International Conference

Transfer transformative change in and through Living Labs:
from practice to theory, and back again

8 - 10 June 2026
forum M | Aachen| Germany

Organiser
Living Labs Incubator | RWTH Aachen University

Book of Abstracts

International Conference
Transfer and transformative change in and through Living Labs: from practice to theory, and back again
Aachen | Germany | 8 – 10 June 2026

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Monday, 8 June 2026

1:30 PM to 2:00 PM | Opening (Forum)

Welcome by Prof. Gabriele Gramelsberger, Prof. Stefan Böschen and the Living Labs Incubator Team (RWTH Aachen University)

2:00 PM to 3:30 PM | Keynote by Prof. Dr. Nicola Marsden (Forum)

Designing better Futures: Living Labs as Infrastructures for Gender-Responsive Innovation
Living Labs are often celebrated as infrastructures for co-creation and real-world experimentation. Yet their transformative potential depends on whose voices are included, how participation is structured, and which forms of knowledge are recognized. In this keynote, Nicola Marsden explores how gender equality in digital innovation depends not only on who participates, but on how innovation processes are structured and enacted in practice.
Drawing on feminist HCI and empirical work from long-term Living Lab collaborations with technology companies, she introduces the concept of feminist Living Labs as infrastructures for socio-technical transformation. These labs create spaces for reflexivity, surface implicit norms, and enable the co-creation of interventions that reshape everyday practices – from team interactions to design decisions.
Through concrete examples – from micro-interventions in team routines to the development of gender-responsive methods in the Gendered Innovation Living Lab (GILL) project – she shows how change emerges through iterative, situated experimentation embedded in organizational contexts.
The keynote outlines what it takes to turn Living Labs into engines of transformative change: interdisciplinary collaboration, safe spaces for marginalized perspectives, and a shift from fixing individuals to redesigning systems. In doing so, it contributes to debates on how Living Labs can move from innovation platforms to infrastructures for societal transformation.

Short bio
Nicola Marsden is Professor of Social Informatics at Heilbronn University and head of the Lab for Social Informatics, part of the European Network of Living Labs. Her research focuses on human–computer interaction, participatory design, and gender-responsive innovation. She leads national and European projects that develop methods to embed equity into digital innovation processes. Her work examines how socio-technical systems reproduce or challenge inequality and how Living Labs can act as infrastructures for transformative change. Nicola Marsden is an expert for the German UNESCO Commission on Gender and AI and Vice Chair of the Kompetenzzentrum Technik – Diversity – Chancengleichheit (Competence Center Technology – Diversity – Equal Opportunity).

4:00 to 5:30 PM | Parallel Sessions

Session 1a Transformative Innovation in and through Living Labs (Forum)

4:00 PM to 4:30 PM

Rico Blei[1], Anja Solf-Hofbauer[2], Katja Schaldach[2], Stephan Meschke[2]
[1]Meissen University of Applied Sciences, [2]TU Bergakademie Freiberg

Living Labs as Experimental Spaces for Innovation and Regulatory Learning – Insights from the 4transfer Innovation Network

This contribution examines Living Labs as infrastructures for innovation, experimentation, and regulatory learning within the 4transfer innovation network. The presentation introduces findings from a recent white paper on Living Labs and discusses how Quadruple Helix collaboration between science, industry, government, and civil society supports transformative change. Using the example of autonomous logistics robots tested in real-world environments, the contribution highlights how technological experimentation, governance, societal acceptance and organizational learning can be integrated. Particular attention is given to transfer structures and policy frameworks that enable sustainable innovation and societal transformation.

4:30 PM to 5:00 PM

Sebastian Günnel
Institute for Housing Research, Landshut

Buffering Burden to Study Burden: Living Labs as Temporary Care-Context Shifts for High-Demand Care Dyads

High-demand care dyads are often excluded from research because everyday care burdens make participation difficult. This presentation argues that Living Labs can address this by temporarily buffering care demands through respite-supported, home-like, or distributed field-evaluation settings. Such shifts should not be understood as reducing ecological validity, but as enabling it: they make participation, routines, needs, and responses observable for groups otherwise filtered out of studies. Drawing on respite research and the NASSS framework, the presentation discusses how temporary burden mitigation can function as research infrastructure for co-creation, prototype testing, and intensive longitudinal observation in high-complexity care contexts.

5:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Laura Fraske, Benedikt Wohlmuth, Christine Arnoldt, Benjamin Biesinger
Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO

Co-creation of Manufacturing Technologies through Industrial Living Labs

Living labs are recognised as key innovation approaches, yet their role in brownfield manufacturing remains underexplored. This presentation examines AUDI's industrial living lab, where logistics technologies are iteratively developed and tested under real-world conditions.
Using an abductive single-case study, we analyse how systematic participation supports co-creation from needs articulation to usability and operational impact. Findings show that living labs enhance exchange between research, technology development, and operations, while improving innovation, acceptance and practical viability. The presentation outlines key enablers, barriers, and implications for industrial living labs in supporting resilience and technology transfer.

Workshop A (Rathausblick)

4:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Carolin Moser[1, 2], Tatiana Merino[1,2], Annica Kögler[3]
[1]KIT Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, [2]ITAS Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis, [3]IOER Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development

From Isolated Cases to Collective Knowledge: A Transdisciplinary Research Database for Sustainability-Oriented Labs

Sustainability-Oriented Labs generate rich knowledge that rarely travels beyond individual projects. This session introduces a Transdisciplinary Research (TdR) database designed to enable cross-case learning and scaling of sustainability transformations, with a focus on Real-World Laboratories (RwLs) as one prominent format among related settings such as living labs and urban transition labs. The database applies explicit inclusion criteria around transdisciplinary knowledge co-production to define project eligibility across these formats.

The session pursues three goals: (1) building a shared understanding of the database vision, current design, and inclusion criteria — including hands-on exploration of the live interface; (2) examining what the database must offer to justify the effort of case entry, including how it relates to existing tools; and (3) identifying analysis functions needed to move beyond qualitative comparison toward operationalized, quantitative data. Findings feed directly into the next iteration.

Session 1b Living Labs as Bridges (Domblick)

4:00 PM to 4:30 PM

Hans Berends[1], Hannah Fults[1], Luca Vadacca[2], Orlando Vazquez[3], Attabik Awan[3], Marc van den Berg[2], Jaime Bonnin Roca[3], Marcel Bogers[3], Fleur Deken[1], Leentje Volker[2]
[1]VU Amsterdam, [2]TU Twente, [3]Eindhoven University of Technology

Living Labs as Experimentation Infrastructures for Collaborative Innovation

Living labs increasingly support collaborative experimentation, knowledge transfer, and societal change, yet research pays limited attention to the material infrastructures that enable these activities. Based on a qualitative comparative study of 12 experimentation environments in the Netherlands, we conceptualize experimentation infrastructures as layered configurations of space, assets, tools, objects, and data. We identify two development pathways: in-the-wild and dedicated. We show how these pathways differ in infrastructuring, experimentation, reuse, and resourcing, and explain how living labs enable collaborative innovation through evolving material infrastructures across diverse real-world collaborative settings.

4:30 PM to 5:00 PM

Nina Hagemann
ZALF Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research

The Innovation Centre for Agricultural System Transformation

tba

5:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Falko Carl
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Bridging the Entrepreneurial Gap: Sustainable Entrepreneurs as Transfer Agents in Living Labs

Living Labs and Real-World Laboratories are recognised as transformative infrastructures, yet often struggle to translate innovations into lasting impact. This contribution argues the problem is specifically entrepreneurial and introduces the Entrepreneurial Gap as an analytical lens. Drawing on seven expert interviews analysed via Grounded Theory, it develops a phase-specific role typology for sustainability- and mission-oriented entrepreneurs along the Real-World Laboratory cycle — from catalysts in co-design to enablers of transfer. The framework connects entrepreneurship theory with Living Lab research and offers a basis for integrating entrepreneurial actors without compromising transformative or non-profit commitments.

