

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Workshop: Starting with a New Vibe: *Handprint and Nature Positivity for Biodiversity*



Organized by Rebecca Rongstock and Sabine Heckmann, Freie Universität Berlin, and co-hosted by Alan Peddie, University of Edinburgh, and Jorrit Holst, Freie Universität Berlin

Deadline for submission: May 31, 2026

Biodiversity is in a crisis. Species are disappearing at rates far beyond what is natural. Often, extinctions often occur unnoticed and are driven by complex interactions between ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity. Addressing this crisis requires more than just reducing harm. It demands expanding nature-positive action. To what extent do concepts such as handprint, resilience, resistance, and regeneration, when embedded in teaching, research, administration, and societal dialogue, provide additional impetus for nature-positive actions? Handprints offer a way to focus not only on reducing “footprints”, but also on generating positive environmental and societal impacts by designing structures that make sustainability a daily practice.

Universities are well-positioned to investigate the causes of species extinction, develop solutions in an inter- and transdisciplinary manner, encourage an understanding of ecological processes among students, and provide the general public with the necessary knowledge. This includes not only biology, but also other natural sciences and humanities.

During three 90-minute workshop sessions, we will explore practical examples of how universities can take action to promote biodiversity and quantify the “positive”, from capacity building and knowledge transfer to structural transformation. Working in small groups, we will answer some of the questions below using three to six cases.

Session 1 aims to present research results and projects that address socio-ecological challenges, emphasizing strategies for coping with vibe shifts in biodiversity.

Session 2 aims to reflect upon and/or co-design activities that result in substantial handprint-outcomes in the domain of biodiversity.

Session 3 will present these reflections or approaches to peers for feedback.

To prepare, workshop participants will have the exclusive opportunity to take part in two online sessions.

The first session, led by Alan Peddie, will focus on biodiversity literacy and last 90 minutes. This session will take place on Tuesday, September 8, at 5:00 p.m. CET.

The second session, led by Jorrit Holst, will focus on concepts such as "handprint, resilience, and regeneration." This session will take place on Thursday, September 10, at 5:00 p.m. CET and last 90 minutes.

We invite researchers, practitioners and students to submit a proposal for this workshop, addressing one of the following questions:

- What does effective protection of biodiversity look like in teaching, research, or on campus?
- Which university practices have significant “handprint”-outcomes in the field of biodiversity?
- In what ways can the impact of biodiversity measures become more effectively integrated in teaching and research?
- Which quantifying methods demonstrate the positive impact of university-led biodiversity action?
- How can we include the biodiversity crisis and nature positivity in teaching formats and offerings for non-biological disciplines?
- What is the best way to encourage different subjects to use approaches like handprints to support strategies and measures related to biodiversity?
- To what extent can approaches such as the handprint serve as a complementary measurement concept to highlight the social impact of participation activities?
- Do we need to make a distinction between the different meanings of "nature-positive" and "handprint", for example, or can we use these terms to mean the same thing?

This is an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from peers on your university-related activities or research. Selected proposals will be published in our conference program and on our conference website. Selected contributions from the conference will be published in an editorial volume. You can find information about the editorial volume here: www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/higher-ed-sustainability-conf/editorial/index.html.

Ways to participate:

In this workshop, we invite contributions of both practical experiences and theoretical research on biodiversity and "handprint" concepts from the perspective of higher education institutions. Contributions to the workshop can be made through a short (10-minute) presentation of research results, an active project for joint reflection and further development with participants, or a poster presentation (5 minutes). Submitted abstracts must be in English and contain 250–500 words. Please submit the abstract as a PDF file, along with a short CV (maximum one page), to the conference organizers via the registration platform: <https://www.conftool.net/higher-ed-sustainability-2026> by **May 31, 2026**.

You will be notified of acceptance by **June 15, 2026**.

The workshop is part of the Sustainability in Higher Education Conference, “Between Transformation and Vibe Shifts.” For more information on the conference, please visit: www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/higher-ed-sustainability-conf/index.html.

Contact:

Moritz Zoellner (events@nachhaltigkeit.fu-berlin.de) is the central point of contact for the conference and registration process.

Questions about this workshop and the call can be directed to Sabine Heckmann (sabine.heckmann@fu-berlin.de).