

RIFS-Blogpost

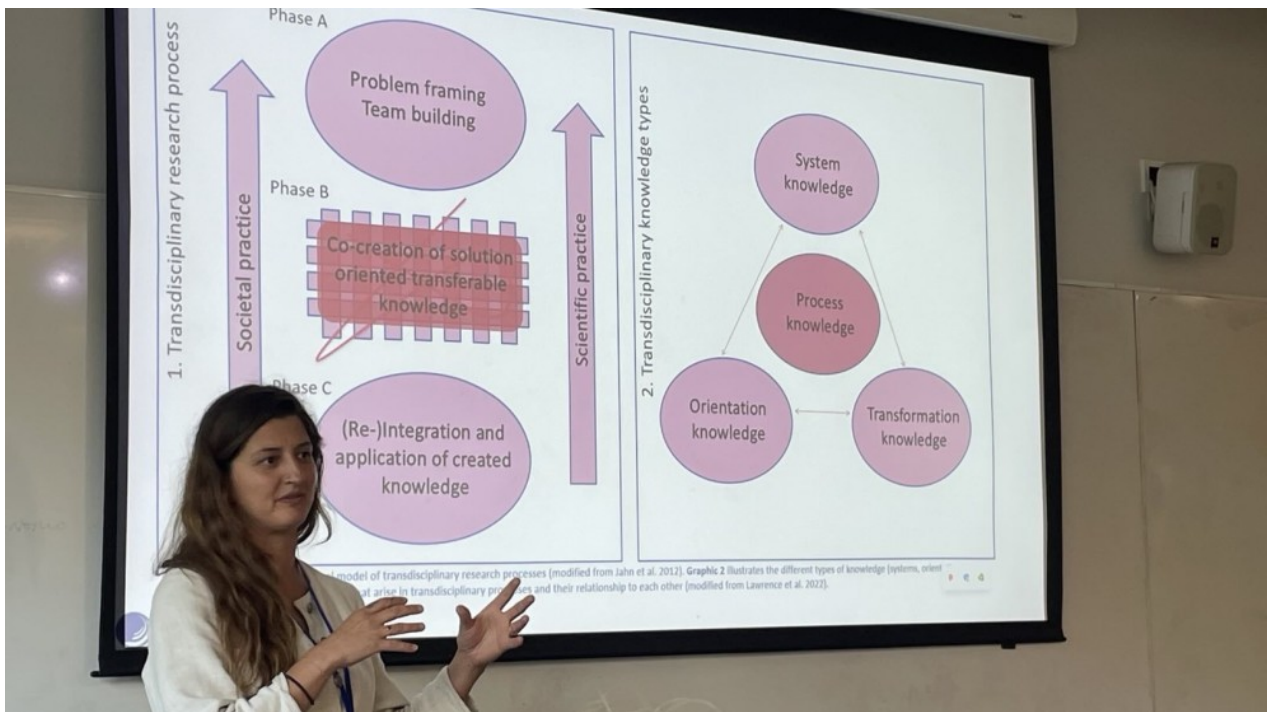
Datum:

Autor*innen: Voggenreiter, Valerie]

Projekt:



Transformations Conference 2025 – Organising for Transformation]



© Anton Stahmer

Valerie Voggenreiter presenting on process knowledge in York.

Since its beginnings in 2013, the Transformations Conference has developed into a growing international community that is focussed

! Zum Aktualisieren der Textelemente, Zitation markieren und dann F9 drücken !

Zitation: [Voggenreiter, Valerie] (2025): [Transformations Conference 2025 – Organising for Transformation] – RIFS-Blogpost, 04.07.2025.

URL:





on the question of how deep, systemic change can help address today's interwoven social and ecological crises. Taking place every two years, the 2025 edition unfolded in two parts: the first under the title "Organising for Transformation" at the University of York in late June, and the second to follow in August at Kruger National Park in South Africa, focusing on "Transformations Towards Justice and Equity". Staying close to its original intention, the conference brought together researchers, practitioners, artists, and others working to bridge the space between knowledge and action, theory and lived experience. It's a space for testing ideas in real, everyday contexts — not just in theory. The gathering was co-convened and co-hosted by Professor Ioan Fazey, who had recently contributed to the evaluation of RIFS at GFZ, and Dr Rebecca Newman, together with a wider team from the University of York and the Transformations Community.