Tuesday, 9 June 2026

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM | Parallel Sessions

Session 2a Transformation of Environments (Forum)

9:00 AM to 9:30 AM

Annica Kögler[1,2], Robert Knippschild[1,2], Stefanie Rößler[1,2]
[1]IOER Dresden Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, [2]IZS Görlitz Interdisciplinary Centre for Transformative Urban Regeneration

Implementing urban climate governance in the city of Görlitz – Reflections on factors of cross-sectoral co-creation
The presentation is aimed at transdisciplinary researchers, who operate within the realm of sustainability-orientated laboratories, especially with a long-term perspective on lab-activities and particularly in connection with governance innovations in the urban context. We aim to present our findings from developing urban climate governance by implementing Transition Management in the city of Görlitz. We will share our in-depth insights and analysis of several factors that are essential for cross-sectoral co-creation and reflect these in relation to the project outputs and the lab setting's scope for manoeuvre.

9:30 AM to 10:00 AM

Maike Gaertner
Eawag Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology

Learning our way into the Blue Nexus Lab
The Blue Nexus Lab (BlueX) is an Urban Living Lab addressing complex urban water challenges through collaboration among diverse actors. It aims to accelerate the transition of urban areas toward a climate-adapted future. This presentation reflects on the establishment of BlueX in Limmattal, focusing on site selection, governance development, and partnership building. It also connects prior experiences from a field laboratory with planned next steps. The talk highlights lessons learned from working across institutional and societal spheres and offers a reflective account of the iterative realities of launching an urban living lab, providing insights for actors developing similar initiatives.

10:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Fredrick Ogenga[1], Steffen Knodt[2] and Stefan Böschen[3]
[1]Center for Media, Democracy, Peace & Security- Rongo University, Kenya; The Peacemaker Corps Foundation Kenya, [2]Voices of the Seas, Aachen, [3]RWTH Aachen University

Conceptualizing and Mainstreaming Sources-Into-Seas Approach to Climate-Ocean Nexus Using Indigenous Climate Action Infrastructures in Western and Coastal Kenya to Protect Water Quality and Biodiversity
This paper argues for the institution of local knowledge ecologies (I-Hub) to understand the climate-ocean nexus through an approach (sources-into-seas) that protects river corridors and conserves lake-ocean ecosystems from plastic pollution in Kenya. The hub functions as a cultural epistemic-cooperation vehicle for science diplomacy, knowledge exchange, education and capacity building to co-create, incubate and innovate

at Lake Victoria and inspire alternative livelihood-pathways through revitalizing circular economies, and building peace using indigenous climate action infrastructures.

Session 2b Living Lab Applications (Rathausblick)

9:00 AM to 9:30 AM

Laura Brings
RWTH Aachen University

Uncovering Trialogical Learning in Living Labs
Assessing the transformative impacts of Living Labs (LL) is a key challenge in sustainability research. This workshop addresses the practical application of Theory of Change (ToC) for evaluating multi-level interventions. We present ToC-based evaluation designs and lessons learned from the projects "Green-AI Hub Mittelstand" and "trafoagent." An interactive exchange invites participants to share and discuss practical experiences in LL-based sustainability evaluations. Topics can be e.g. balancing scientific validity and practicability or linking to macro-level goals of transformation. Jointly, we hope to generate new perspectives on evaluating the long-term sustainability effects of Living Labs.

9:30 AM to 10:00 AM

Michael Hölscher[1], Editha Marquardt[2]
[1]German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer, [2]Heidelberg University

Living Labs as Catalysts for Transdisciplinary Research and Administrative Innovation: Rethinking Municipal Administrations in the Innovation Society
Living labs are highlighted as key instruments for transdisciplinary collaboration, yet the role of municipal administrations remains under-explored. Drawing on two urban living labs, we show that city governments occupy a dual position: they are collaborative partners *in* and subjects *of* innovation. This role promotes knowledge exchange, as practice-based insights shape research, while scientific findings foster administrative change. Institutionalised cooperation structures created in living labs enable testing new governance approaches and enhance municipalities' capacity to absorb external knowledge and embed scientific insights into public-sector practice. Our presentation advances better understanding of how living labs foster administrative innovation through transdisciplinary research.

10:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Kai Masuch, Dirk Nissing
Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences

An integrated laboratory concept for a project-based study course: Conjoining teaching, science and transfer for a sustainable engineering education
The Engineering for Sustainability study programme takes a project-based approach, merging teaching, science and transfer into one mission. In a process mimicking real working life, conventional lectures are replaced by co-creation events. As engineering projects are interdisciplinary, communication is mandatory and supported by a room design enabling close cooperation and integrating capabilities. Therefore, a new learning floor has been established at Rhine-Waal University. Featuring an open-space concept, laboratories and centres are merged with the learning environment to connect theoretical content with application. The

concept creates a living location rather than a learning space, empowering students to shape their socialisation process.

11:00 AM to 12:30 PM | Parallel Sessions

Session 3 Social Questions in Living Labs (Forum)

11:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Sebastian Wittland[1], Nele Jantz[1], Martin van Rooij[2]
[1]Ostwestfalen-Lippe University of Applied Sciences and Arts, [2]Agrifood Capital, Next Tech Food Factories

Europe's food-tech Living Labs: connecting deep-tech innovation in practice
Across Europe, Living Labs are expanding as spaces for experimentation and co-creation, yet access for food SMEs remains fragmented across regions, infrastructures, and governance contexts. SIXFOLD addresses this by strengthening the connected cross-regional Living Lab ecosystem, positioning Living Labs as shared public–private innovation infrastructures rather than isolated pilots. This presentation introduces the SIXFOLD Vision–Mission–Strategy framework, interoperability efforts, and the learnings from study visits using 'Barrier Cases' to structure cross-border learning. Reflecting on early insights, we invite the community to discuss how fragmented experimentation can evolve into a coherent European networked Living Lab system for systemic impact.

11:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Carolin Moser, Felix Wagner
KIT Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, ITAS Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis

The Infrastructural Turn: A Framework for Enabling Transdisciplinary Research through Sustainability-Oriented Laboratories
Transdisciplinary research has built an impressive practice especially with real-world laboratories, living labs, and related sustainability-oriented formats. Yet nearly all of them remains project-bound and repeatedly rebuilt from scratch instead of offering long-term research possibilities. An infrastructural turn is overdue! This presentation introduces a conceptual model of four core infrastructure components (societal-interface, organizational, technical, and knowledge) drawn from a scoping review. Each component is characterized by distinct features and functions that support real-world experimentation and enable transdisciplinary knowledge co-production. Strengthening them offers a pathway from isolated experimentation to sustained, comparable, and institutionally anchored transdisciplinary research at the scale sustainability challenges demand.

12:00 PM to 12:30 PM

Cassy Juhasz[1], Hao Wang[2], Rachel Ankeny[2], Dani Shanley[1]
[1]Maastricht University, [2]Wageningen University & Research

What does it mean to be an ELSA "Lab"?
The emergence of ELSA Labs in the Netherlands marks a distinctive moment in the evolution of Ethical, Legal and Societal Aspects (ELSA) frameworks. Yet while considerable attention has been paid to what it means to *do* ELSA, it remains unclear what makes an ELSA Lab a "lab". By foregrounding the lab as an institutional and

methodological form, this paper contributes to understanding how this configuration shapes ELSA principles into concrete practices. As funding bodies continue to promote lab-based approaches to responsible innovation, it is increasingly important to understand what the lab designation actually means in practice.

Workshop B (Rathausblick)

11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Justus von Geibler, Julia Brandt, Florian Feldmann
Wuppertal Institute
Assessing the transformative impacts of Living Labs (LL) is a key challenge in sustainability research. This workshop addresses the practical application of Theory of Change (ToC) for evaluating multi-level interventions. We present ToC-based evaluation designs and lessons learned from sustainability-oriented LL projects, such as “trafoagent” and “Green-AI Hub Mittelstand”. An interactive exchange invites participants to share and discuss practical experiences in LL-based sustainability evaluations. Topics can be e.g. balancing scientific validity and practicability or linking to macro-level goals of transformation. Jointly, we hope to generate new perspectives on evaluating the long-term sustainability effects of Living Labs.

