

From Vision to Transformation: Living Labs as Catalysts for Tourism Futures in Vorarlberg?

2. Sustainable Tourism in Austria Summit 2025

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June 4, 2025





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Agenda

1. Living labs
2. One region, one vision
3. Six places, six stories
4. From insight to impact

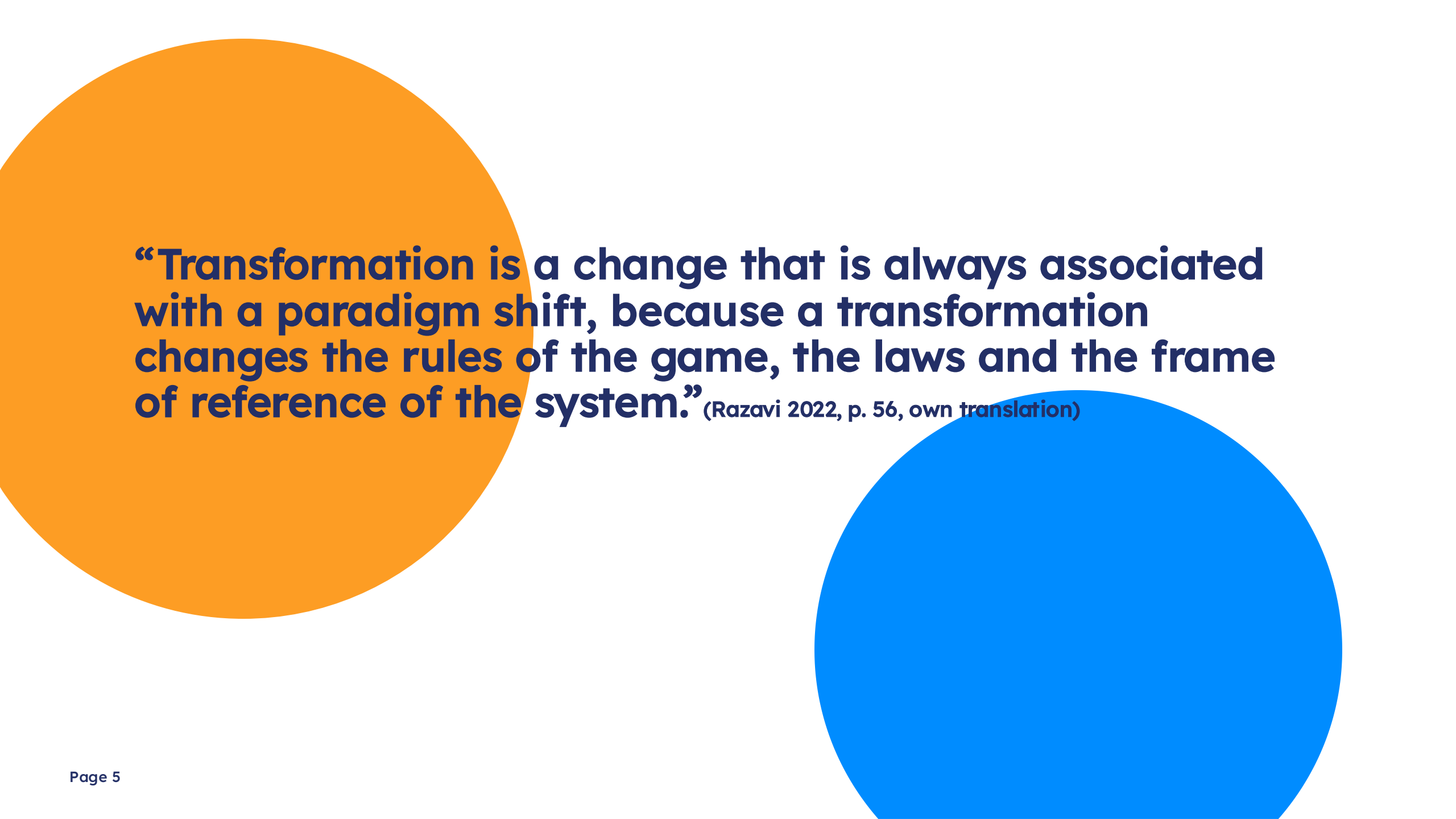
1

Living labs: Can science listen? And what happens when it does?



