

Theme Week Multiple Crises – Strained Resources

Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover, April 15-17, 2026

Contact

Matters of Conferences & Symposia

Name	E-Mail	Phone
Anke Harwardt-Feye	harwardt-feye@volkswagenstiftung.de	+49 511 8381 292
Jeana Thilla	thilla@volkswagenstiftung.de	+49 511 8381 233

Matters of Funding & Organisation

Name	E-Mail	Phone
Yassin Abou El Fadil	abouelfadil@volkswagenstiftung.de	+49 511 8381 333
Corinna Ben Mohamed Salah	salah@volkswagenstiftung.de	+49 511 8381 202

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1 Theme Week

The success of Western Market Economies, and Germany's market economy in particular, has come under increasing pressure in recent years. The digital transformation of society, the decarbonization of the economy and the decline in international trade volumes in times of a renewed rise in protectionism are present-day challenges which are accompanied by strained social and economic resources. There are various reasons for the scarcity of financial resources, working force and raw materials. While the analysis of problems resembles across political parties, the publicly discussed solutions in the current political debate are sometimes diametrically opposed.

Questions regarding a successful transformation of society under scarcity are also of concern to the scientific community. With the theme week "Multiple Crises – Strained Resources", from April 15-17, 2026), the Volkswagen Foundation funds four scientific symposia aimed on analysing the causes, consequences and challenges of strained financial, material and human resources on society and economy. The Foundation explicitly intends to bring together scientists and partners outside of academia to tackle the various aspects of the overarching theme outlined. The following four Symposia funded by the Foundation take place at the Xplanatorium Herrenhausen Palace in Hanover/Germany:

Europe's Industrial Policy Options in the digital, green and geoeconomic Transitions

Prof. Dr. Helen Callaghan, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Dr. Timur Ergen, Universität Bremen

Dr. Robert (Bob) Hancké, London School of Economics

Unlocking private Wealth as a Resource for solving global Crises

Prof. Dr. Matthias Waldkirch, EBS Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht

Prof. Dr. Luca Manelli, Politecnico di Milano

Prof. Dr. Emanuela Rondi, Politecnico di Milano

The Strained Empire: Resources, Conflict, and Collapse in the premodern Empire

Dr. Matthias Berlandi, Georg-August Universität Göttingen

Transformative Economics for a Socio-Ecological Transformation

Dr. Steffen Lange, Universität Siegen

Prof. Svenja Flechtner, Universität Siegen

PD Dr. Christian Franke, Universität Siegen

Prof. Dr. Niko Paech, Universität Siegen

2 Schedule

Wednesday, April 15

Time	Agenda
08:30 - 09:15	Check-In and Registration
09:30 - 10:00	Welcome and Introduction
10:00 - 10:45	Brief introduction to the symposia
11:00 - 11:30	Keynote I: "Surviving Geoeconomic Disorder" (Prof. Cornelia Woll, President of Hertie School of Governance)
11:30 - 12:00	Keynote II: "Offshore Finance, Kleptocracy, and the Polycrisis" (Prof. Brooke Harrington, Dartmouth College)
12:00 - 13:00	Joint Lunch
18:00 - 20:00	Joint Dinner

Thursday, April 16

Time	Agenda
12:00 - 13:00	Joint Lunch
16:15 - 17:00	Roundtable Discussion: "EU Industrial Policy in motion – securing competitiveness and resilience in a changing world" (Opening Statement by DDG Maive Rute, European Commission)
17:15 - 17:45	Keynote III: "Meeting the Challenges to Advanced Europe" (Prof. David Soskice, London School of Economics)
17:50 - 18:00	Group Photo in the castle courtyard
18:15 - 20:00	Joint Dinner

Friday, April 17

Time	Agenda
12:00 - 13:00	Closing Remarks
13:00 - 14:00	Joint Lunch

3 Speaker and Panelists

Prof. Dr. Cornelia Woll

Professor of International Political Economy
Hertie School Berlin

Keynote: “**Surviving Goeconomic Disorder**”

From a firm perspective, navigating the global economy has become ever more challenging. Governments have unabashedly used markets and economic infrastructures to exert pressure on allies and enemies alike. Companies have become transmission belts and sites of conflict between states, whether they are asked to execute a government’s policy of economic sanctions, provide visibility over economic activities or create the conditions for market dominance in areas of national interest such as data or security provision. In her keynote, Cornelia Woll explores the conditions for companies to strive in a world riddled with uncertainty and unexpected events. Rather than increasing resources needed for planning and risk assessment, she points to the need for innovation that allows for adaptability and autonomy.

