

Precarious Life – Sustainability and Theology

40 years of Theologie interkulturell (Thi) in Frankfurt am Main

Conference Program

June 26–28, 2025

With this conference the Department of Catholic Theology of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University celebrates the 40th anniversary of “Theologie interkulturell” (Thi) – our international teaching and research focus.

To mark the anniversary, we will dedicate ourselves to a current topic with the theme “Precarious Life: Sustainability and Theology” – and pose at the same time classic questions of intercultural theology in a new way. Scientific research on sustainability is strongly focussed on political, economic and ecological issues. Within theology, there is currently a spectrum of ethical and eco-theological approaches. But what does a theology of sustainability achieve, what broader contours would it need and how should it be formulated? What can intercultural theology contribute to closing the justice gaps identified by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? To what extent is a reference to the transcendent or to human spirituality productive for thinking about a sustainable and nature-compatible global society? What do decolonial readings of history achieve?

These and other questions of global relevance will be examined from multiple perspectives and with international participation at the anniversary conference. The celebration starts with a [study week](#) for our students, researchers and guests. Meeting again or getting to know the others and their topics – accompanied by a cultural programme – is also important here. In this week the international scientists will take part in the courses offered by our department.

About Thi

In 1985 the Department of Catholic Theology at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main established the programme “Theologie interkulturell” (Thi). Since then, Thi has been dealing with the diversity of local and global Christianities worldwide, exploring the traditional relationship between “gospel and culture” in ever-changing perspectives against the backdrop contextual theologies. For 40 years, we have been welcoming international academic guests every year to discuss theological issues in dialogue with our teaching staff and students. The aim was and still is to raise awareness of the fact that religious belief, theological thinking and solidarity-based action must be considered in a global context and in terms of political challenges. A corresponding criticism of Western, anthropocentric Christianity, which often causes conflicts, crises, poverty, discrimination, exploitation and injustice, goes hand in hand with this.

Location: Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main – Campus Westend
Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 1, 60323 Frankfurt a.M. (Germany). Room: Renate-von-Metzler-Saal, Cas. 1.801/1.802 (Casino-Building)

Speakers: The CVs of the speakers can be found on our webpage.

Languages: Most of the presentations will be held in English, the subsequent discussions can be held in German, English and/or Spanish/French. A handout in German will be available for the presentations.

Thursday, 26th of June, 2025

- 4:00 pm** Arrival and coffee/tea
- 4:30 pm** **Greetings**
Enrico Schleiff, President of Goethe-University
Ralf Stammberger, Diocese of Limburg/Germany
Other Greetings (international, virtual)
- 5:00 pm** **Precarious life – Sustainability and Theology. Introduction into the Conference**
Anja Middelbeck-Varwick / Christoph Nebgen
(Frankfurt/Germany)
- Opening lectures:**
- 5:30 pm** **Rodrigue Naortangar, Abidjan (Abidjan/Ivory Coast)**
The importance of the SDGs for Sahel: The example of Chad
- 6:15 pm** **Haruko K. Okano (Yokohama/Japan)**
No peace, no sustainability: A Japanese perspective [in German]
Questions and answers
- 7:30 pm** **Reception and celebration**

Friday, 27th of June, 2025

- 8:45 am** Coffee/tea (optional)
- 9:00 am** Introduction: Britta Baumert (Frankfurt/Germany)
- 9:15 am** **Román Guridi Ortúzar (Santiago/Chile)**
Listening to the "good living" (Buen vivir) of Latin American Native People: an urgent Challenge
- 10–12:30 am** **Panel Session**
- Panel 1 Spirituality and Theology**
Chair: Martin Nitsche (Frankfurt/Germany)
Joséphine Mbembe de Jésus (Kinshasa/DR Congo)
The Interrelationships Between Spirituality and Sustainability in African Context
Mirian Cerveira (Porto Alegre/Brazil)
What can intercultural theology contribute to the SDGs?
A Brazilian perspective

**Panel 2 Social Peace & Human Rights: Challenges in History
and for today's Mission?**

Chair: Christoph Nebgen (Frankfurt/Germany)

Federico Tavelli (Freiburg i.Br./Argentina)

The Role of the Church during the military dictatorship in Argentina:

Paths to social peace

Obiora Ike (Enugu/Nigeria)

The question of Human Rights

Panel 3 Power and Gender Relations

Chair: Knut Wenzel (Frankfurt/Germany)

Anja Middelbeck-Varwick (Frankfurt/Germany)

Sexual Abuse in the context of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany

Samuel Kojo Gyamfi (Kumasi/Ghana)

Towards an ethical and social response to sexual minorities in Ghana

Panel 4 Christianity in times of War and Conflict

Chair: Nina Käsehage (Frankfurt/Germany)

Volodymyr Bureha (Kyiv/Ukraine)

On the situation of religious communities and churches in Ukraine
under conditions of Russian military aggression

Viola Raheb (Wien/Austria)

Christians in the Middle East- Witnessing in times of wars and
dehumanization

1:00 pm	Lunch (Mensa)
2:00 pm	Introduction: Michael Sommer (Frankfurt/Germany)
2:15 pm	Birgit Weiler (Lima/Peru) [online] What theology does Amazonia need? Questions and Answers
3:15 pm	Coffee/tea break
3:30 pm	Josée Ngalula (Kinshasa/DR Congo) African Women Challenge the Theology of Sustainability Questions and Answers
4:15 pm	Knut Wenzel (Frankfurt/Germany) Precarious life – Systematic theological impulses
5:15 pm	Looking back to the future – 40 years of Thi
6.30 pm	Holy Mass (option to participate) with remembrance of the deceased – Alfred-Delp-Saal, Katholische Hochschulgemeinde (KHG)

7:15 pm Speakers' Dinner and open evening at KHG

Saturday, 28th of June, 2025

8:15 am Laudes with Taizé Songs, Haus der Stille (option to participate)

9:00 am Introduction: Markus Luber (Frankfurt/Germany)

9:15 am **Margit Eckholt (Osnabrück/Germany)**
Intercultural creation spirituality in the service of 'ecological conversion'

10:00 am Coffee/tea break

10:15 am **Nora K. Nonterah (Kumasi/Ghana)**
Religion and Human Development: How can the Emergence of a Synodal Church Contribute to the SDGs?
Questions and answers

11:00 am **Closing panel**
Chair: Michael Roseneck

Armando Lampe (Aruba/Carribean)
Circular Economy is the New Name for Sustainable Development

Benjamin Aind (Ranshi/India)
Munda Culture and Sustainability – Current Political Developments
Questions and answers

12:30 pm **Conclusion**
Precarious Life: Theology and Sustainability – Insights and outlooks
Anja Middelbeck-Varwick

13:00 pm **Farewell and end of conference**
Christoph Nebgen (Frankfurt/Germany)

(+ Speakers' lunch)