



Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges (UGlobe)

Programme Report 2022-2023





Content





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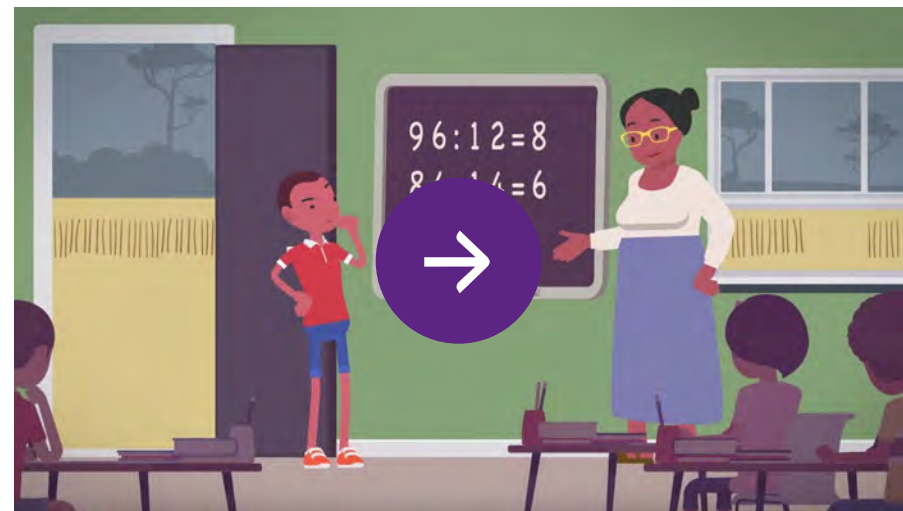
How does Utrecht University's dedication to global engagement influence its approach to research, education, and relation with stakeholders?

At Utrecht University, a global outlook that extends beyond the boundaries of Western Europe and North America is essential for exceptional research and education. With 85% of the world's population residing in low and middle-income countries, challenges such as climate change, the consequences of ongoing conflicts, the spread of fake news, democratic limitations, refugee flows, and medical shortages are not limited to country borders. As a socially responsible institution, it is crucial that our research contributes to solving these significant issues while enabling our students to develop a comprehensive global perspective.

UGlobe is a testing ground where researchers and students from Utrecht University and social partners worldwide come together to explore new forms of collaboration. Drawing on insights generated by this testing ground over the past year, this report presents a range of perspectives on tackling global challenges. By showcasing diverse viewpoints, we seek to foster innovative and effective solutions to the most pressing issues of our time.

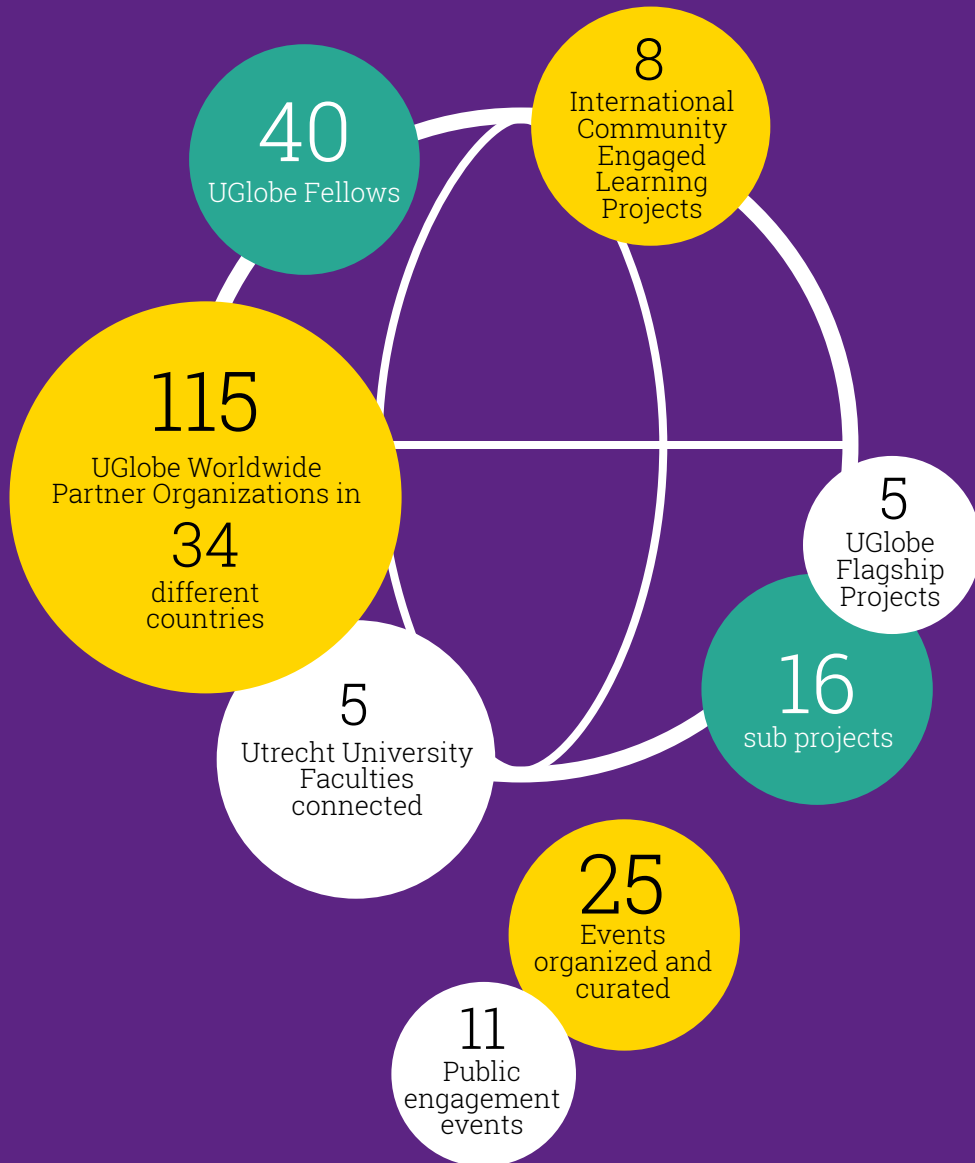
Our collaborations involve five ambitious experimental flagship projects that integrate research, education, and impact: Open Cities, Global Education Lab, Contesting Governance, Navigating Deep Transitions, and Just Transitions. The Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges warmly invites you to explore our activities, accomplishments, challenges, and objectives over the past year by turning the page.