Workshop C (Domblick)

11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Sarah Rogulj,Oscar Yendell, Pia Sauermann, Katrin Hille
IZB – Future Education Initiative

Living Labs Under Scrutiny: An Experience-Based Discussion on Enablers and Challenges
Living labs (LL) bridge the gap between research and practice to address social challenges. Since RPPs, as long-term reciprocal partnerships, aim to solve practical problems, LL can be understood as a specific transdisciplinary manifestation of RPPs. However, a systematic alignment between these concepts has not yet been established. In the first step, workshop participants will discuss the theoretical alignment between RPPs and LL through concept mapping. In the second step, they will cluster and compare success factors and their practical implications to identify resilience strategies and strengthen the role of LL as drivers of social change.

2:00 PM to 3:30 PM | Keynote by Professor Timo von Wirth (Forum)

Urban Living Labs as ‘Cracks, not Doors’: Taking Stock of Promises and Challenges in Urban Experimentation
Tba

Short Bio
Timo von Wirth is Full Professor for Sustainability at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and Adjunct Professor with the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He is also currently an invited Research Fellow with the Center for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. His work has focused for many years on the Governance of Urban transitions, the institutional design and impacts of intermediaries such as Urban Living Labs as well as knowledge co-creation between

Science-Society. Latest research has also turned to the role of ontological and epistemic security of collectives and individuals in the context of societal change.

4:00 PM to 5:30 PM | Parallel Sessions

Session 4 Engagement in Living Labs (Forum)

4:00 PM to 4:30 PM

Marie Mirsch, Julia Berg-Postweiler, Marc Gschlössl, Carmen Leicht-Scholten
RWTH Aachen

Who Makes the Campus a Living Lab? Student Engagement as Infrastructure for Experimentation and Transformation
Universities function not only as spaces for knowledge transmission but also as environments for informal learning, where competencies emerge through practice-based experiences in student councils or initiatives. We leverage the Campus-Living-Lab framework to conceptualize student engagement as a Living Lab and analyze how institutional and teaching frameworks can actively support and strengthen engagement as mechanisms for knowledge transfer and societal impact. In particular, we map the landscape of student engagement in Aachen and present how support structures, such as the RRI Hub at RWTH Aachen, foster exchange between research, practice, and society.

4:30 PM to 5:00 PM

Asa Ito, Kei Kohagura
Institute of Science Tokyo

Imagining Futures through Art: The “Moshimo” Living Lab for Co-Creating Alternative Futures
Despite decades of national policy promoting Japan as a "science and technology nation," public trust in and engagement with science and technology remain low. To address this disconnect, Institute of Science Tokyo established "Moshimo," an off-campus space woven into residents' everyday routes, where university researchers across diverse disciplines collaborate with local citizens to envision alternative futures. What distinguishes Moshimo is its use of art as tools for participatory inquiry. This paper clarifies how an arts-based Living Lab model can facilitate knowledge exchange between experts and citizens, while cultivating the collective imagination needed to navigate technological and social futures.

5:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Oscar Yendell, Sarah Rogulj, Pia Sauermann, Katrin Hille
IZB Future Education Initiative
Educational research has increasingly developed formats in which practitioners and researchers from various disciplines jointly develop educational concepts. However, there has been little discussion of these formats as living labs in the sense of transdisciplinary, transformative research. The IZB (Future Education Initiative) established two living labs, in which educators (early childhood and primary education) and researchers jointly develop innovative educational concepts. We discuss this approach of these living labs against the backdrop of the characteristics of living labs. In doing so, we identify similarities and differences with approaches to research-practice-partnerships and co-construction that dominate educational research.

Workshop D (Rathausblick)

4:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Laura Brings[1], Matthias Wanner, Agnes Förster[1], Isabel Strehle[2]
[1]RWTH Aachen University, [2]Landeshauptstadt München

Broadening Perspectives in Failure
In this workshop, we will address the aspect of failure in living labs. In small groups, we will first collect stories of failure (What and how?). Building on this, we will cluster the stories playfully and creatively into a landscape of failure. By that, we want to understand categories of failure in terms of their causes (Why/what caused it?). Finally, we want to develop a diversity of perspectives by broadening our viewpoints (What/how from which perspective?). With this workshop we aim to foster a shared, deeper understanding of failure in living labs and generate new insights for dealing with failure in transdisciplinary contexts.