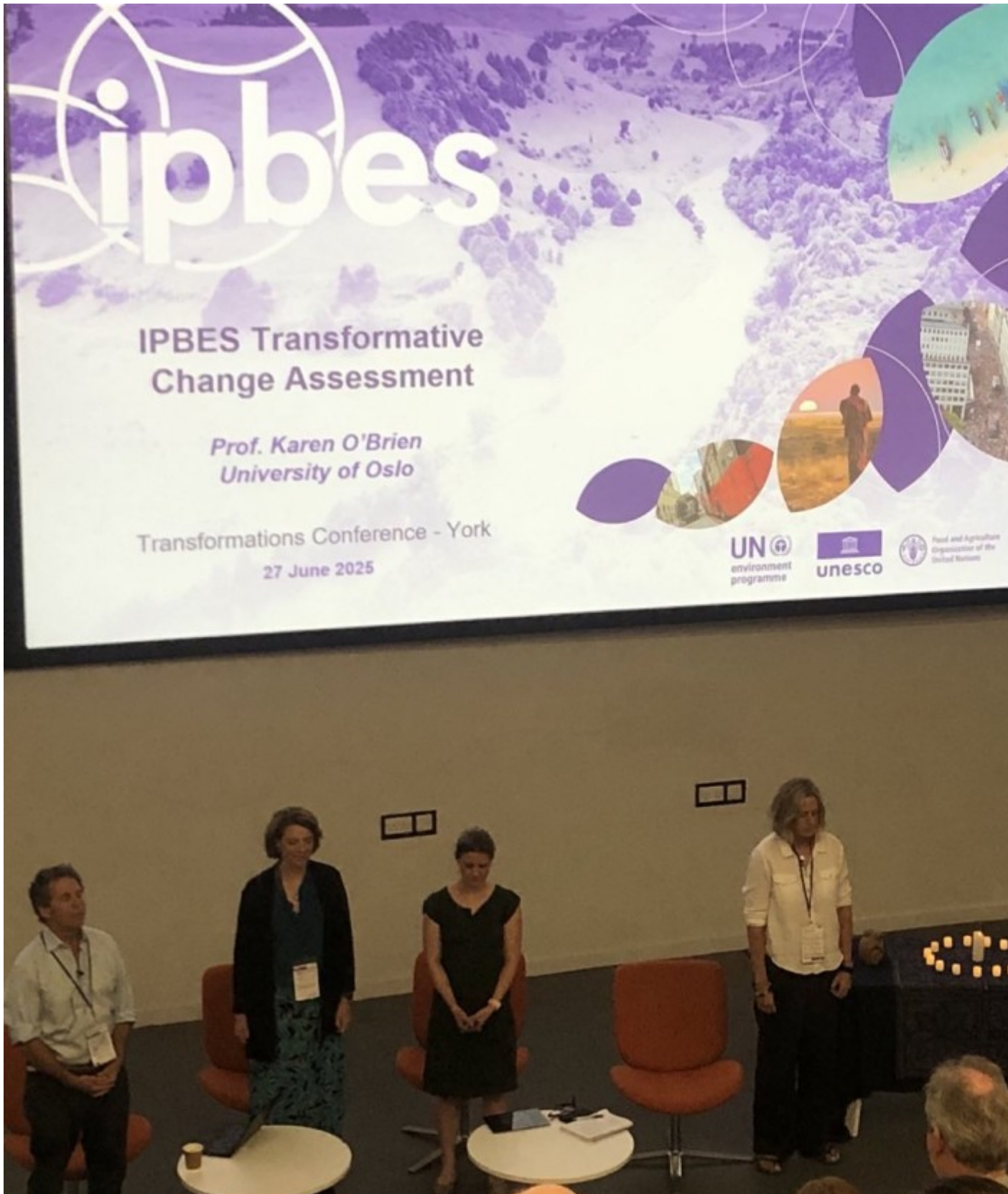
A central theme in York was the link between inner and outer transformation—recognising that personal and cultural shifts are inseparable from institutional and systemic change. The programme offered a mixture of spark talks, experiential sessions, and practice-based workshops. Sessions drew on case studies such as regional food systems in Yorkshire, while also addressing broader issues like biodiversity loss and governance. The aim was not only to reflect intellectually, but also to engage with the felt and relational dimensions of transformation. Therefore, the event also invited spiritual and contemplative practices into its programme. Twobirds Cunningham, a shamanic elder and trainer, offered sessions that encouraged participants to connect more deeply with nature and to reflect on future generations and Earth-based consciousness. These practices invited participants to create space to slow down, re-centre, and question the dominant pace and modes of life. Alongside this, sessions on contemplation, poetry, and embodied



grounding opened opportunities for quieter forms of reflection.

The IPBES Transformative Change Assessment presented in York offers a framework for responding to biodiversity loss and systemic unsustainability.

© RIFS / Valerie Voggenreiter





One of the key discussions at the conference centred around the Transformative Change Assessment, published by IPBES, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, in 2024. Introduced by three of its authors—among them Karen O’Brien, who founded the Transformations Conference—the assessment offers a framework for responding to biodiversity loss and systemic unsustainability. It defines transformative change as “a fundamental, system-wide reorganisation across technological, economic, and social factors, including paradigms, goals, and values.” This framing stresses the need to question underlying assumptions and structures at the root of today’s polycrisis. The assessment identifies five interconnected levers—governance, values, incentives, capacities, and knowledge systems—that must be addressed together. It places strong emphasis on self-reflexivity and includes scientific, Indigenous, and local ways of knowing. It also warns against superficial efforts that might claim the label “transformative” without challenging existing structures. As governments begin to engage with the assessment, one of the main questions emerging is: What now? The conference responded not with one clear answer, but with the recognition that we are all asked to step up, the need to create and expand spaces for meaningful collaboration, where trust and shared responsibility can grow over time.

What stood out was the conference’s atmosphere: open, collaborative, and rooted in a spirit of mutual support. Knowledge and experience were shared generously. Contributions were not overly polished, leaving space for others to respond, build, and deepen the dialogue. The focus wasn’t on showcasing, but on learning and sensing together—making space for honest reflection and co-creation. There was a clear intention to create a space where both intellectual and emotional engagement were welcome,



and where the academic system could be imagined as cooperative rather than competitive.

For me personally, the conference was valuable not only because I could present the current state of my own work, but because of the exchanges that happened in between sessions—conversations that offered guidance and insight. In particular, I had the chance to connect with experienced action researchers who live the principles of inquiry and reflection in action. Self-reflexivity, which is often discussed in transdisciplinary and transformative research, and which the community refers to as t-research, was embodied and challenged at this gathering. Through these conversations, I received encouragement and clarity on a direction I had been exploring for the past year in designing my PhD research. These were moments of resonance that reminded me why we gather in the first place, moments of transformation.

For more information and upcoming events, visit transformationscommunity.org.

