

**Co-creating in place:  
Transformative Inter- and Transdisciplinary research  
through the lens of *vagar***

ITD27 Training for Students and Early Career Researchers

## Key Information

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**Lecturers:**

PD Dr Bianca Vienni-Baptista, Professor Dr, Centre for Transformative Sciences, BOKU University, Vienna, Austria

Dr Leonel Alegre, Auxiliary Researcher, \_ARTERIA\_LAB, Universidade de Évora, Portugal

**Teaching Assistant:**

Matthew McCarthy, Complexity Science & Contemplative Studies Consortium, Belgium

**Dates:**

*In-person training:*

- Saturday 29 May: 9.30-13.00; 14.30 - 18.00
- Sunday 30 May: 9.30-13.00; 14.30 - 18.00
- Monday 31 May: 9.30-12.00; 14.00 - 16.00

*Participation in the ITD27 Conference and autonomous work:*

From Tuesday 1 June to Thursday 3 June

*Final presentations:*

Thursday 3 June during the farewell session

**Venue:** In-person, [Colégio dos Leões - Universidade de Évora](#), Évora, Portugal

**Conditions and Fees:** Accepted participants will need to register for the “Full ITD27 Conference including “Co-creating in place” Training” to take part in the training. For information on the fees please go to: [ITD27 Conference Fees – ITD-Alliance](#).

## Abstract

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Inspired by the term ***vagar***, which is the motto of Évora, European Capital of Culture 2027, the **ITD27 Training** offers a forum for undergraduate, master's, PhD students' and early career researchers to strengthen their competences in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (ITD) research. ***Vagar***, in Portuguese, defines a new art of existence grounded in the principles of slow living, being present, and being in relation with the environment.

Through hands-on creative tools and collaborative experiments, participants will explore challenges in designing and conducting research that meaningfully responds to societal needs. This shift requires both recognition and active integration of different cultural and

disciplinary perspectives. In this respect, *vagar* serves not only as a cultural backdrop but additionally as a vehicle for learning about how to do ITD: as contextually embedded, attentive to the rhythms that knowledge co-production requires, and grounded in the understanding that knowing is inseparable from doing.

## Learning objectives

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In an experiential setting, the **ITD27 Training** will offer practical guidance for undergraduate, master's, PhD students' and early career researchers, embarking on or curious about interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research—projects that involve co-creating socially-relevant transformative knowledge in collaboration with diverse societal actors. It draws on the evolving landscapes of ITD research from both institutional and experiential perspectives, offering tools and resources to enhance collaboration across disciplines, the arts, different sectors and civil society. Through hands-on experimentation with selected methodological tools, participants will explore key challenges in designing, investigating and conducting research that is responsive to societal needs.

At the end of this training students are able to:

- Understand the conceptual and methodological foundations of inter- and transdisciplinary research and the advantages of its application in addressing real-world challenges combining scientific, technological, artistic, and empirical approaches.
- Jointly-frame, and analyse complex societal and environmental problems, and evaluate their potential societal impacts.
- Critically examine positionality, and methodological assumptions, while developing key competencies as reflexivity, and attentiveness needed for inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations.

## Competencies

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### *Subject-specific Competencies*

Concepts and Theories: fostered

Analytical Competencies: assessed

Problem-solving: assessed

Project Management fostered

### *Social Competencies*

Communication: fostered

Cooperation and Teamwork: assessed

Leadership and Responsibility: fostered

### *Personal Competencies*

Creative Thinking: fostered

Critical Thinking: assessed

Self-awareness and Self-reflection: assessed

## Content

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In 2027, Évora will be European Capital of Culture under the theme *vagar*. Usually associated with the slow Mediterranean way of life, this concept proposes a new form of coexistence grounded in the full awareness that humans are, and have always been, one with the universe — an awareness that questions relations of dominance and power, and that embraces the concepts of coevolution, containment, creation and decomposition, time and space, memory and the collective, resilience and tension.

Through the poetic and philosophical lens of *vagar*, participants will be challenged to expand these concepts across three transdisciplinary case studies developed at the University of Évora focused on local challenges such as landscape and natural resource management and the energy transition.

Weaving together conceptual insights, hands-on collaborative activities, and the living context of Évora, the training offers an experiential and transformative approach to ITD research. It is open to both newcomers and those further along on their research pathways. Participants from diverse backgrounds are therefore invited to encounter the varied intersections of ITD research and *vagar*, bringing different experiences to shared questions of embeddedness, time, and embodied practice.