6:30 PM to 9:00 PM | Conference Dinner (Foyer & Roof Terrasse)

Wednesday, 10 June 2026

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM | Panel Debate (Forum)

Democracy in the Age of AI: Living Lab Experimentation for Regulation, Participation, and Inclusion

Moderation: Dhenya Schwarz | Head of OecherLab, City of Aachen

Laura Grosser	PhD researcher, Centre Responsible Digitality (ZEVEDI) & TU Darmstadt
Dr. Julia Mann	Managing Director, Center for Artificial Intelligence, RWTH Aachen University
Dr. Christian Temath	CEO KI.NRW, Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems
Kai Zenner	Head of Office & Digital Policy Advisor (MEP Axel Voss) & TUM Think Tank

Session 5 Varieties of Living Lab Approaches (Forum)

11:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Alper Al, Ceren Sezer
RWTH Aachen University

Reimagining University Campuses as Energy Communities: Insights from the Campus Imaginarium Hybrid Serious Game
Urban Living Labs (ULLs) are increasingly recognised as key arenas for experimentation, participation, and co-creation in response to climate change and net-zero transitions. Within this expanding field, university campuses have emerged as particularly valuable living lab environments because they combine buildings, infrastructures, governance systems, mobility networks, and diverse user communities within a manageable spatial setting.

11:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Anja Richert, Larissa Müller, Valérie Varney
Cologne University of Applied Sciences

Beyond TRL and SRL: Context Readiness as a missing dimension for transfer and transformative change in and through Living Labs
Living Labs are infrastructures for co-creation, co-production, experimentation and knowledge transfer, yet transfer often fails when implementation contexts are not ready. Building on Technology Readiness Levels and Societal Readiness approaches, this contribution introduces context readiness as an analytical dimension for transformative change. We define it as the alignment of organisational, regulatory, spatial, relational and governance conditions enabling innovation uptake, adaptation and scaling in real-world settings. Based on living-lab-based transfer work in regional development, the authors discuss how collaboration quality, decision structures and partner alignment shape impact, and how context readiness supports evaluating transfer beyond isolated outputs.

12:00 PM to 12:30 PM

Julia Backhaus[1], Julien Forbat[2] & contributors to the SSPP Collection
[1]RWTH Aachen University, [2]University of Geneva

Living Labs and the Governance of Sustainability Transformations
Living labs are widely promoted as spaces for real-world experimentation and collaborative innovation to advance sustainability transformations. However, their ability to drive systemic change remains disputable. This Collection examines how living labs balance sustainability goals, democratic participation, and experimental governance, often facing conflicting pressures. Across eight contributions, three key fault lines emerge: structural constraints from funding and regulation, governance asymmetries that limit shared power, and selective inclusion that challenges legitimacy. Together, these create a "glass ceiling" that reinforces existing socio-technical systems. The Collection calls for greater political awareness and for experimentation that also addresses underlying power and economic structures.

Workshop E (Rathausblick)

11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Sebastian Günnel
Institute for Housing Research, Landshut

Co-Creating and Measuring Immersive 360° Guided Tours in Living Labs
This 1.5-hour workshop explores how immersive 360° guided tours can become modifiable Living Lab instruments for co-creation, measurement, and remote participation in domestic health and care settings, with transfer potential to housing and related fields. Participants will test a browser-based tour and analytics dashboard, interpret traces such as paths, dwell times, revisits, and decision points, and then adapt tour elements including images, hotspots, guidance cues, and analytic logic. Through hands-on experimentation, the session asks how 360° tours can support situated collaboration, usability assessment, and shared learning, while generating transferable design and evaluation methods for transformative Living Labs.

12:30 PM to 01:00 PM | Closing (Forum)

Final reflections, fun facts and farewell with the LLI team

We wish you safe travels and thank you for contributing to the conference.