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“Tourism sees itself as a growth industry and thinks: now we have overcome Covid and are back on our path - but that is not the right way to go. We actually have a profound contradiction here: Tourism should be thought of as a post-growth model, but this is not compatible with the industry ... I am not surprised by this insistence on traditional economic practices. Incentives are needed to change things ... Courageous action changes everything.” (Weisz 2025, own translation)



“Transformation is a change that is always associated with a paradigm shift, because a transformation changes the rules of the game, the laws and the frame of reference of the system.” (Razavi 2022, p. 56, own translation)

Transformation as ...



Governance problem

Systems thinking
Social innovation
Evidence



Social problem

Lifestyles
Futures
Social conflicts
Discourses



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Six living labs. Six fields of transformation. One mission.

Masterstudiengang (M.Sc.)

**Transformation
und nachhaltige
Lebensraumentwicklung –
Tourismus neu gestalten**

Digital studieren

Bewerbungsschluss ist 15. Juli

Infos unter
ku.de/tourismus-neu-gestalten



Six living labs - six topics





Uno-Bericht
»Wir sind auf Land angewiesen
behandeln es wie Dreck«

02.12.2024, 1:54 Uhr
The Guardian
Northern Ireland
Giant's Causeway visitors
causing damage by wedging
coins into cracks

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC UMWELT
16. JUNI 2023, 15:44 MESZ
Massiver Bergsturz: Wie sieht die Zukunft der Alpen aus?

tagesschau
Klimawandel
Waldumbau in Europa wird immer
schwieriger
Stand: 29.04.2024 17:27 Uhr

THE TIMES

Machu Picchu: is it too
crowded?

Großfeuer von Los Angeles
Klimawandel machte die tödlichen
Brände in Los Angeles wahrscheinlicher
extremer
29.01.2025, 08:22 Uhr

tagesschau
Studie zu planetaren Grenzen
Der Erde geht die Puste aus
Am 11. Januar

Artenschutz
Genetische Vielfalt von Tieren und
Pflanzen geht alarmierend schnell
verloren

SPIEGEL Wissenschaft
»Cities turned into theme parks':
Why Airbnb is facing trouble in
Spain
Published 5:14 AM EDT, Fri May 30, 2025

Süddeutsche Zeitung
100 miles from the border
29. Januar 2025, 17:18 Uhr

MailOnline | Travel
The worst places for
overtourism in Spain this
summer - and where to go
instead

SPIEGEL Ausland

Das Abfallproblem der Malediven
Die Müllinsel
tagesschau
Neut Öl aus havariertem Tanker
getreten
Stand: 10.01.2025 20:11

Alarmierende Prognose: Mikroplastik-
Verschmutzung könnte sich bis 2040
verdoppeln
Frankfurter Rundschau
30.09.2024, 06:38 Uhr



Transdisciplinary research for transformative solutions

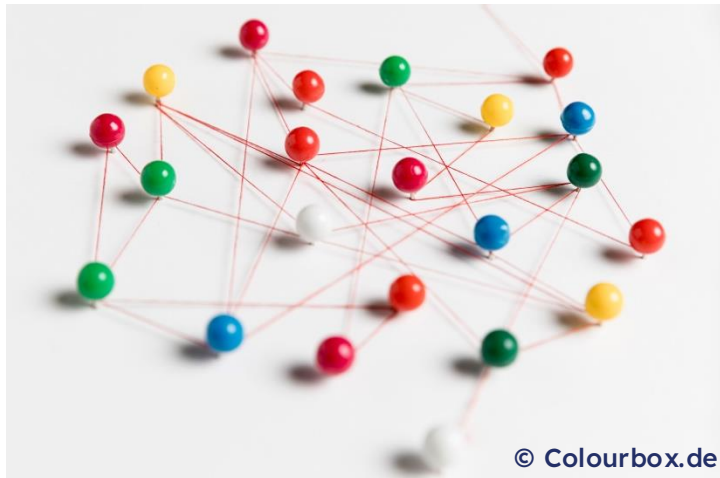
Living labs see themselves as places for transdisciplinary and transformative research. So-called live experiments serve to create basic understanding in the sense of target knowledge between actors from science and practice, to experiment with real-life situations in a problem-oriented manner and to seek new and alternative solutions.

