

HEIDELBERGER BRÜCKE

# FROM ADVOCACY TO ACTION

HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES AND CITIES  
WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE UN  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS?

PUBLIC PANEL DISCUSSION  
15 May 2025, 17:30 CET  
The Great Hall, Old University  
Grabengasse 1

PROGRAMME



## ABOUT THE TOPIC

Mostly, universities are embedded in a city-context. Within cities, universities perform as strong stakeholders not only due to their physical size with respect to covered area and buildings, their large numbers of employees, students and academic staff, but also due to the massive energy consumption within certain research activities. Therefore, from a sustainability perspective, it appears logic that city governance and university administration should aspire for harnessing synergies in their attempts to promote “green” traffic concepts and alternative energy policies. Additional challenges come from climate change-induced “heat islands”, loss of biodiversity, but also from the need to develop passive housing standards. In case of historical buildings or entire city quarters, additional challenges may arise from reconciling adaptive technologies with the need for monument protection. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research at universities could address all these challenges and develop concepts for evidence-based solutions. Since effective concepts to meet the above-mentioned challenges often require acceptance of and/or collaboration with the local population, citizen science can operate to integrate public opinion and awareness into sustainability strategies. Being a link between academic science and city governance, citizen science – such as for data collection or as part of co-creation processes – may prove instrumental for jointly developing inclusive solutions.

As a joint endeavour of partner universities of the 4EU+European University Alliance, the event provides a unique platform to discuss diverse approaches in addressing global challenges and thus open new perspectives for promoting connections between cities and science.

# PROGRAMME

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*17:30 – 19:30 PUBLIC PANEL DISCUSSION*

*The Great Hall of the Old University*

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## **17:30 Welcome note and introduction**

Prof. Dr. Thomas Rausch, Heidelberg University  
Dr. Maximilian Jungmann, Heidelberg University

## **17:40 Setting the scene**

Impulse talks

Prof. Dr. Géraldine Pflieger, University of Geneva  
***Cities at the forefront of climate action***

Prof. Dr. Natasha de Vere, University of Copenhagen  
***The importance of urban green spaces for the health and well-being of people and biodiversity***

Introductory statements

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard, Heidelberg University  
Raoul Schmidt-Lamontain, City of Heidelberg

## **18:10 Panel discussion**

Prof. Dr. Géraldine Pflieger, University of Geneva  
Prof. Dr. Natasha de Vere, University of Copenhagen  
Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard, Heidelberg University  
Raoul Schmidt-Lamontain, Mayor for Climate Protection, Environment and Mobility, City of Heidelberg

Host & facilitator:

Dr. Maximilian Jungmann, Heidelberg University

## **19:10 Questions from the audience**

## **19:30 Closing**

## PANELLISTS

**Prof. Dr. Géraldine Pflieger** is a full professor of urban and environmental policy at the **University of Geneva** and a Director of the Institute of Environmental Sciences, which brings together five partner faculties and trains students in the themes of water, climate change, biodiversity protection, regional planning and the energy transition. Since 2020, she has been an associate negotiator and science representative on the Swiss delegation responsible for climate negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs) and since 2023, a leading scientist of the Flagship Environmental Transitions within the 4EU+ University Alliance. She has been nominated as the IPCC Lead Author of the next Special Report on Climate Change and Cities. Her research focuses on climate action and policies at local, regional and international levels.



**Prof. Dr. Natasha de Vere** is an interdisciplinary biodiversity scientist, a Curator of botany, and a professor at the **University of Copenhagen**. In her research, she is focusing in particular on the question about how climate and environmental change impact plant-pollinator interactions and plant diversity over current and historical timeframes. Moreover, she seeks to understand plant-pollinator interactions in anthropogenic landscapes (gardens, urban amenity areas and farmland) and how to improve floral resources for pollinators. She is a Lead Curator of the Biodiversity Gallery, one of the permanent galleries within the new Natural History Museum of Denmark, and engages actively with the public, especially using art-science to explore how humans connect with the natural world.





**Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard** is professor for Human Geography of North America & Urban Geography at the Institute of Geography and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) at **Heidelberg University**. Her research focuses on recent urban developments in North America, Europe and Germany, often from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective. Ulrike Gerhard is a deputy director of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies as well as head of the former living lab



"Sustainable Urban Development in the Knowledge-based Society" which runs an Urban Office at Heidelberg University at the cutting edge between the university, the city of Heidelberg, and civil society actors. She is speaker of the DFG-funded graduate training program "Authority and Trust in American Society, History and Culture", Principal Investigator of the MSCA-EU Horizon Doctoral Network on C-Newtral Cities (2024-2027), and coordinates Flagship 1: Urban Health and Demographic Change within the 4EU+ Alliance.

**Raoul Schmidt-Lamontain** has been **Heidelberg's Deputy Mayor for Climate Protection, Environment, and Mobility** since 2020. He promotes sustainable mobility with numerous new bicycle streets, express routes, and a 2,000-space bike parking facility. The OASIS program at Bismarckplatz and climate-resilient urban areas support adaptation to climate change. Looking ahead, he is driving the transport transition in Heidelberg with the Climate Mobility and Transport Development Plan 2035, integrating regional mobility solutions and thus creating mobility options. Academia and civil society play a key role in this process. He will discuss this collaboration at "From Advocacy to Action".