Prof. Joost de Laat
Director Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges





UGlobe Community in Numbers



UGlobe boasts a vibrant and distinctive community comprising over 40 research and teaching fellows. This community is characterized by its dynamic and inspirational nature, as its members are all dedicated to experimental and transformative projects that are developed in close collaboration with partners in society. Furthermore, these fellows have a global perspective and secure funding from non-conventional sources, which enhances the uniqueness of this community.

Our UGlobe community works closely together with three Strategic Research Themes within Utrecht University: Dynamics of Youth, Institutions for Open Societies and Pathways to Sustainability.

Our Mission

At the Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges, we aim to address significant global issues through research, education, and impactful initiatives. We foster a global perspective within Utrecht University and work closely with societal partners from various sectors worldwide to achieve our goals.

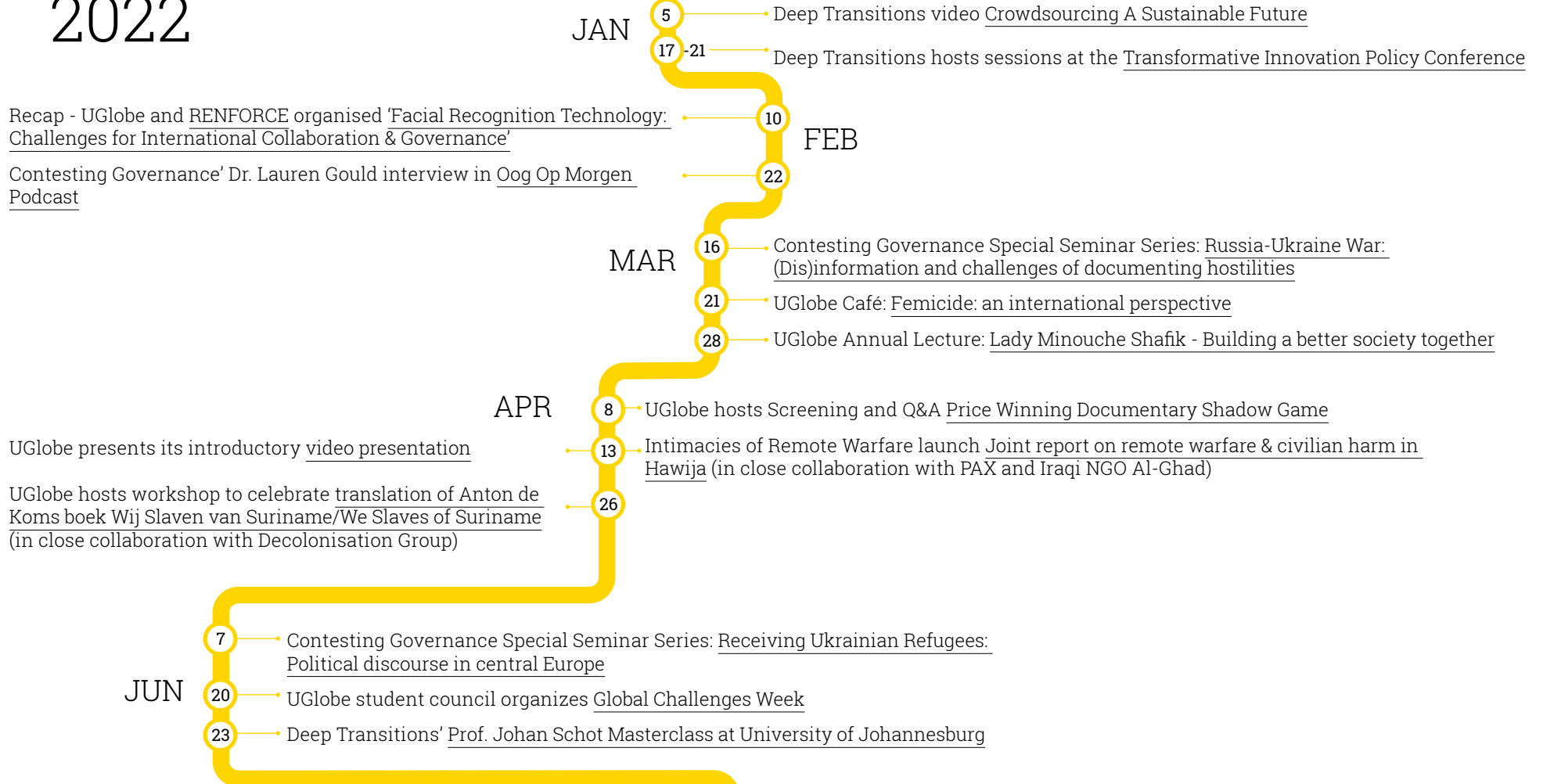




Centre for Global Challenges Timeline

2022

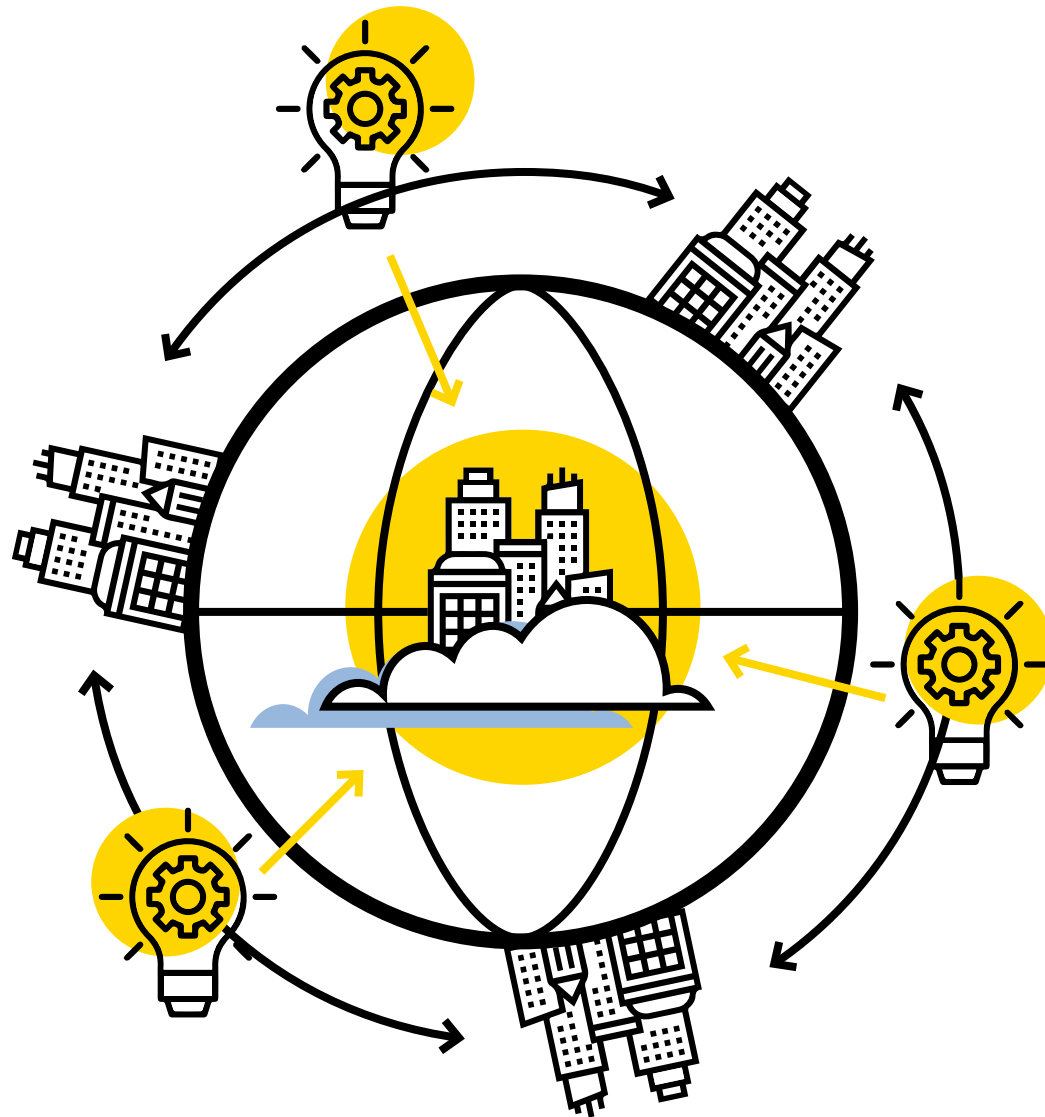
Throughout the past year, we have curated an array of events that aimed to create awareness and encourage solutions towards global challenges. Our events covered a broad range of topics, including research, education, and impact initiatives. By means of our events, we sought to promote collaboration among experts from various fields and spark meaningful discussions around the most pressing issues of our time.







Open Cities



Cities are dynamic places where we work, socialize, exercise, and engage with a diverse range of people. They offer a canvas for us to envision and pursue our ideals for a perfect society, to dream and create our own utopias. However, the reality of peaceful cohabitation with neighbors from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may not always match our imaginations. How much are the limitations of reality constraining our aspirations for a harmonious community?

