



TRANSECTS

NEWSLETTER

TRANSECTS is an innovative, transdisciplinary research training partnership that reconfigures sustainability science education, prepares graduates to be the next generation of sustainability change makers, and offers unparalleled opportunities for intercultural learning through shared international experiences and comparative analysis across the Global North and South.

To learn more about *TRANSECTS*, read our newsletter, [explore our website](https://sens.usask.ca/transects), or reach out to us directly.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Parmveer Singh Joined Dr. Maureen Reed's *TRANSECTS* Project as a Postdoctoral Fellow

By Dr. Parmveer Singh

On February 3rd, Dr. Parmveer Singh officially joined the *TRANSECTS* project as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the *PROGRESS* Lab of Dr. Maureen Reed. Dr. Singh's educational background is in Agricultural and Extension Education with a core focus on program development and evaluation. Dr. Singh earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education at The Pennsylvania State University, USA, in December 2024.

In the *TRANSECTS* project, Dr. Singh will collaborate closely with the international network in research, education, and outreach. He will actively engage in monitoring and evaluating the transdisciplinary international learning labs and other activities while supporting the evolution of an international community of practice. In addition, Dr. Singh will contribute to the design and delivery of key project components, including learning labs, online courses, program institutes, conferences, and meetings. He will also conduct research both within and beyond *TRANSECTS* to advance the theory and practice of transdisciplinary research.

Read more about Dr. Parmveer Singh joining as a Post-Doctoral Fellow [here](#).

I am fortunate to have this opportunity to serve as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Saskatchewan and work at the interface of education, research, and outreach – It is truly a dream come true moment for me!

– Dr. Parmveer Singh, Postdoctoral Fellow



Image: Dr. Parmveer Singh and Dr. Maureen Reed (L-R).
Credit: Gilbert Adum, SENS Student.

Making an Impact: Danielle Spence Receives the Provost's Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award By Dr. Parmveer Singh

We are pleased to announce that Danielle Spence was recognized with the Provost's Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award during USask Staff and Faculty Awards event on June 18th, 2024. This prestigious award recognizes her proven teaching contributions.

Danielle is currently a PhD candidate in the School of Environment and Sustainability and the Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research takes a collaborative approach to understanding water quality issues in lakes and exploring ways to address these issues.

Read more about Danielle Spence's award and involvement in *TRANSECTS* [here](#).

RECENT ACTIVITIES

START Update By Chloe Canning

START is running a Buddy Program for TILL 2025. The Buddy Program pairs TILL alumni with 2025 TILLies to help them navigate the months leading up to the TILL and provide support during the TILL as someone who has been through a similar experience. At the end of February, we had the opportunity to connect with almost all of the 2025 TILLies and their Buddies during a virtual meet-and-greet session, during which everyone started to get to know each other and put faces to names! All of START wishes the 2025 TILLies the best as they prepare for their TILL in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve in South Africa!

One of the most exciting projects we are working on is starting a START Speaker Series! On the last Thursday of April, May, June, and July, START is piloting presentations done by people working with Transdisciplinary (TD) methods in any capacity (for example students, BR practitioners, community groups, or researchers). We aim to bring together the *TRANSECTS* community by highlighting the amazing TD work happening. We are also inviting anyone participating in TD work to present. In April, we will kick off the Speaker Series with one of our own *TRANSECTS* Post-Doctoral Fellow, Dr. Parmveer Singh! Look for more information coming soon!

START has also been focusing on finding more mentorship opportunities for students who want to work with Biosphere Reserves/Regions (BRs). We have presented ideas for possible mentorship opportunities and are considering many options for what this could look like. If you are a BR interested in getting more students involved, please contact start@usask.ca!



Image: START organized meet-and-greet event with TILL alumni, TILL mentors2025, and TILLies2025 attended.

Credit: Athes Ayun Khan, START.

Building Connections: *TRANSECTS* TILL Meet-and-Greet 2025 By Dr. Parmveer Singh

On February 27, the *TRANSECTS* community members came together for a meet-and-greet session virtually. A total of 23 members, including TILL alumni, TILL 2025 mentors, and new TILLies2025, attended this event. It was an exciting opportunity for *TRANSECTS* TILL community members to share stories about their TILL experiences, give advice, and answer questions from the TILLies2025.

"It's awesome getting to chat with people from the different TILLs and share our experiences with the new cohort! The months leading up to the TILL are an exciting but anxious time. Getting the chance to chat with people who have been through the same experience was beneficial for me when I was a TILLie, and it's great being able to give that advice now as a buddy!"

– **Chloe Canning, START Lead**

Citizen Science in European UNESCO Biosphere Reserves – International Workshop hosted by the Biosphere Reserves Institute

By Charlotte Griestop

From February 3rd to 7th, 2025, the Biosphere Reserves Institute hosted the workshop “What is the potential for Citizen Science in European UNESCO Biosphere Reserves?” at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm, Rügen.