Prof. Dr. Brooke Harrington

Professor of Sociology
Dartmouth College

Keynote: “**Offshore Finance, Kleptocracy, and the Polycrisis**”

What links the climate emergency to the simultaneous breakdown of international governance? Dartmouth Sociology professor Brooke Harrington points in an overlooked direction: the offshore financial system. By facilitating a global elite insurgency against democracy, international law, and environmental protection, the offshore system has unleashed a polycrisis whose fallout threatens all 8.3 billion of us. Harrington’s research peels back the layers of secrecy that have protected the offshore financial system from scrutiny and allowed the polycrisis to build to its current level. Her new work identifies key vulnerabilities in the system that can be leveraged to slow or halt the crisis.

Prof. Dr. David Soskice

Emeritus Professor in the Department of Government
London School of Economics and Political Science

Keynote: “**Meeting the Challenges to Advanced Europe**”

David Soskice is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Government and was School Professor of Political Science and Economics at the London School of Economics. He taught macroeconomics at Oxford, was a research director at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin and a senior research fellow at Nuffield College as well as Research Professor of Political Science at Duke. He has been visiting professor in the economics department at Berkeley, the government department at Harvard, the Industrial Relations School at Cornell, and the Scuola Superiore St Anna, Pisa, and held the Mars Visiting professorship at Yale and the Semans Distinguished Visiting professorship at Duke. He was President of the European Political Science Association from 2011 to 2013. In his talk, David Soskice addresses the major challenges facing advanced Europe, including geopolitical shifts, low economic growth, lagging innovation, domestic political realignment, and the stagnant EU, while preserving the European social contract and political values: Democracy, social mobility, relative equality and mutual respect.

Deputy Director-General Maive Rute

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)
European Commission

Roundtable: “**EU Industrial Policy in motion – securing competitiveness and resilience in a changing world**”

Speaker: As Deputy Director-General of DG GROW of the European Commission, Maive Rute is responsible for the investment and innovation policies such as Invest EU, public procurement and intellectual property. She also leads DG GROW work in the European Semester process and in the research program Horizon Europe. Maive Rute is also a member of the Board of Directors of the European Investment Fund. Between 2016 to 2018, she was DDG in the Commission’s internal science service for Joint Research Centre. Previously, she worked as Director for biotech research and for SME & enterprise policy of the European Commission.

Dr. Simon Gerards Iglesias

Personal Advisor to the Director
The German Economic Institute (IW)

Panelist: Simon Gerards Iglesias is an economist and economic historian currently serving as Personal Advisor to the Director at the German Economic Institute (IW). His research focus lies at the intersection of German and European political economy, international trade, and geopolitics. He is currently working on topics such as global trade dependencies, as well as the development of industrial policy and resilience strategies for the German and European economies.

Lukas Bertram

Programme Lead: Economics of a Green and Just Transition
ZOE-Institute

Panelist: Lukas Bertram is an economist and leads the research of the ZOE Institute for Sustainable Economies on the topic of 'The Economics of the Green and Just Transition'. In this role, he analyses how European industrial policy can promote sustainability, long-term competitiveness, autonomy, and cohesion within the EU. He examines instruments such as industrial strategies, the mobilization of private and public investment, conditionalities and 'Made in EU' criteria.

Vanessa Guinan-Bank

Freelance Journalist

Moderation: Vanessa Guinan-Bank is a Freelance journalist and audio producer who has worked for national and international media outlets. She produces features and long-form reports on social, economic and political issues. Her reporting has covered femicides in Italy, the housing crisis in Ireland, and the political and economic situation in while working as a news assistant for the Berlin Bureau of the Washington Post, she covered news in Germany and Europe, including wealth inequality in Germany and the war in Ukraine.

4 Further Information

Arrival by public transport from the main train station “Hannover Hauptbahnhof”

Your destination is Herrenhausen Palace (Herrenhäuser Straße 5, 30419 Hannover, Germany). You can reach the venue by tram. After a 2-minute walk from Hannover Central Station towards the city center, you will arrive at the “Kröpcke” tram station. Please take the tram **line 4** (towards “Garbsen”) or **line 5** (towards “Stöcken”) to “Herrenhäuser Gärten” station. Herrenhausen Palace (“Schloss Herrenhausen”) is located on the left-hand side in the direction of travel.