The Open Cities flagship project is dedicated to creating more open and equal cities worldwide. To achieve this, the project aims to foster collaborative relationships between scholars, students, cultural practitioners, policy makers, and civic communities from various disciplines, professions, and nations. By promoting cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural exchanges of ideas and knowledge, Open Cities seeks to facilitate a more inclusive and diverse urban environment.

Meet the [Open Cities](#) team →





‘We often think of infrastructure leading to a faster, better, more inclusive city. However, we must ask ourselves: Development for whom?’

Dr. Kei Otsuki on infrastructure and its impacts on inclusive cities





Lives of Deltas

In 2023, universities in Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong, Maputo, and Utrecht will launch the first Lives of Deltas global exchange program. The program aims to investigate how taking an affirmative stance on pollution and pollination can help us understand the complex relationship between urban deltas and nature-human coexistence. By examining the challenges and opportunities presented by these ecosystems, the exchange hopes to shed light on ways to promote sustainable and mutually beneficial interactions between humans and the environment.

Read more about the [Lives of Deltas program](#) →



Between Utopia and Reality

Open Cities collaborated with UGlobe Café to examine the tension between utopian ideals and the reality of urban living. This investigation involved exploring how different cities worldwide have addressed such challenges and identifying the lessons that can be drawn from their experiences.