© Colourbox.de

What do you want to achieve with living labs?

**System
knowledge**

What is it?



**Transformation
knowledge**

How do we get there?



**Target
knowledge**

What should be?

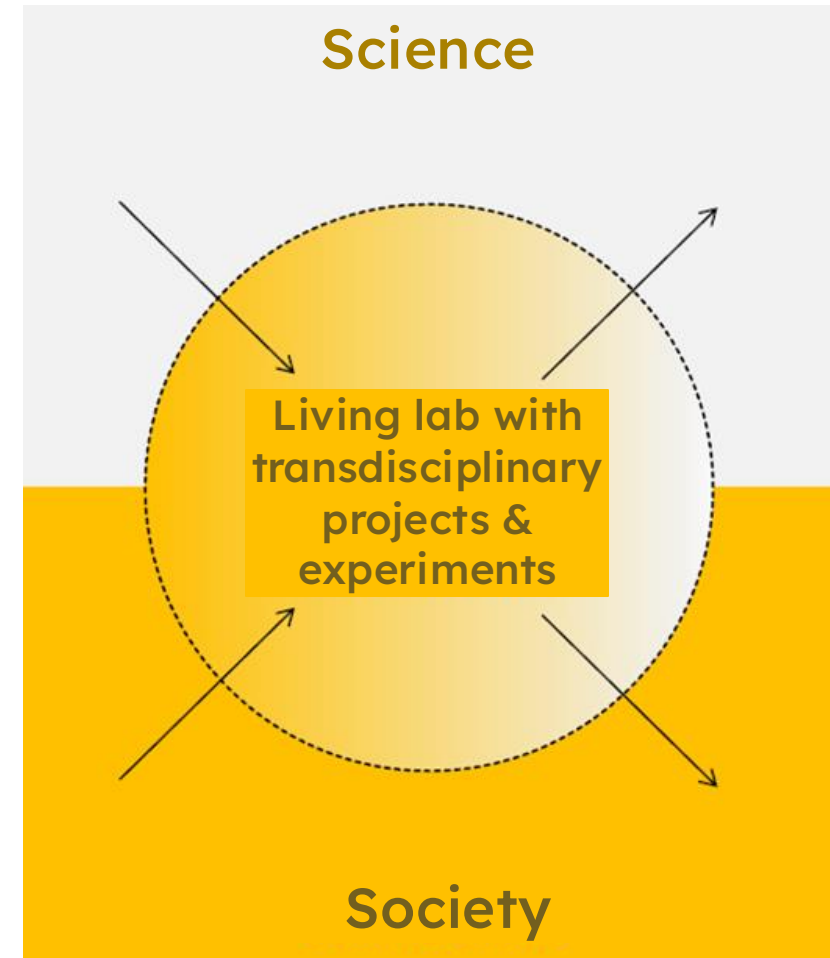


Scientific understanding of living labs

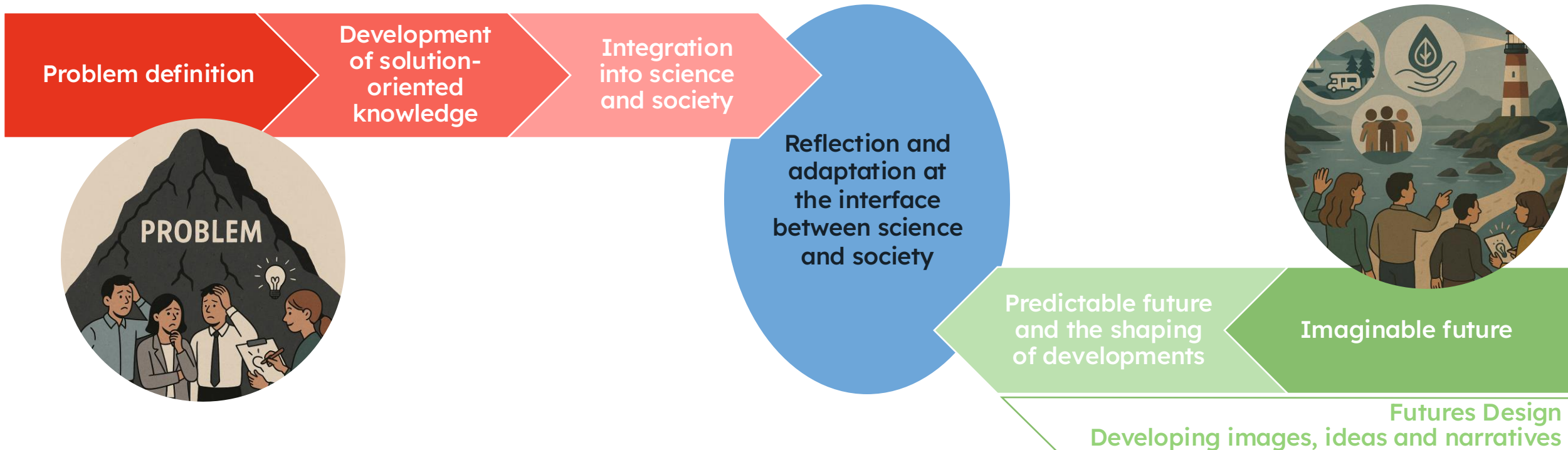
Living labs ...

- conduct science *for* society
- conduct science *in* society
- conduct science *with* society

