

Sustainable Behaviour Newsletter

Volume 3 April 2026

Our most recent seminar speaker, Christine Hedde - von Westernhagen shared her insights on accelerating net-zero transitions

Accelerating net-zero transitions via household technology co-adoption. This was the topic of our latest seminar by Christine Hedde - von Westernhagen. She explored how accelerating change requires not just technological advances but shifts in household adoption behavior.



Drawing on the concept of social tipping points, the research emphasized that reinforcing feedbacks and the co-adoption of complementary low-carbon technologies (e.g., in electrified transport or home energy systems) are key to driving systemic change. Using large-scale survey data from European households and latent class analysis, the study identified six distinct clusters of technology co-adoption, revealing that most households are low adopters, while only about 2.65% act as frontrunners. The findings show that individual interventions—such as increased income or pro-environmental attitudes—have limited but similar effects, and also depend on pre-existing conditions (like home infrastructure). Importantly, combining interventions can shift households toward higher co-adoption levels, though effects vary across groups. The results also highlight possible behavioral spillovers, heterogeneity in adoption pathways, and the absence of a clear tipping point so far, positioning this work as an early empirical step toward understanding how coordinated, targeted interventions can activate reinforcing dynamics and accelerate the transition to net-zero energy systems.

Thank you, Christine, for your interesting presentation!

Agenda

05/05/2026

This seminar is cancelled due to a Dutch public holiday

02/06/2026 15.00-16.00

Seminar by Anna Castiglione - more information will follow

14/07/2026 15.00-16.00

Seminar by Ellie Gordon - more information will follow

Learn more about Christine on the page from [Tilburg University](#) or on her [LinkedIn profile](#).

Want to write or promote something in our next newsletter? [Contact us!](#)



Utrecht
University

Special Interest Group on
Sustainable Behaviour

Copernicus Institute of
Sustainable Development



Sustainable Behaviour Newsletter

Volume 3 April 2026

PhD opportunity: Into a brighter future: The role of positive imaginaries in young people's climate action and well-being

Strategies to address climate change are often framed as sacrifice: reducing enjoyable behaviours like flying, eating meat, and driving, in order to avoid catastrophe. Decades of psychological research have shown, however, that such framing does not create motivation to change. It also, implicitly - and incorrectly - suggests that climate-friendly behaviours are inherently unpleasant. We propose that the motivation to address climate change through individual behaviour and through supporting climate policy requires the imagination and experience of tangible positive outcomes. In addition, such positive imaginaries can also create hope for a better future, and therefore positively impact mental well-being.

In this PhD project, you will investigate (1) which worries and opportunities young people experience with regard to addressing climate change, (2) whether imaging positive future outcomes (e.g., improved health or stronger social connectedness) promotes behaviour change, policy support, and well-being, and (3) whether positive experiences help sustain change over time. You will use a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative focus groups and interview studies (e.g., thematic analysis) with quantitative methods (e.g., experience sampling and experimental studies).

The project will focus on individuals during emerging adulthood (16-29 years old). Individuals of this age group are at a crucial stage in their development, building new behavioral routines and forming concrete images of the future. As a transitional phase, it offers unique opportunities for sustained behaviour change. Moreover, young people's well-being is currently under considerable pressure, and they may particularly benefit from a positively re-imagined future. You will work with participants from diverse educational backgrounds (including vocational training), to generate a representative understanding of their motivations, experiences, hopes and fears.

Essential criteria (extra on top of the criteria mentioned in the general vacancy text of BSI):

- A high level of Dutch proficiency (B2)
- MSc in Psychology or other relevant discipline
- Solid understanding of research on behaviour regulation/behaviour change
- Interest in research on climate change/planetary health
- Excellent communication and project management skills

Desirable criteria:

- Experience with qualitative research methods
- Skills in advanced statistics incl multilevel modelling

Important dates:

Application deadline: 03 May

First interview: Monday 18 May

Second interview: Wednesday 27 May

Contact persons: Esther Papies, Professor Enduring Behaviour Change for Sustainability (esther.papies@ru.nl) and Daniela Becker, Assistant professor Social and Cultural Psychology (daniela.becker@ru.nl)



Utrecht
University

Special Interest Group on
Sustainable Behaviour

Copernicus Institute of
Sustainable Development



Sustainable Behaviour Newsletter

Volume 3 April 2026



German capital is rewarding tourists for 'sustainable behaviour'

An article got published about Berlin's new approach to motivating sustainable behaviour of tourists. "Instead of penalising tourists, cities are relying on positive reinforcement for good deeds and better behaviour", Daniela Toporek writes. She highlights the case of Berlin, where littering remains a huge struggle.