Read more about the [Open Cities event](#) →



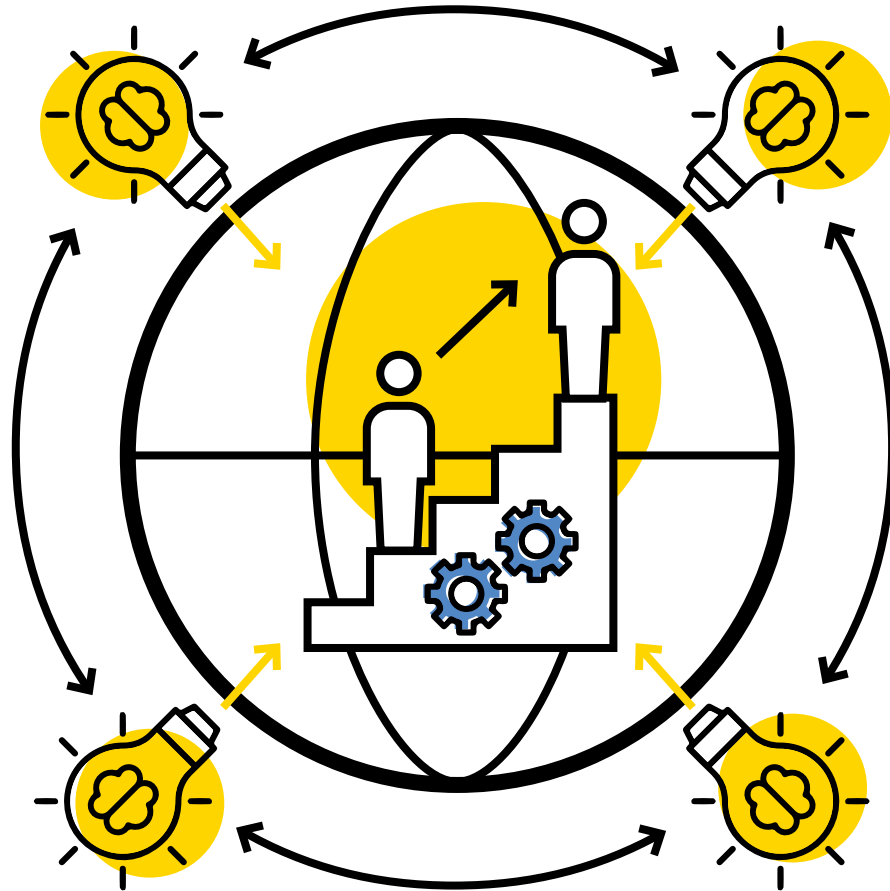


Global Education Lab:

Working together to enhance children's opportunities

The Global Education Lab is devoted to addressing educational inequalities worldwide by partnering with a wide range of societal organizations across the globe. Our collaborative efforts are closely aligned with Utrecht University's Dynamics of Youth strategic theme, allowing us to leverage our resources and expertise to effect positive change in education on a global level.

The Global Education Lab is adhered to promoting education equity worldwide through two main strands of activity. Firstly, we facilitate Global Learning Communities, where partners from different sectors can exchange experiences and insights to enhance their efforts towards this shared goal. Secondly, we collaborate with NGOs and governments on field experiments in schools in low and middle-income countries, with a focus on improving learning outcomes and developmental opportunities for children facing the greatest disadvantages.



Meet the [Global Education Lab](#) team →





'Education is the great enabler, but today, in many cases, it is also the great divider.'

António Guterres - UN Secretary-General on Transforming Education





Working together to enhance children’s opportunities

The Global Learning Community (GLC) is founded on the belief that collaboration can amplify our collective impact in education. Its mission is to connect education professionals from around the world who are interested in effective approaches to integrating whole child development into schools and school systems through pedagogy. With over 60 education organizations represented, the GLC provides a platform for learning and sharing among its members. UGlobe is proud to facilitate the Global Learning Community (GLC) on Whole Child Development.

Read more about [Whole Child Development](#) →



Springboard for School Readiness program

The Global Education Lab is actively partnering on experimental evaluations (RCTs) with governments and organizations in Bulgaria, the Gambia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, and Rwanda to enhance education opportunities for vulnerable children. One example is the longer-term follow-up of the Springboard for School Readiness (SSR) program, which supported disadvantaged children, Roma children especially, attend kindergarten. Findings from an experimental evaluation of the SSR program, led by Utrecht University Professor Joost de Laat in collaboration with researchers in France and the United States, supported the decision by Bulgaria’s national parliament to adopt a new law to remove parent financial contributions for kindergarten: one of the key barriers identified by the research.

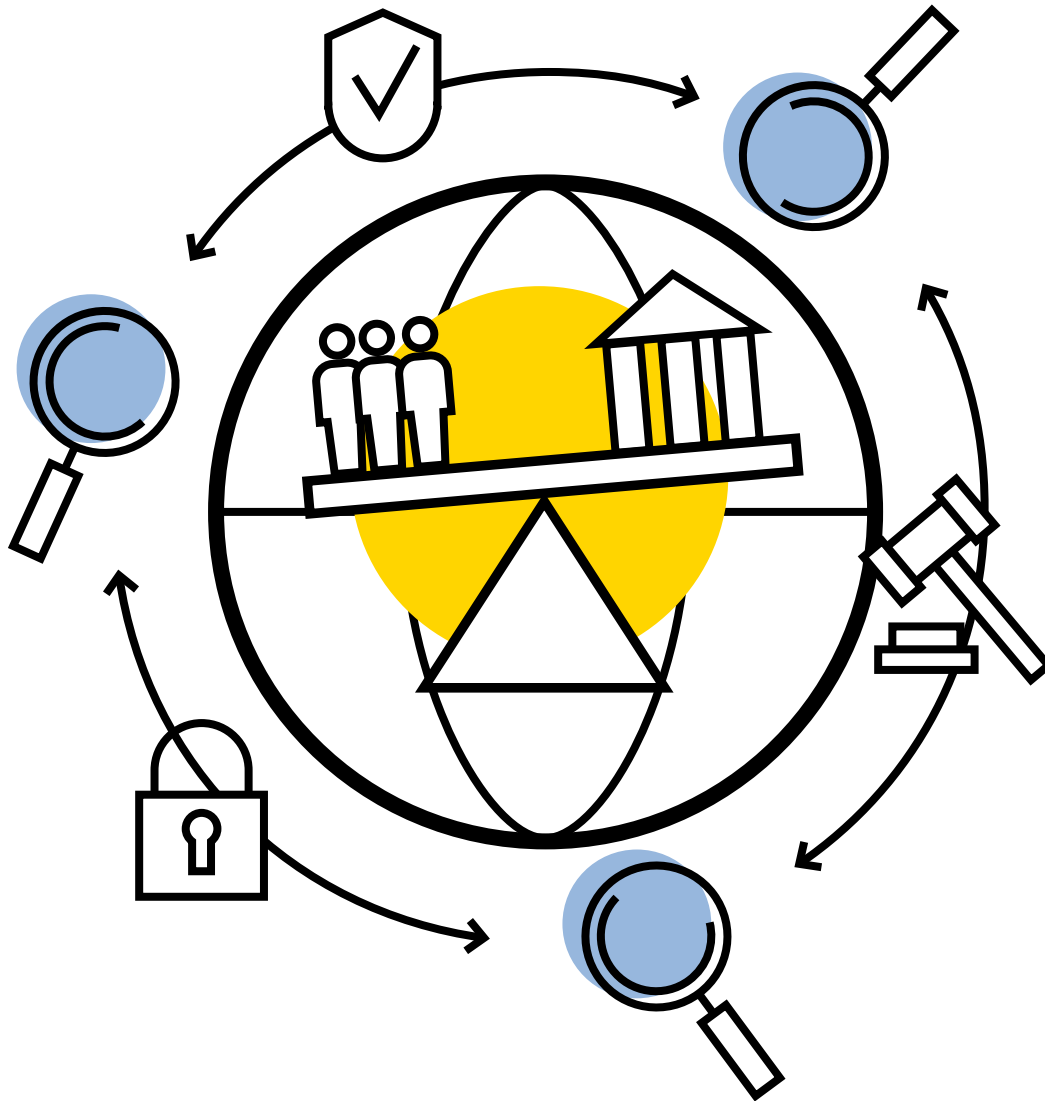
Read more about the study [‘Building Evidence for Preschool Policy Change in Bulgaria’](#)