Primary mode of science: *experiment*



The living lab process



2

One region, one vision: Vorarlberg's path to transformation



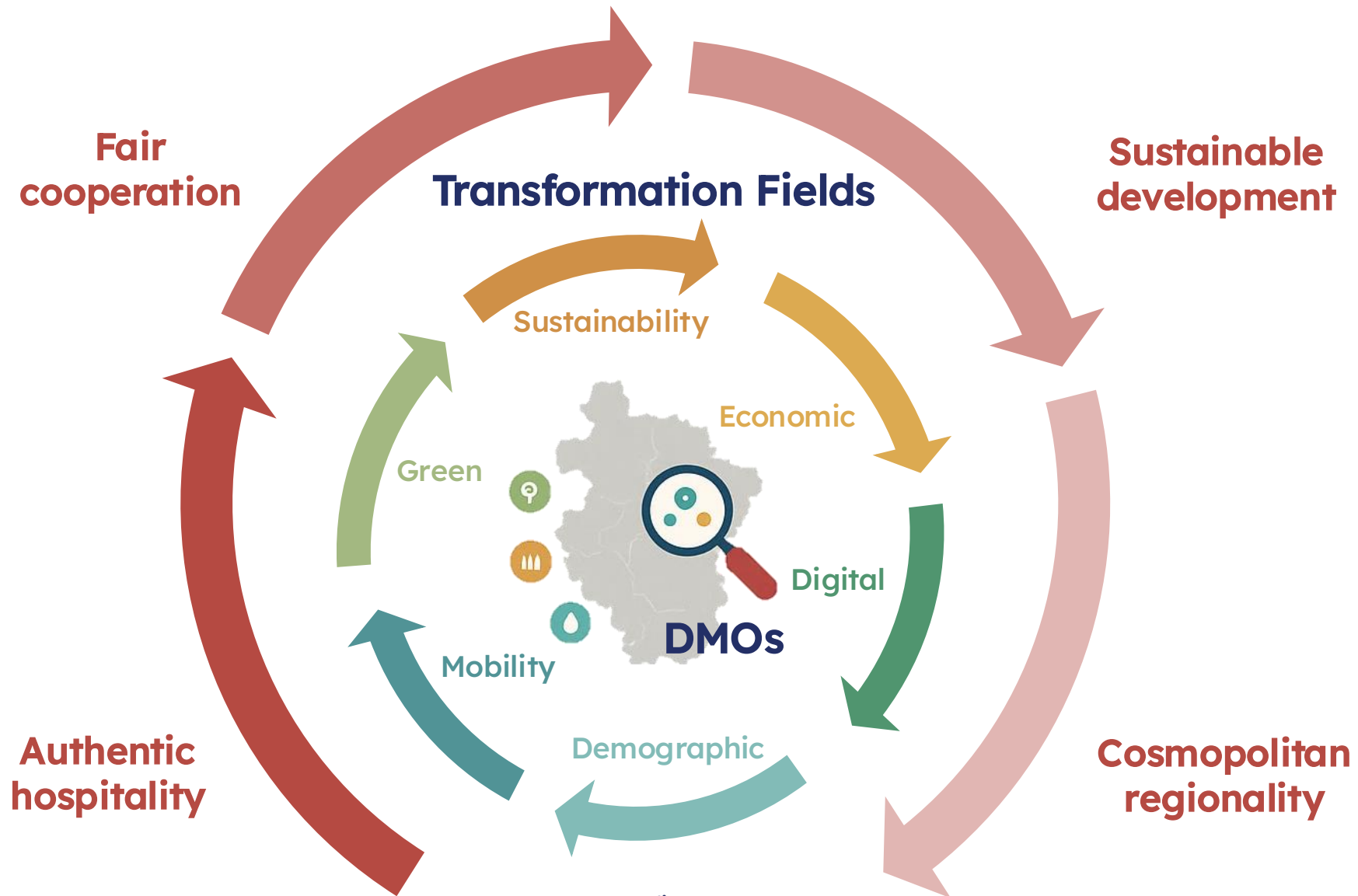
© Anja Wolf | Bregenzerwald Tourismus



**“Creating places and spaces for the
good life – together, today and
tomorrow.”**

(Vorarlberg Tourism Strategy 2030, own translation)

Vorarlberg Tourism Strategy 2030



3

Six places, six stories: Living labs across Vorarlberg



© @Parabol

Process



Desktop research

Co-initiate

Co-design

Co-produce

Co-evaluate

Winter term 24/25

March 2025

April-June 2025

May-August 2025

Winter term 25/26

Kick-off meeting with
