

Eu-SPRI 2026 - Early Career Event - 9th June 2026, Valencia

Imagining Futures:

How can Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation contribute to grand challenges?

PLANNING OF THE DAY

The morning session focuses on theoretical discussions and the afternoon session on research practices and careers. Experts' presentations introduce creative discussions with and between participants, who design a *Creative Reflection and Imagination Wall*, on which participants contribute with drawings, keywords, and personal reflections. At the end of the event, the wall is presented as a collective artifact.

9:45 - 10:00. Ice breaker (main room, altogether)

Prior to the event, participants present their research in a creative fashion by drawing their PhD or favourite research topic(s) and their vision of the future. They prepare a t-shirt or a poster (A5 or A4) about their PhD or favourite research topic(s) that they wear during the event like a billboard (back and front)¹. One side illustrates key research ideas, and the other a 2040 headline about what research in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation might look like in 15 years' time. Here is an example from another conference of a t-shirt presenting a PhD topic:



During this ice breaker, participants pair up and get to know each other, by using their creative garment.

Format:

- 5': teammate #1 introduces herself and her research topic;
- 5': teammate #2 introduces himself and his research topic;

5': each teammate tells the whole group (10'' max) one sentence about his/her teammate (e.g. "Eva comes from Ireland and works on transformative innovation policies in the defence industry").

¹ They can also use post-it notes that they will simply stick on their front and back sides.

Session 1

10:00 - 11:30. Contributions & epistemologies of researchers in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation (*separate rooms, small groups*)

In this first session, we discuss in small groups what grand societal challenges entail for the research and epistemologies of researchers in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation.

10:00 - 10:45. The contributions² of the SPRI community to grand challenges³.

- 10': **expert** introduces the key terms & discusses some of these contributions⁴.
- 15': participants discuss **in pairs**:
 - one key contribution of researchers in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation to grand challenges;
 - the potential contribution of their own research to grand challenges.
- 20': **group** debrief: each pair selects one contribution to share with the group, explains in what manner it contributes to grand challenges (3' per pair), and sketches a quick metaphor or symbol for the contribution discussed & posts it on the *Reflection Wall*.

10:45 - 11:30. Critical reflexions on the epistemology of researchers in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation.

- 10': **expert** introduces key term & provides thoughts about the epistemology of researchers in SPRI⁵.
- 15': participants discuss **in pairs** (keep the same pairs):
 - one epistemological feature⁶ of research carried out by researchers in Studies of Policies for Research & Innovation;
 - their own epistemological approach⁷.
- 20': **group** debrief: each pair selects one contribution to share with the group, explains in what manner it contributes to grand challenges (3' per pair), and sketches a quick metaphor or symbol for the contribution discussed & post it on the Reflection Wall.

Experts (each animating one small group) – Room – Support team:

- [Müge Özman](#) (IMT-BS & Université Paris-Saclay) - Sala CPI (Cubo rojo 3rd floor) - Paula G. & Alejandro
- [Asuncion Lera St. Clair](#) (DNV) - Sala Imagina (Cubo verde) - Laura & Paula O.
- [Bonno Pel](#) (Utrecht University) - Sala Cambio (Cubo verde) - Erika & Cédric

² E.g. a theory, approach, concept, case study, a key author, a key publication...

³ E.g. planetary boundaries, One Health, Raworth's doughnut, SDGs...

⁴ E.g. a recent development in SPRI is the conceptualisation of a third frame of innovation policies directed towards the common good, which are Transformative Innovation Policies.

⁵ E.g. open epistemologies that account for positionality, the more-than-human and other dimensions in pursuit of an expanded notion of scientific "rigour" (embracing societal impacts and reflect upon who is impacted)...

⁶ E.g. ontology (view of the world e.g. regarding the relation between humans and nature), approach to collaboration with actors, understanding of scientific rigour (e.g. what is a valid scientific contribution?), etc.

⁷ A useful representation has been provided by Saunders & Tosey in "The layer of research design", cf. <https://www.csd.uoc.gr/~hy109/resources/layers.pdf>, accessed 29/09/2025.

Session 2

12:00 - 13:00. Ethical & ecological issues of research approaches and tools: The cases of applied research & generative AI (*main room, lead: Laura & Erika*)

In this session, two experts present their thoughts on these two issues in their practice of research, and a discussion follows.

- **20'**: Expert #1. [Laurens Hessels](#) (Rathenau Instituut & Leiden University),
“Opportunities and risks of AI in the practice of academic research”.
- **20'**: Expert #2. [Marta Rivera](#) (Ingenio, CSIC-Universitat Politècnica de València),
“Doing research WITH actors: Trust, mutual respect and craft of compassion”.
- **20'**: Discussion time: “Headlines from 2040”.

