Assessing Improvements for Planning Networking Events

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ZKSD
Zurich Knowledge Center
for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development is a Zurich-based organization that creates and facilitates networking events with a focus on sustainability efforts. This project assessed the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary networking of these events, as well as created guidelines to improve and plan future events. To assess the current success of the networking aspect of these events, the team attended several events to observe and obtain survey data. Additionally, key-informant meetings with event organizers provided insight to the requirements of planning an event. This collective information directed the team's recommendations for improvement, as well as gave insight on the content a formal event planning guide would include. These recommendations involved allotting dedicated time during events for attendees to socialize and connect with one another, such as before or in the middle of an event, and creating engaging activities that facilitate participant interaction. Through structuring an event in such a way that it increases attendee interaction, ZKSD will be able to further contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 17: "partnerships for the goals".

Executive Summary

Switzerland as a nation has become a global leader in supporting and fostering sustainability efforts in all aspects. As of 2022, Switzerland ranks eighth among the 163 nations that have taken the pledge towards the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations [UN], 2022). However, maintaining this culture of sustainability requires constant attention and continuous upkeep. Part of this maintenance has included implementing sustainability practices and promoting understanding into the country's higher education. This has created a need for all Swiss citizens, especially university students and faculty, to connect and share ideas to further spread and preserve sustainability culture in Switzerland.

Our sponsor, Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development (ZKSD) is an organization that facilitates and provides space for networking events on topics of sustainable development. They aim to bring research and education on sustainability as a means to further promote discussion and innovation around sustainability topics. With this in mind, they hope to create a space for various disciplines of this sustainability research and education to connect with one another. Similarly to sustainability culture in Switzerland itself, ZKSD hopes to continuously improve upon their events despite their current success. In particular, ZKSD wants to more effectively facilitate networking and interdisciplinarity at their events. They also require an organized planning process for their events that specifically details the time required for each step of planning of events of various sizes and demographics.

The goal of our project was to assist ZKSD in accomplishing these tasks. As university students with otherwise no affiliation to ZKSD, we were able to provide a unique perspective on the challenges and barriers to forming connections at these events. In addition to this, we were able to utilize this perspective by creating a means to further evaluate future events in the form of various feedback surveys to use as they see fit. Furthermore, we drafted a complete timeline and event planning document to provide to ZKSD to streamline their event planning process. In order to achieve these goals, our main objectives were as follows: understanding ZKSD and their purpose behind their networking events; collecting and analyzing data from past and current

events; and proposing how to plan a networking event with evaluation methods that allow for continuous improvement.

We began by seeking to gain an understanding of our sponsor's goals with their events. To accomplish this, we held a key-informant interview with our sponsor to better comprehend their objectives with their events and their motivations as an organization. In addition to this interview, we also spoke with ZKSD-partnered event organizers for additional perspectives and attended their events. At these events, we made many notable observations on how effectively attendees were able to connect with each other. Our attendance also provided the perfect opportunity to administer feedback surveys to participants and gain yet another essential stakeholder perspective. We administered the surveys virtually by distributing QR codes at the conclusion of each event to maximize responses. These surveys provided us with statistical data that reflected the effectiveness of the networking and interconnectivity aspects of the events. This data, in addition to our observations, then helped form our recommendations for networking improvements to be reported back to ZKSD.

In addition to our feedback on the networking aspect, we assisted ZKSD by creating a written planning process. To achieve this, we reached out to several student associations, and had key-informant interviews with the previously mentioned event organizers to determine an adequate time frame for the planning of various event types. We compiled the results of this research into a document for ZKSD to use as a formal event planning guideline. This included not only information regarding the required time for each step of planning, but differences in advertising and formulating attendee lists as well. Overall, this guideline comprehensively detailed all of the most important considerations for planning an event. Amongst these details were timing alterations based on the scale of the event and the intended guest demographic, between students and non-students in a professional setting. Because of the required research on various companies to create an attendee list, the non-student demographic typically takes up to two months longer to plan. Additionally, we determined how much time larger scale events would require for preparation, including catering and venue planning, where each can take more than three weeks.

Another deliverable of our project was to determine how effectively the events encourage networking between participants, and to report back any recommendations we have. To improve the facilitation of attendee connections, we recommended that events with an emphasis on

connecting participants include additional dedicated times for attendees to speak freely amongst themselves. Examples of such include encouraging attendees to chat amongst themselves before the event commences, incorporating a break in the middle of the event for them to network with each other, or implementing activities in which they are grouped together with one or more attendees. With the support of our survey data and personal observations, we think that these considerations will greatly improve the networking that can occur at ZKSD's future events. We also provided our survey templates to ZKSD so that they can tailor them to any future event and continue to evaluate their events past our project.