Vorarlberg Tourismus
GmbH
&
Defining the
transformation fields

Kick-off meeting with
6 regional DMOs

Setting the Research
agenda & designing
interventions

Implementing 2
interventions:
Workshops
Bike tours with data
collection
Surveys
Expert interviews

Symposium

Arlberg

Winter alone won't carry us anymore.
How can year-round tourism secure
futures for locals?

Economic Transformation

**Support a shift
towards year-round
operations.**

© Sepp Mallaun | Vorarlberg Tourismus

Arlberg



© Sepp Mallaun | Vorarlberg Tourismus



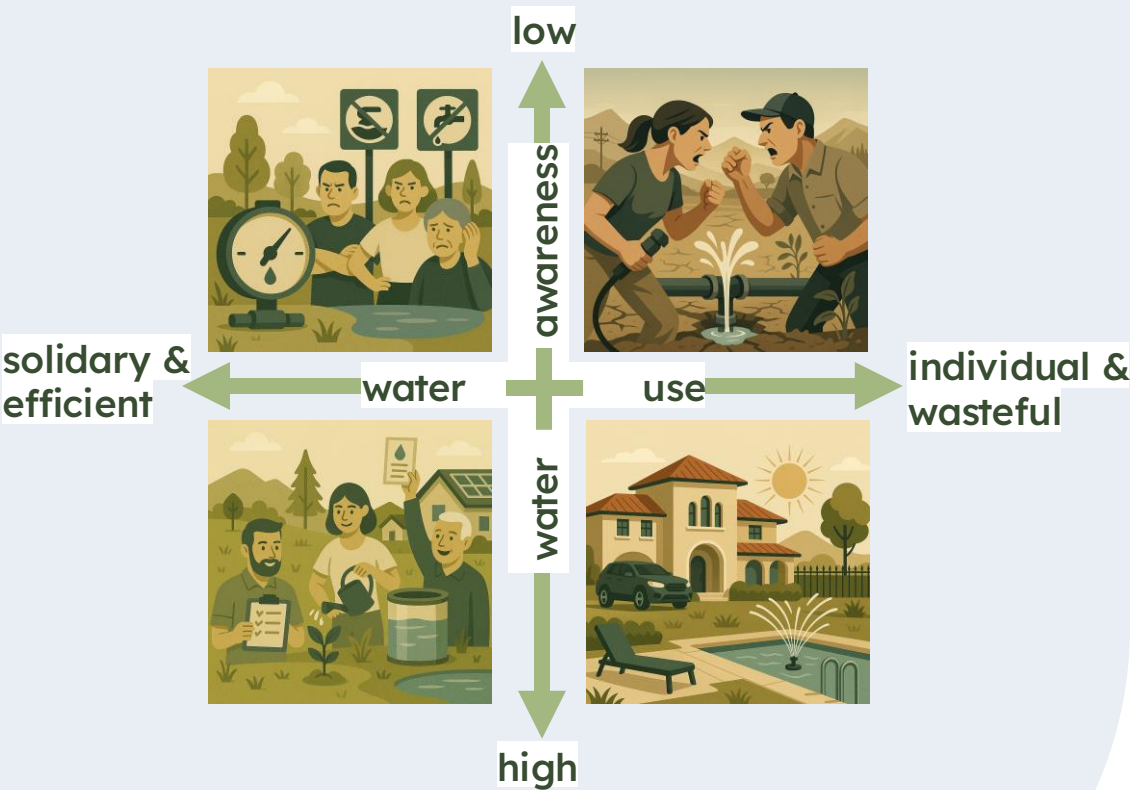
**Ideas for behavioral
change & measures
to raise awareness.**

