - Erasmus Sustainability Hub, led by Anna Abad Kolotouchkina

Humanities - Edwin van Meerkerk, Radboud Institute for Culture and History, Aymeric Mansoux, senior lecturer Master Media Design & Communication at Piet Zwart Institute, and Hill Scholte, course director Transformation Design at Willem de Kooning Academy.

Natural sciences - William Voorberg, researcher at Naturalis Biodiversity Center

Social sciences -Derk Loorbach, director of DRIFT, Carine Elion-Valter, Erasmus School of Law and Remko van der Pluim, lecturer-researcher at Knowledge Center Business Innovation.

Sustainability health care: more and better now! - Lex Burdof, Erasmus MC, dr. Harald Miedema, Knowledge Centre for Healthcare Innovation Hogeschool Rotterdam, and Ellen Bakker, Knowledge Centre for Healthcare Innovation at Hogeschool Rotterdam.

9. Contribution List

Thematic Workshops

Building Sustainable Partnerships: The Fossil Industry and Beyond - EUR Committee for Cooperation with the Fossil Industry

Connecting the bubbles, a holistic vision for a sustainable academia in 2030 - Anne Urai and Sanli Faez, Green Young Academy.

Engaging local communities: designing sustainability initiatives - Florian Wijker, programme lead education at the strategic initiative Erasmus Verbindt

'Scaling Futures' focusing on methods to deal with yet unknown futures - Hogechool Rotterdam, research group Cybersocial Design: Justien Marseille, professor and Anja Overdiek, professor

Sustainable education: what future are we educating for? - Ginie Servant-Miklos, Assistant Professor Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences and Rosa Groen, Coordinator Programme Global Citizenship at Hogeschool The Hague

Transforming Research – Creating contexts for meaningful transdisciplinary collaboration - Julia Wittmayer (DRIFT / DIT platform EUR), Esther Baar (Rathenau Institute), Rachel Williams MSc (DIT platform EUR) and Laurens Hessels (Rathenau Institute)

(Un)sustainable objects - Hill Scholte, course director Transformation Design at Willem de Kooning Academy.

9. Contribution List

Fair Exhibitors

For contact information, please visit [this link](#).

Bildung Climate School
Confession about Ethical Dilemmas in Sustainability Transformative Research
DIT
Erasmus Food Lab
Erasmus Sustainability Hub
Erasmus Sustainability Program
FABRIX
Green Deal Sustainable Healthcare
Green Office Hogeschool Rotterdam
HefHouse (Erasmus X)
KIN
Master EUR Societal Transition
Modules of the Future
Oceanlab 010 x Cultuur&Campus Putselaan
Planetary Health World Congress
Plant-Based Universities Nederland
Reward and Recognition
Sustainable Healthcare - Master of Healthcare Management
Sustainability Conference
Scientist for Future
Scientist Rebellion
Together for the SDG's: Developing and Embedding Learning Communities in the Ecosystem of Universities of Applied Science
TransAct
Transition Atelier

9. Contribution List

Media Crew and Photography

Chilled Winston - Videography and video content
Ieva Gutmanaite - Photography