      Our primary deliverable to ZKSD was a formal document that streamlined the event planning process. The document detailed the time required to plan an event depending on both the scale and target demographic. In general, events that are run on a larger scale, and events that are not targeted towards the university student demographic take longer to plan and need to be taken into account. With a more streamlined planning process in addition to plans to better facilitate networking, we predict that ZKSD will identify an increase in interdisciplinary connections made. In addition to this, we provided ZKSD with our recommendations regarding the networking aspect of their events, the most prominent of which was to allow for dedicated time for socializing and networking. Through collecting and analyzing data through feedback surveys, we were able to form conclusions as to possible areas of improvement to allow attendees to form connections more easily. By assisting in creating more interdisciplinary connections, ZKSD contributes to furthering SDG 17, "partnerships for the goals", which feeds back into all other goals by increasing this education and discussion about sustainable development practices. When large numbers of people work together for a common cause, we can make more progress than ever imagined before, and ZKSD can be an even greater contributor to bringing people together in this way.

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Team Bios

Dominic Brunetti

Hello, my name is Dominic Brunetti and I am from Lewiston, Maine. I am a Junior Electrical and Computer Engineering major at WPI. This project was my first time in Europe, and it was amazing to have the opportunity to explore and see things I never could have imagined. I am extremely grateful to have been able to meet, connect, and work with everyone at ZKSD, and for the opportunity to grow both professionally and academically through this project.

Charlotte Larson

Hi! My name is Charlotte Larson and I use she/her pronouns. I'm a WPI Data Science major from Danvers, Massachusetts. I'm also in Alden Voices choir and I'm the social media coordinator for the Society for Medieval Arts and Sciences. This IQP was my first time leaving America, and it was such a pleasure to be able to work in such a beautiful country and with such wonderful people at ZKSD. This project has helped me to grow a lot and I will take everything I learned with me through and beyond my remaining years at WPI.

Antonio Ruiz

Hello, my name is Antonio Ruiz. I am from Monterrey, Nuevo Léon, Mexico. My studies involve majoring in Industrial Engineering and minoring in Business at WPI. It was very humbling to see and find out that the world is huge with many opportunities all over it. Working with ZKSD helped me learn how to be more efficient with my sustainable lifestyles. It took me into a further perspective on the importance of networking with peers and faculty.

Acknowledgements

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Our sponsors, the Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development, for sponsoring this project. In particular, Cathérine Hartmann, Matthias Huss, and Livia Gygax, for their commitment and time to assisting us.

Our advisors, Professor Leonard Polizzotto and Professor Uma Kumar for their constant guidance and advice in creating and editing this report.

Our project site coordinator, Professor Nancy Burnham, for organizing all of the projects for our cohort and allowing us to be a part of the Zurich IQP project site.

Lastly, we would like to thank various individuals who aided us in a multitude of ways during our IQP project. Firstly, Fatimah Daffaie, our ID2050 groupmate who was unable to join us in Zurich, for her assistance and being an exceptional team member during the pre-departure preparation of this project. Secondly, all of the event organizers and hosts who gave their time to speak with us and provide us with advice for planning an event. Lastly, all of the people who attended the ZKSD events during our time in Zurich and assisted in our data collection through our surveys and interviews.

1. Introduction

Humanity has been dealing with the increasingly urgent challenges of sustainable development for several decades, including climate change, management of waste and natural resources, energy consumption, poverty, and equal opportunity (United Nations [UN], 2015). The concept of sustainable development has been in circulation for as long as we have been plagued by these issues, maintaining sustainable events and environments leads to improvements in life such as protecting our ecosystem and the preservation of natural resources. While it is important that nations as a whole decide to take action to respond to these problems, there are solutions to be found at the local levels as well. One potential method to achieve this is to foster connections between people of various disciplines to help solve these problems on a smaller scale. Our project sponsor, the Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development (ZKSD), has been bringing together research and teaching for sustainable development and offering a networking space that allows people to collaborate and debate different perspectives and values on the topic.