© Oliver Farys | Kleinwalsertal Tourismus

Kleinwalsertal

Water connects us all. Can we avoid conflicts of use when becoming aware of the value of water?

**Green
Transformation**



Kleinwalsertal

Workshop I
Exploring now –
imagining 2050

Workshop II
From ideas
to impact

Synthesis session
Cross-lab insights

Alpenregion Bludenz Großes Walsertal

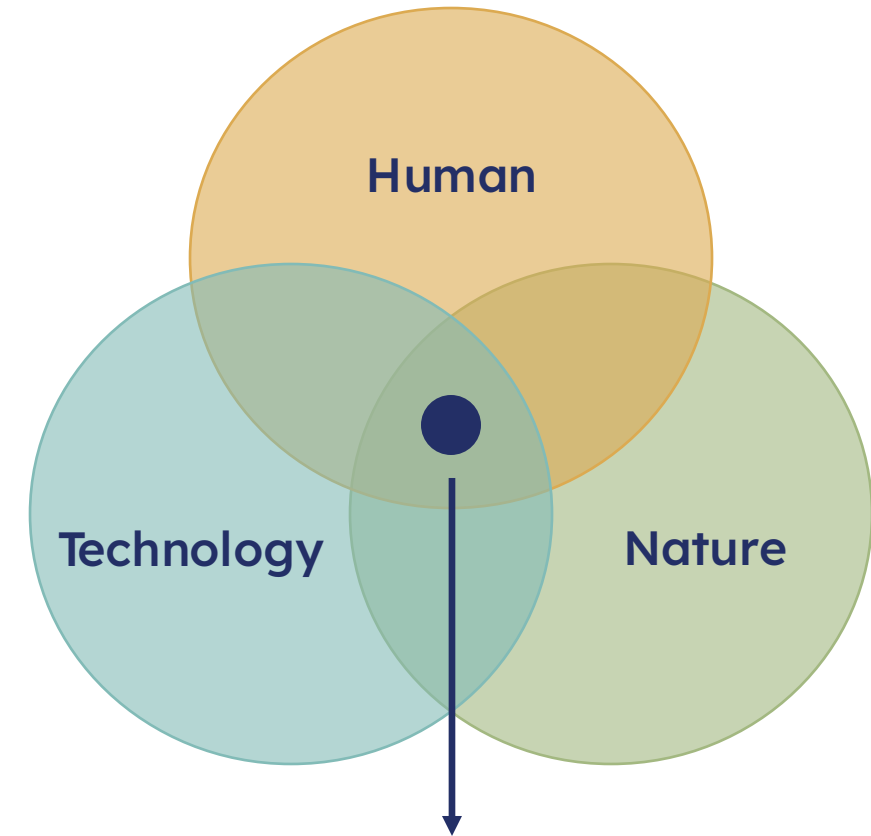
Can data improve mountain moments?
How personalized guest journeys start
with smart collaboration.