In a time of increasing tourism, highly-visited cities need to find ways to accommodate travelers sustainably and minimize the negative impact of tourism on the city environment. Berlin will start implementing BerlinPay next summer, which should motivate tourists to pick up litter, support local projects, or help clean up neighbourhoods in return for free or discounted museum tickets, tours, or lunches. The hypothesis is that if tourists "engage more thoughtfully with the city, [they] will also feel more connected to it".

Source: [Timeout.com](https://www.timeout.com)

Research associate opportunity: vacancy at the El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Public Policy

For a new transdisciplinary Horizon Europe project, we are seeking a Postdoctoral Researcher or an experienced Research Assistant, ideally with experience of EU or similar international projects. The project focuses on transitions to the circular economy in clothing, mobility, electronics, and food packaging, with a particular emphasis on behavioural interventions and the consumer interface.

The candidate will work closely with the PI (the Director of the El-Erian Institute) and the Cambridge team within a multinational consortium of researchers, companies, and societal institutions. They will be responsible for conducting empirical and conceptual research, including co-designing and testing pilot interventions. They will also be tasked with writing up reports and intervention designs and communicating with the other project partners throughout. The position also allows for gaining experience in large project management. There is ample opportunity to publish in high-level journals.

The ideal candidate has an excellent publication record, including literature reviews (ideally with experience using AI tools for evidence synthesis and an understanding of how such processes can be automated), field experiments, qualitative and quantitative analyses of consumer needs, behavioural barriers and drivers, and experience of delivering interventions for behavioural change. Strong training in experimental and quantitative methods, including experience with SPSS, STATA, R or Python, an understanding of multivariate statistics and causal modelling, and ideally experience with running models using cloud infrastructure, would be highly desirable. We are seeking a behavioural economist, cognitive psychologist, or someone with a similar disciplinary background who has a keen interest in the circular economy. The position comes with membership of Queens' College, Cambridge.

[More info available here.](#)



Utrecht
University

Special Interest Group on
Sustainable Behaviour

Copernicus Institute of
Sustainable Development



Sustainable Behaviour Newsletter

Volume 3 April 2026

Postdoc opportunity: vacancy at the El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Public Policy

Kristian Roed Nielson and Alice Pizzo are looking for a postdoc to join their project “(Un)sustainable Tipping Points” funded by the [Independent Research Fund Denmark](#). The position is for three years (with the possibility of an additional year linked to teaching responsibilities) and is positioned in our group, [Consumer and Behavioural Insights Group](#), at [Copenhagen Business School](#).

This role combines behavioral science and computational social science, focusing on how social contagion and individual thresholds influence tipping points in sustainable behavior.

The project combines:

- Large-scale longitudinal behavioural data
- Behavioural experiments
- Computational modelling of diffusion and threshold dynamics

Their goal is to move beyond abstract narratives and empirically identify when and how positive feedback loops drive (or hinder) sustainable transitions.

The postdoc will work across empirical, computational, and experimental components, including:

- Modeling social contagion processes
- Analyzing large-scale behavioral data
- Conducting network analyses
- Designing and running behavioral experiments

They are looking for candidates with:

- ✓ A PhD in a relevant field
- ✓ Strong quantitative and coding skills (R, Python, Stata, etc.)
- ✓ Experience with behavioral or longitudinal data
- ✓ Interest in computational modeling and network analysis

* The application deadline is May 4th.

Please reach out to either [Kristian Roed Nielsen](#) or [Alice Pizzo](#) if you have questions about the position

Want to write or promote
something in our next newsletter?

Contact us at
c.m.j.slikkerveer@uu.nl