A total of 33 participants from 17 European countries, including managers, researchers, youth representatives and practitioners representing 18 different biosphere reserves, shared their experiences, knowledge, questions, and challenges related to conducting Citizen Science projects in Biosphere Reserves.



Image: During the Vilm walk.
Credit: Irene Lautenschlager, BfN.



Image: Working on the Research Guidelines.
Credit: Mihaela Mesarić, Međimurje Nature.



Image: During the Vilm walk.
Credit: Maria Kleegrewe, HNEE.

Inputs were given by the Citizen Science experts Silke Voigt-Heucke and Dr. Julia von Gönner, by the UNESCO representatives Dr. Serena Heckler and Dr. Lutz Möller, as well as by 14 participants who shared their insights into practical experiences. Furthermore, using the story lenses method, different groups explored the following topics in depth: Potential for collaboration, Education, Tools, Evaluation and Monitoring, Communication and Outreach, Good practices, Youth, Data, as well as Challenges and how to face them.

Building on their session from the EuroMAB meeting in 2024, Dr. Filipa Ferreira (HNEE) and Dr. Valentin Fiala (BOKU Vienna) further developed the research guidelines for Biosphere Reserves during a collaborative session. Also, an excursion was organised to experience the Biosphere Reserve Südost-Rügen. The workshop not only inspired for new and ongoing Citizen Science projects but also fostered connections and collaborations between the different European Biosphere Reserves.

Find more information about the Biosphere Reserves Institute by visiting <https://www.biospherereserves.institute>

COMING UP

TILL 2025: The Upcoming Gathering in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve

By Marlis Merry

The 2025 Transdisciplinary International Learning Lab (TILL) is being hosted in Nature's Valley, located in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve in South Africa. Activities commence in April with an online Foundational Course, which is followed by an onsite Learning Lab in May and June. The TILL offers trainees the opportunity to deepen their professional, relational, and intercultural skills and provides an introduction to effectively applying transdisciplinary collaboration to tackle interconnected sustainability challenges.

The online Foundational Course will consist of five webinars hosted by Garden Route Biosphere Reserve practitioners, TILL mentors, and additional *TRANSECTS* members. The topics range from understanding transdisciplinarity in sustainability research to enhancing intercultural and collaborative skills, aiming to prepare trainees for the academic and social requirements of the Learning Lab.

The 2025 cohort of TILL trainees consists of a diverse group of Undergraduate students, Graduate students, and Postdoctoral Fellows from Germany, South Africa, and Canada. While onsite, trainees will work in international teams under the mentorship of applied researchers, practitioners, and community partners. They will develop a systematic understanding of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the region by engaging in projects designed to address local issues aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve's research and development needs.



Image: Nature's Valley Estuary.

Credit: Michael Klaver, Garden Route Biosphere Reserve.

Shaping What's Next: *TRANSECTS* Strategic Planning for Upcoming Reporting

By Marlis Merry

Coming to the end of the third year of the *TRANSECTS* project marks the halfway point, accompanied by a report to our funding agency: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Network (SSHRC). The Midterm Report will detail Year 1-3 activities, accomplishments, and challenges, along with plans for Years 4-6.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) led a Strategic Planning Series between October 2024 and February 2025 to shape the upcoming reporting to SSHRC. Workshops were held with Strategic Mobilization and Advisory Round Table (SMART) members, Student and Trainee Advisory Round Table (START) advisors, Biosphere Reserve/Region practitioners, and PSC members. The proposed plans for Years 4-6 reflect the priorities and insights that emerged from the Strategic Planning Series, along with strategies to strengthen the project's legacy. PSC members sincerely appreciate the time and thoughtful suggestions contributed by those involved in the strategic planning process, and they look forward to presenting these co-developed plans to SSHRC at the end of April.



Putuma Balintulo
RHODES - South Africa



Shannon Rutherford
RHODES - South Africa



Anna Gowera
WITS - South Africa



Stefan Rummler
HNEE - Germany



Jon Chance
HNEE - Germany



Frederike Helmke
HNEE - Germany



Aisha Adelah
USASK - Canada



Dr. Parmveer Singh
USASK - Canada



Chloe Canning
USASK - Canada



Athef Ayub Khan
Sustainability
Practitioner/Software
Developer - Canada

START ADVISOR PROFILES

We welcomed a new cohort of **START Advisors** to *TRANSECTS* in 2024. To learn more, view their profiles on the *TRANSECTS* website under [Meet the START.](#)

The Student Advisory Round Table (START) has been working hard since the new cohort officially started in the fall of 2024. Since then, START has undergone strategic planning to help decide where to focus our efforts to best support *TRANSECTS*. Ongoing initiatives include the Buddy Program, starting a Speaker Series, finding mentorship opportunities, and updating START social media!

START advisors have been diligently working on increasing our social media presence! [The LinkedIn group](#), [Instagram \(@transectshub\)](#), [Facebook](#), and [TRANSECTS website](#) are updated regularly so check out any of those platforms for the latest on what START is offering!