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Contesting Governance: The Global Challenges of Rule, Accountability, and Citizenship



What are the responses of citizens who feel unprotected, abandoned, or attacked by the state? How do people express their concerns and assert their rights in public spaces and legal institutions? How do individuals negotiate their daily needs and livelihoods when private armed actors dominate their physical and social environments, and determine their fate? What types of regulations and power structures emerge in areas where state governance is lacking or has collapsed?

Contesting Governance is a collaborative initiative among researchers from Utrecht University who are deeply invested in exploring critical and interdisciplinary themes where governance, institutions, human rights, conflict, and security intersect. Through a critical lens, we examine how power is constructed and operates within specific institutional and societal contexts.

Meet the [Contesting Governance](#) team →





‘Going beyond normative framings that picture what the rules should be and how they should be exercised, our group has the combined expertise to understand how de facto governance and de jure governance intersect, and how they strengthen and/or contest each other.’

Prof. Martijn Oosterbaan
on the Contesting Governance platform





Global Justice Investigations Lab

The current era of globalization and digital technology has made it easier for knowledge and information to reach unprecedented levels of dissemination. However, it has also led to the proliferation of misinformation and fake news. As a result, there is an urgent need for students to develop critical inquiry skills that can cut across various disciplines. One effective way to do this is through open-source investigation techniques. With these techniques, students can learn to identify, document, verify, analyze, and evaluate open-source materials such as news reports, social media posts, and satellite images.

Read more about the [Global Justice Investigations Lab](#) →



Hawija: The Destructive Realities of Our Remote War Against IS

The town of Hawija in Iraq was destroyed by a bombing in 2015, resulting in the death of at least 85 civilians. It was only four years later that Dutch investigative journalists were able to uncover the culprit responsible for the attack: the Netherlands. Researchers Jip van Dort, Lauren Gould, and Marrit Woudwijk, all part of the [Intimacies of Remote Warfare project](#), conducted an investigation into the bombing and have now published their findings in a new work titled "Hawija". Read more about [Hawija: The Destructive Realities of Our Remote War Against IS](#) →