Furthermore, the training is fully integrated into the ITD27 Conference. As such, students will have the opportunity to engage with colleagues from the international inter- and transdisciplinarity community. They will be encouraged to exchange ideas and interact with participants as part of their own learning and reflection process, benefiting from the unique gathering of perspectives and expertise that the conference provides. The conference community is typically very open and welcoming, and participants will be encouraged to contribute to the students' reflections, discussions, and learning activities.

The course focuses on four key modules representing the phases of the ITD research process:

a) Understanding Inter- & Transdisciplinary Research

Establish the conceptual and methodological foundations of inter- and transdisciplinary research, the conditions under which it becomes necessary, and the principles that guide its design and practice for transformative change.

b) Shaping Collaborative Conditions

Explore and enhance collaborative conditions across diverse disciplinary backgrounds, working cultures, and knowledge systems, across sectors and the arts.

c) Co-creating a Research Project

Working in small groups around one of the case studies and establishing connections with Évora\_27's artistic projects, participants integrate diverse perspectives, experiment with methods and tools, and begin to collaboratively develop an integrated output that will be further explored and shaped through the conference.

#### d) Honing Transformative Competencies

Developing transformative competencies and skills essential for inter- and transdisciplinary research, including critical and creative thinking, engagement with diverse societal actors, and reflexivity. Participants will critically reflect on their positionality and career paths and the societal impact of research collaborations.

Beyond the training days themselves, during the conference a series of excursions into Évora's urban landscape, as well as participation in Évora\_27's cultural and artistic programme, will offer participants more direct encounters with the places, communities, and contexts that the case studies address. This also allows participants the time to reflect on their own questions and lines of inquiry, encouraging each group to collaboratively follow the questions, threads and encounters related to the concept of *vagar*.

The integrated output developed during the training will be presented in a dedicated session on the final day of the conference.

### Certificate

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Participants will receive a certificate of the training upon successful completion of the following requirements:

1. Attend the three in-person days of training, from Saturday 29 to Monday 31 May (20 hours of in-person work in total).
2. Actively participate in group work on the development of the project during the conference, drawing on interactions with speakers and participants, interviews with stakeholders, site visits, and other activities (6 hours of independent group work).
3. Prepare the final presentation, to be presented on Thursday 3 June within a dedicated session at the ITD27 Conference (2 hours of group work).

### Selection Criteria and Application

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Be an undergraduate, master's, or PhD student, or an early career researcher (up to three years after PhD) from any scientific or artistic field, and have a written and oral command of English.

**Application entails completing [the corresponding form](#) which includes:**

- a motivation letter explaining your interest in transdisciplinary and transformative research and what perspectives or experiences you can bring to the workshop (1 page maximum);
- a short CV (2 pages maximum).

The deadline to submit is **October 30th, 2026**. A maximum of **25 participants** will be admitted. Candidates will be selected based on their motivation and profile in order to ensure

a balance across levels of study, scientific areas, gender, and country of origin. Selection results will be communicated by email by **January 15th**.

Readings and other materials will be provided by the lecturers. Participants are asked to bring their own laptop/device for the training.

Lunches and snacks are included. **Accommodation must be arranged and covered by the participants.**

## Biographies

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**Bianca Vienni-Baptista** is a social anthropologist with a PhD and Habilitation in the anthropology of science and technology. She is Professor Dr, Centre for Transformative Sciences at BOKU University, Vienna. Before she was Group Leader of Cultural Studies of Science and Technology at the Transdisciplinarity Lab, ETH Zurich. Bianca's research examines practices, institutional dynamics, funding and evaluation systems. In addition, she co-designs transformative transdisciplinary processes for sustainable development. Bianca leads multiple international transdisciplinary research projects, advises universities on interdisciplinary strategies, and actively supports innovative inter- and transdisciplinary educational programmes.

**Leonel Alegre** holds a degree in Physics and Chemistry Teaching from the University of Évora and a PhD in Organometallic Chemistry from Instituto Superior Técnico. After a career in science communication and museum curation, he now researches at the University of Évora, coordinating \_ARTERIA\_LAB, leading transdisciplinary projects grounded in co-design and participatory processes, exploring community-territory and human-nature relations.

**Matthew McCarthy** is an early-career researcher looking into practices and frameworks that support regenerative ways of living. His core research interest involves mapping and navigating existing epistemic and cultural ruptures, especially from a phenomenological perspective. He is primarily affiliated as a lead researcher at the Complexity Science and Contemplative Studies Consortium (CSCSC), a research community that draws on complexity science and contemplative wisdom traditions to explore questions related to epistemic and ontological transformation.