After experts' presentations, participants are invited to imagine a newspaper headline from the year 2040 about the future of today's research practices in relation to the use of AI in academic research &/or to collaborative research practices. In small groups (3-4 people), they create one headline and post it on the *Reflection Wall*. For example: “2040: Citizens' Assemblies Replace Peer Review in Global Research Funding”; “Generative AI Becomes A Standard Mentor for Early Career Researchers”; “Human Supervisors Shift to Well-Being Roles”; “A Historical Perspective On Research Practices: How AI Personas Replaced Human Interviewees”.

Session 3

14:00 - 15:00. How do we relate to our PhD or research project? (*main room, lead: Paula O.*)

This reflexive session focuses on the practices involved in carrying out a PhD or research project, and not only from the perspective of early career researchers. We all relate in different ways to our research activity and are embedded in different contexts. How can we best enjoy our early career research experience while fulfilling its demanding requirements? To give us food for thought, an expert introduces a set of recommendations for supervisors and PhD students, also relevant for other early career researchers, developed as a joint reflection on good PhD practice by Leiden University⁸. We also examine the expectations placed on early career researchers and consider what can reasonably be expected from supporting actors (supervisors & mentors).

Participants share their thoughts online and anonymously about their early career journey, by writing 3 keywords and elaborating with a few sentences. Clicking on this link <https://chk.me/3kSFMyt> or scanning the following QR code leads to a padlet that ensures anonymity of all comments.



Both experts and early career participants then engage in a collective discussion based on these contributions.

- **30'**: introduction by two experts ([Inge van der Weijden](#) -Leiden University), [Andy Stirling](#) (Emeritus Professor, SPRU-Science Policy Research Unit);
- **10'**: individual contributions on padlet;
- **20'**: plenary discussion about contributions.

⁸ Cf. “Good Practice Principles for Graduate Schools in the Netherlands”, <https://research.utwente.nl/en/publications/good-practice-principles-for-graduate-schools-in-the-netherlands>.

Session 4

15:30 - 16:45. Where is my research (career) going? (main room, lead: Paula G. & Alejandro)

In this session, we explore various ways of becoming and of being an academic, which besides career paths also includes ways of collaborating with non-academic actors. The discussion starts with a **roundtable** comprising academics and practitioners:

- [Victoria Pellicer-Sifres](#) (València Clima i Energia)
- [Raquel Luján Soto](#) (Ingenio, CSIC-Universitat Politècnica de València)
- [Lidia García-García](#) (Ajuntament de València, València Innovation Capital)
- [Oksana Udovyyk](#) (Ingenio, CSIC-Universitat Politècnica de València)

Paula G. & Alejandro animate the **roundtable (40')**. **Q&As** follows (**15'**) before (literally) walking the wrapping up: To conclude the session, participants are invited to do a short **Walk-and-Talk** in pairs to discuss the following question: “What future role do I imagine for myself in society as a researcher?” (**10'**). They conclude the walk is by a mini-ritual “**Postcards from the Future**”: each participant takes the role of their future self as a researcher in 2035, writes a short (anonymous) note to their 2025 self, posts it on the *Reflection Wall*. For example: “Dear Klara, in your PhD you hypothesised that in the future innovation policies would by design integrate ecological issues, well the EU has been doing it for five years!” (**10'**).

Programme

Time	Topic	Location	Presenters
9:00 - 9:30	Registration & welcome coffee		
9:30 - 9:45	Introduction to the Event & to Eu-SPRI	Sala CPI	Davide Consoli, Sandra Boni, Jordi Molas Gallart
9:45 - 10:00	Ice breaker	Sala CPI	Organisers
10:00 - 11:30	Session 1 Contributions & epistemologies of researchers in SPRI	Sala CPI	Müge Özman
		Sala Imagina	Asuncion Lera St. Clair
		Sala Cambio	Bonno Pel
11:30 - 12:00	Coffee Break		
12:00 - 13:00	Session 2 Ethical & ecological issues of research approaches and tools	Sala CPI	Laurens Hessels Marta Rivera
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break		
14:00 - 15:00	Session 3 How do we relate to our PhD or research project?	Sala CPI	Inge van der Weijden Andy Stirling
15:00 - 15:30	Coffee Break		
15:30 - 16:45	Session 4 Where is my research (career) going?	Sala CPI	Victoria Pellicer-Sifres Raquel Luján Soto Lidia García-García Oksana Udovyyk
16:45	Closing of day: Group photo	Sala CPI	All
19:30	Early Career Event drinks & dinner		