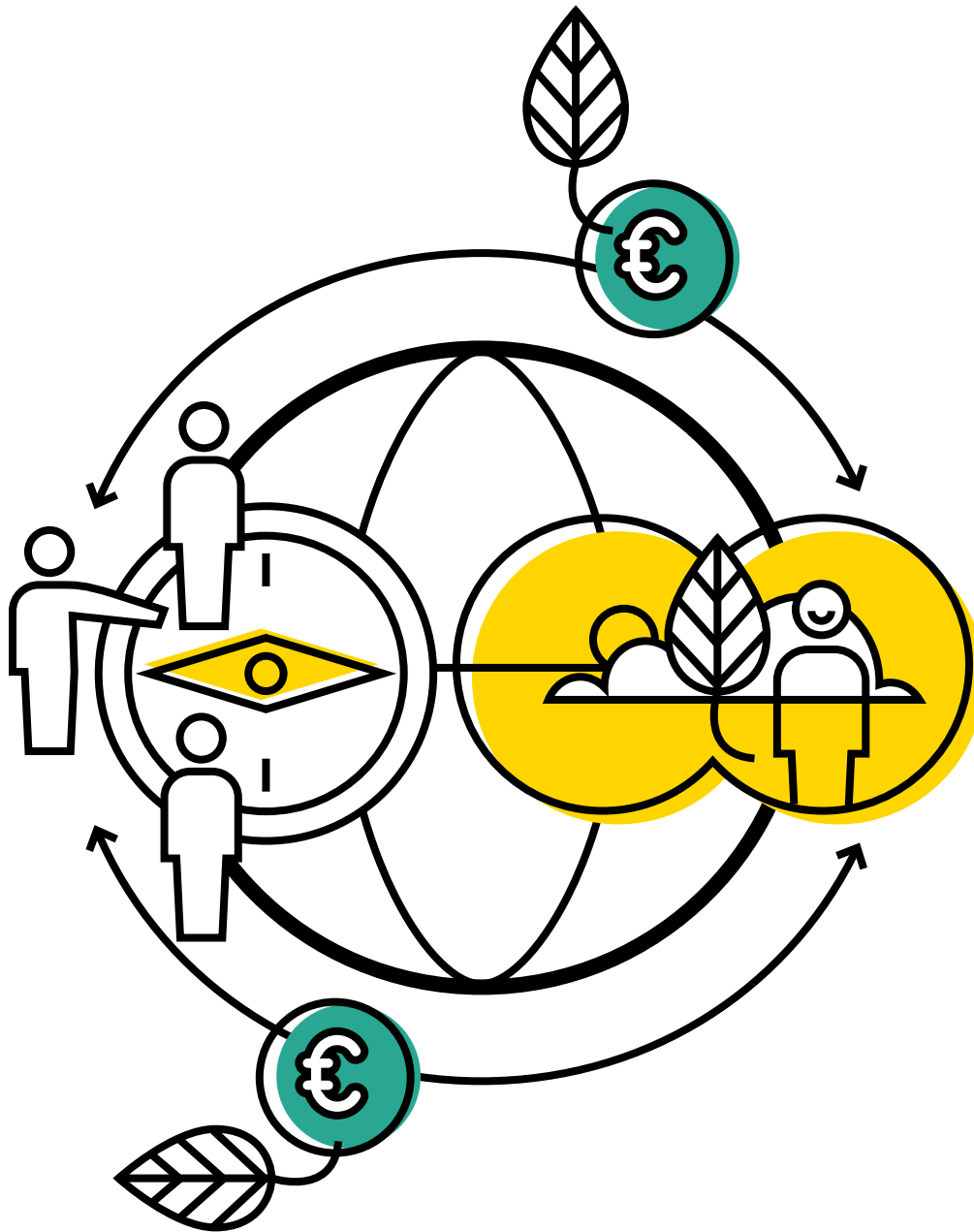


Navigating Deep Transitions

Deep Transitions is a groundbreaking interdisciplinary research initiative aimed at comprehending the emergence of unsustainable systems in our societies and exploring ways to dismantle them. The project comprises two distinct phases: Deep Transitions History and Deep Transitions Futures. It involves an unparalleled historical inquiry into how fundamental shifts occurred in the past and anticipates the future to guide these crucial drivers of change towards sustainability. Thus, Deep Transitions draws on the lessons of the past to shape a sustainable future.

To effectively address the ongoing crises and achieve a sustainability revolution, financial investments must shift towards transformative investment rather than system optimization. While Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment practices may yield positive results, they often do not result in fundamental transformations. Deep Transitions advocates for transformative investment as a novel approach that amplifies positive impact within multiple dynamic systems. This philosophy is the outcome of a 2-year collaboration between the Deep Transitions research team, comprising historians, sustainability transitions scholars, and futurists, and the [Global Investors Panel](#), consisting of 16 public and private investors from across the globe.

Next step is the development of a Deep Transition Lab, that will seek to experiment with the transformative investment framework across the globe. The Lab will collaborate with several governments active in the Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium.



Meet the [Navigating Deep Transitions team](#) →





‘One of the biggest challenges for sustainable finance is the risk that it satisfies itself with incremental change, while reproducing the harmful foundations of mainstream, or “unsustainable”, finance. For example, by failing to reorient its goals away from private profit maximization towards social and ecological flourishing.’

Dominic Burke, Investment Director of the Lankelly Chase Foundation and Global Investors Panellist

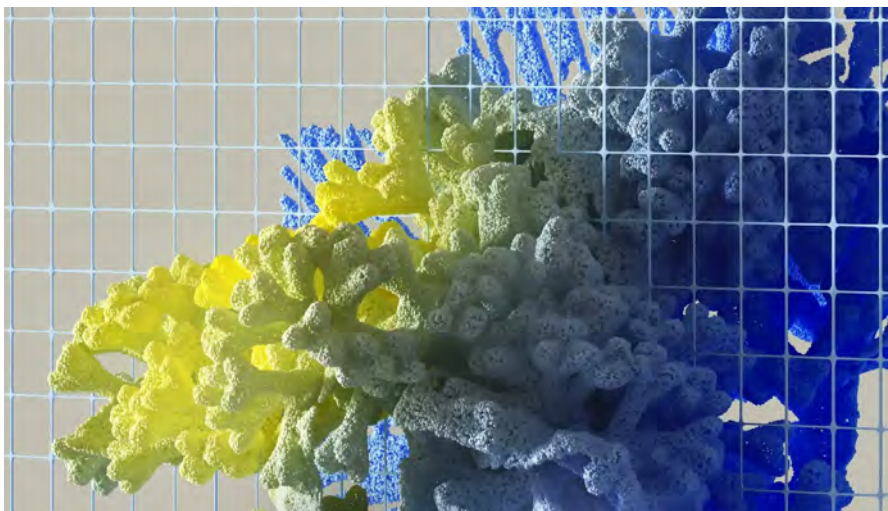




Transformative Investment: Unleashing the power of capital to achieve the sustainability transition

At present, impact investments primarily focus on mitigating the consequences of problems such as global warming. Yet, to effectively tackle the complex and interdependent issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality, and social unrest, we must address the underlying causes. Recently, a group of researchers and investors proposed a novel approach called Transformative Investment, which seeks to finance sustainable, long-term systemic change. This innovative strategy aims to facilitate a transition towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Read more about [Transformative Investment](#) →



Deep Transitions launches Transformative Investment Philosophy for financing sustainability transition

The [Transformative Investment Philosophy](#) was officially launched by the Deep Transitions research project on November 16th, 2022. This comprehensive report introduces new principles, tools, and metrics designed to support long-term systems change and facilitate a deep transition towards sustainability. At the launch event, the authors and contributors of the investment philosophy discussed its significance and outlined its main components and implications.