Digital Transformation

**Data-based system
for personalized
guest
recommendations
staging in natural
areas.**

© Conny Schneider

Alpenregion Bludenz Großes Walsertal



The future of tourism experiences

© Own figure

© Conny Schneider



**Foster bike mobility
and raise heat
awareness.**

Bodensee Vorarlberg

Climate culture starts on the move.
Students map heat.

Transformation of Mobility

© Kirstin Tödtling | Bodensee-Vorarlberg Tourismus



Bodensee Vorarlberg



Bikes with heat sensors

Live heat map

Raising awareness for sustainable bike mobility

© Kirstin Tödtling | Bodensee-Vorarlberg Tourismus

Montafon

Vacant spaces, vibrant ideas.
Workshops visualize the future use of
abandoned tourism infrastructure.

Sustainability Transformation



**Draw young
people's attention to
the possibilities of
their own initiative.**

© S. H. Gue



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

„Design your Montafon“
workshops for Gen Z (13-21 years old)

@ Schruns & Gaschurn
@ JAM youth club



Strengthen social & economical value
creation cycles @Montafon

Ideate what young people need to
make their region worth living in

Utilize abandoned tourism
infrastructure to make their potential
visible

© S. H. Gue





**Recommendations
to sustain tourism
acceptance among
Gen Z.**

Bregenzerwald

Sustainability through the eyes of Gen Z.
What must tourism become to earn their trust and serve
as their livelihood?

Demographic Transformation

© Jessica Firron

Bregenzerwald



© Jessica Firron



#Guest goals

#Ideal guest avatar

#NextGen tourism 2035

#Dream tomorrow

#Build the future

#Love it now

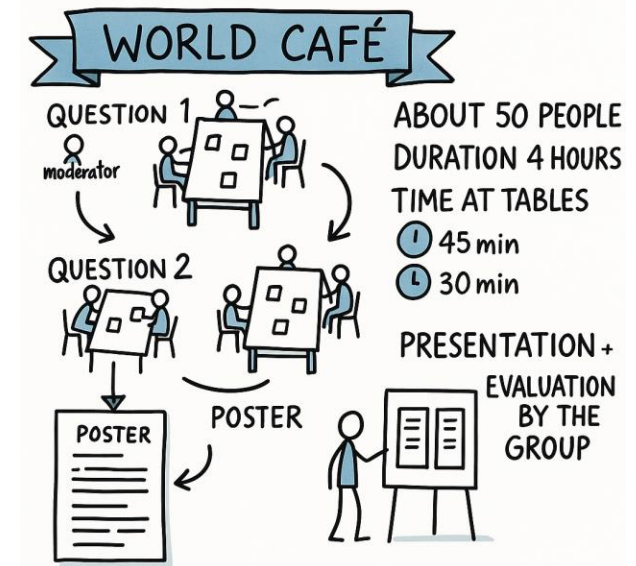
#Tourism that works

#Youth proof

#Limits of acceptance

#Worth staying

#Shared spaces



4

From insight to impact: Key learnings



© @beckerworks

Failure as fertile ground – What living labs taught us

Failure is
not a flaw
– it's part
of the
process.

Let go of
perfection.

Let go of
control.

Uncertainty
is part of
the process.

Our timeline
looked great
– until reality
happened.

Count
with some
extra
loops.

What seemed
like a task
turned into a
marathon.

Communication?
...work in
progress.

Coordinating
schedules is
challenging.

Aligning
expectations
is crucial.

Relationship
-building
takes time.
Trust can't
be rushed.

Designing futures
starts where
comfort ends –
with bold ideas
and people willing
to co-create the
unknown.

Living
labs need
to be
explained.



From irritation to innovation: Living labs...

...reveal deeper questions.

...foster unlikely connections.

...shift perspectives.

...challenge us to define how we communicate – and how we relate to one another.

...are mirrors. They invite us to step back, observe and question our own roles.

...make transformation tangible.

© @gallarotti



**The space for a good life
emerges where people take
responsibility together - and
where science listens.**

Thank you!



**Prof. Dr.
Harald Pechlaner**



**Johanna
Kamara**



**Ronja
Schneider**

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