Read more about the [Transformative Investment Philosophy launch event](#) →

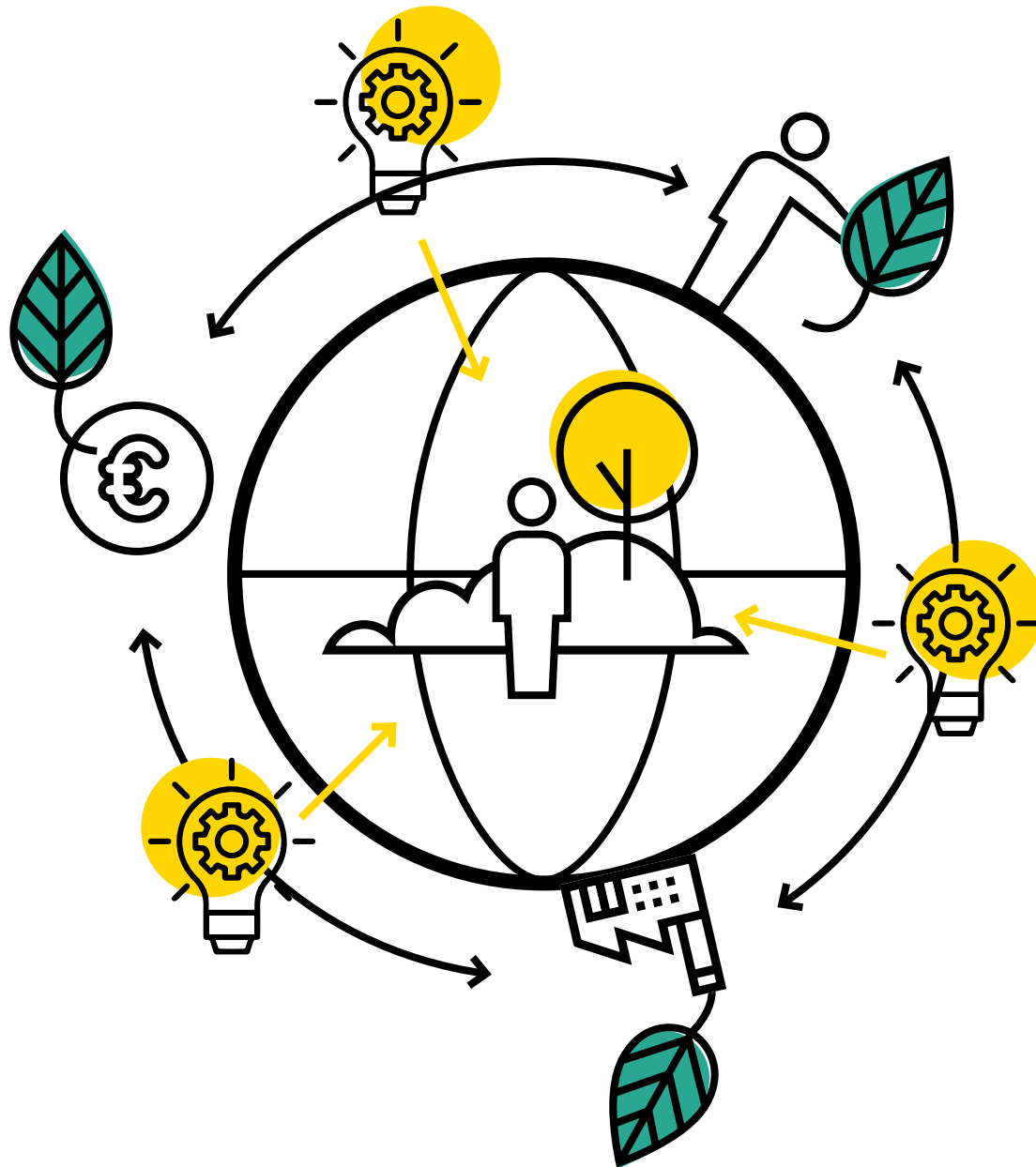




Just Transitions

The global effort to tackle climate change and shift towards sustainable living has highlighted the pressing need for a “just transition” - a plan to protect individuals who may face negative consequences as a result of the transition. However, this is not just about protecting those affected; it also presents a unique opportunity to address social injustices and promote greater equality. As we strive for a more sustainable future, it is crucial that we prioritize fairness and ensure that all individuals have a voice in the transition.

Climate change is not just a technical or environmental problem; it is also a social and economic challenge that demands social and economic solutions. As such, any efforts to address climate change must necessarily consider issues of poverty and vulnerability. It is impossible to address climate change in isolation from these complex social issues. In order to be truly effective, climate change action must be accompanied by a commitment to tackling poverty and promoting greater social equity.



Meet the [Just Transitions](#) team →





‘To solve the problems of climate change we need to be able to look at the cultural diagnosis and solutions. The receptiveness of how people are going to take on our scientific solutions will depend entirely on the people’s imprints in those solutions.’

Dr. Fatima Denton holds the Prince Claus Chair in Equity and Development at Utrecht University on Just Transitions.





Interview Dr. Fatima Denton

In order to address the pressing challenges of the climate emergency, it is essential that we prioritize the concept of a “just transition” for those communities in Africa that are most vulnerable to its impacts. By empowering these individuals to share their experiences and perspectives, we can bring their voices to the forefront of the global debate. This means creating more inclusive spaces where diverse voices are heard and valued, and where the unique needs of these communities are taken into account. To achieve this goal, it is important to produce a strong evidence base that includes real-life examples of what a just transition could look like, and what solutions may be needed. Ultimately, democratizing the issue of climate change and widening the conversation to include a diversity of perspectives is key to achieving a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Read the [complete interview with Dr. Fatima Denton](#)



Dare to Share Knowledge Consortium (DtoSKC)

To achieve sustainability for all, including vulnerable groups, we must address interconnected challenges in food, energy, and cities. This requires a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates ongoing learning and systems thinking to tackle cross-cutting issues and achieve multiple outcomes simultaneously. In 2023, Utrecht University and the United Nations University Institute of Natural Resources in Africa (UNU INRA) will join forces to create the Dare to Share Knowledge consortium aimed at fostering a collaborative learning platform for tackling complex socio-economic challenges, commonly referred to as poly-crises. These challenges cut across various sectors and pose a threat to humanity’s survival. The consortium, known as DtoSKC, will leverage the collective knowledge and resources of its members to develop sustainable solutions that benefit all segments of society.



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-INRA

Institute for Natural Resources in Africa





International Community Engaged Learning (ICEL)

ICEL is an innovative approach to education that fosters collaboration between students, teachers, and external partners to address pressing societal challenges. By integrating academic study with reflection and societal engagement, ICEL enhances the learning experience while contributing to the needs of the community. This experiential education approach enables students to apply their knowledge to real-world problems, encouraging active participation and providing opportunities for personal growth and development.

Over the last year, the ICEL programme has funded eight unique projects, all of which embody the spirit of collaborative education between students, teachers, and external partners. These projects are aimed at tackling global societal issues, and while they vary in form and content, they all share the fundamental values of the ICEL programme.

Have a look at the [short overview of the funded projects](#) →

UGlobe, in partnership with the Community Engaged Learning programme and the Centre for Academic Teaching, has developed a practical and informative toolkit. This toolkit provides step-by-step guidance on how to integrate Community Engaged Learning into your teaching. It includes an explanation of ICEL and its best practices, a five-step process for incorporating ICEL, strategies for cultivating and maintaining relationships with societal partners, and methods for encouraging student reflection. The toolkit has been enhanced with a range of novel tools that enable online community engaged learning, facilitate the accomplishment of learning objectives, and streamline assessment and evaluation processes. Furthermore, new tools are currently under development..

Discover the [ICEL Toolkit](#) →





Why ICEL matters: From the perspectives of lecturers, students and societal partners

On March 7th, UGlobe launched the International Community Engaged Learning Lab at the Social Impact Factory. The event, hosted by Dr. Lauren Gould, started with two conversations exploring the relevance of ICEL from the perspectives of lecturers, students and societal partners. Prof. James Kennedy, chair of Community Engaged Learning, moderated the conversations. These discussions were followed by a hands-on workshop where participants utilized UGlobe's ICEL toolkit to brainstorm and develop their own projects. A key takeaway from the event was the importance of "finding the right allies" when engaging in ICEL, a sentiment that was echoed by both the participants and organizers.

Read the [full recap of the ICEL Launch Event](#) →





Public Engagement

At UGlobe, public engagement is considered a vital aspect of its mission to address global challenges through research, education, and societal impact. Embedded in a socially engaged university, UGlobe recognizes the value of engaging with stakeholders beyond the academic community to foster meaningful collaborations and tackle complex societal issues.

Through public engagement initiatives, UGlobe seeks to bridge the gap between academia and the broader public, encourage dialogue and knowledge-sharing, and promote mutual understanding. By prioritizing public engagement, UGlobe aims to increase the impact and relevance of its research and education programs while simultaneously contributing to the betterment of society.

UGlobe Café

The UGlobe Café is a unique collaboration between students of Utrecht University, UGlobe and the knowledge and debate programme of TivoliVredenburg. In a joint editorial, topics are determined that bring knowledge outside the walls of the university in an accessible way.

Studium Generale

Studium Generale serves as a public platform for knowledge and reflection at Utrecht University. With a focus on the intersection of science and society, it brings together scientists and thinkers to organize a variety of engaging events such as lectures, talk shows, and movie screenings. UGlobe and Studium Generale join forces every year to organize a lecture series that explores a range of global challenges. The lecture series is designed to bring together a diverse audience of students, professionals, and curious individuals to engage in meaningful dialogue about topics ranging from sustainability and human rights to technology and global health.

UGlobe Events

UGlobe is always seeking new ideas for events or collaborations throughout the year that can lead to thought-provoking and engaging discussions. Our goal is twofold: to bring together our community of researchers and students, and to showcase important topics within UGlobe to the wider public. Whether it's through workshops, lectures, or other innovative formats, we strive to foster an environment of open dialogue and intellectual curiosity.





In the UGlobe café 'Olympolitics', we discussed the different aspects and perspectives of (political) activism during international sport events, such as the Football World Cup and the Olympics.





UGlobe Café: The Olympolitics

Do political statements belong in the sports world? A question that has been the focus of attention in the last couple of years, reaching a climactic point during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Rather than the focus on sports, it seems the World Cup is pre-eminently used for politics. From the One Love initiatives against discrimination to the Iranian team's refusal to sing along to their national anthem in light of the protests that followed after the death of Masha Amini. In short, Qatar has been the subject of debate not only in the light of sports, but of human rights and political activism. But when and where do we draw the line between what political messages can be conveyed in such events? Is it ethically responsible to ignore such aspects? In this UGlobe café, we discussed the different aspects and perspectives of (political) activism during international sport events, such as the Football World Cup and the Olympics. Read more about [UGlobe Café](#) →

Reimagining Sex Work Photo Exhibition

The exhibition was created by [Reimagining Sex Work](#), a feminist activist collective made up of sex workers, photographers, researchers and scientists. This collective wants to present a nuanced picture of people working in the sex industry and also improve the representation of sex workers in the media. The exhibition also includes a media guide with photos for journalistic image banks so that image editors have more choice, plus a manual for journalists and sex workers, written by journalists and sex workers themselves. Read more about [this exhibition](#) →

Studium Generale: Rethinking global power

UGlobe and Studium Generale organized a public lecture series 'Rethinking Global Power': Russia's power game. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a turning point for Russian influence in the world. Russia's rule of law and democracy have since been crushed under Putin's presidency. Where did it go wrong? What do the Russian citizens think of the current war and recent developments such as the annexation and immobilization? And are Russia's attempts to expand its sphere of influence with incursions into Crimea and Ukraine the last convulsions of a world power? With historian Dr Gijs Kessler (International Institute of Social History). Watch [the event](#) →





Get in touch with us

[UGlobe website](#)