Our project focused on creating a step-by-step planning process for organizing networking events to exchange ideas and scientific information in order to make tomorrow's interdisciplinary solutions to today's challenges in the field of sustainable development. The organization has identified three primary sustainable development concerns they would like to address. This includes economic, social, and environmental sustainable development. Currently, ZKSD does not have a formal event planning process detailing the steps and time required for different types of events. Furthermore, they wished to increase the number of connections being formed at these events to encourage the exchange of ideas across disciplines. The goal of our project was to formalize a planning process for events on finding sustainable development solutions and suggest improvements to further promote interdisciplinary networking between attendees. To achieve this, our first objective was understanding ZKSD and their purpose behind their networking events. This helped us gain a perspective on methods and activities that could potentially be utilized in events. Our second objective was collecting and analyzing data from past and current events. Obtaining a clear idea of what attendees want helped us to better inform

ZKSD as to how to deliver an event more suited towards different target audiences. The third objective was proposing how to plan a networking event with an evaluation plan that allows for continuous improvement.

This report contains a background chapter on sustainable development to provide context for the target of the project. Our methodology chapter details the research and evaluations we implemented to reach our project goal and objectives. From our methods, we noted many important findings, which are outlined in our results chapter. These findings allowed us to formulate our recommendations chapter, which reiterates our recommendations to ZKSD, including an event planning guideline and changes regarding the networking and connectivity portion of their events.

2. Background

Sustainable development has been a widely known topic of global discussion for over a decade, yet many countries are still falling behind on their goals in sustainability. However, Switzerland has maintained their strong culture of sustainability, and takes preventative action to ensure that they do not start to fall behind. Some of these actions include spreading awareness and forming new ideas for sustainability issues. With this goal in mind, the ZKSD was formed in 2021 with the objective of breaking down boundaries and bridging gaps between diverse groups of people for the causes of sustainable development (ZKSD, 2021). This chapter will provide background information on sustainable development, sustainable development goals, and the efforts that have been put forth by ZKSD and other organizations to educate about and progress towards these goals.

2.1 Defining Sustainable Development

Sustainable development can best be defined as a principle that encourages achieving the goals of the present by enabling natural systems to obtain natural resources without interfering with future generations providing their own needs (UN, 2016). There are many types of sustainable development, but this project focused specifically on environmental, social, and economic sustainable development.

Environmental sustainability refers to the ability to enhance people's well-being without exceeding the earth's ecosystems' ability to support life (UN, 2016). It involves finding a balance between human consumption and natural resources, which are currently in an unstable relationship, to ensure long-term stability and resilience for both. Environmental sustainability generally leads to an open view and outlook on how human roles should play and conduct our ways of living and how it can be improved. Given the diversity of ecological, economic, and social circumstances across countries, there is no universal plan for implementing sustainable practices.

Social sustainability involves recognizing and handling the effects that a business has on individuals, both advantageous and disadvantageous (United Nations Global Compact, 2022).

The way in which a company interacts and engages with its stakeholders is an important and essential manner. Companies have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on their employees, workers within the value chain, customers, and local communities, and it is crucial to take a proactive approach to managing these impacts. Actions to achieve social sustainability may unlock new markets, help retain and attract business partners, or be the source of innovation for new product or service lines (UN, 2022). The main goal social sustainability seeks to achieve is the improvement of life quality alongside goods and services that provide all basic needs.

Economic sustainable development refers to achieving a state of balanced economic growth that does not rely on excessive borrowing or consumption of resources (UN, 2016). This includes engaging in economic activities that consider the capacity of the environment and the needs of future generations. It emphasizes the significance of considering the environmental carrying capacity for the benefit of future generations as it discusses sustainable development from the perspective of every economic decision-maker.

Sustainable development is a concept that heavily matters to improve quality of life and future natural resources and needs for upcoming generations. By the year 2050, it is estimated that our global population will reach 9 billion people (Emerald Built Environments, 2023). The task of achieving sustainable development entails progressing in a manner that ensures a high quality of life for every individual, without causing harm to our natural resources.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are taken in immediate action by multiple countries all over the world to contribute and develop a global partnership. Altogether, the goals serve a purpose and objective of recognizing each project that will end poverty and other such deprivations. Utilizing strategic methods of health

Figure 1

The 17 Sustainable Development goals established by the United Nations Agenda in 2016

Note. United Nations (2016). *Envision 2030: 17 goals to transform the world for persons with disabilities.* https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html

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and education improvement, to achieve economic growth and the reduction of inequality (UN, 2016). These sustainability goals were directly related to our project, as we promoted them along with new ideas to complete them, and thus it was important to have a firm understanding of these goals and their meanings.

2.2 Project Sponsors: Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development (ZKSD)

ZKSD is an organization that facilitates and provides space for networking events on topics of sustainable development. They were established in 2021 by four Zurich universities: University of Zurich (UZH), Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Zurich University of Education (PHZH), and Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) (ZKSD, n.d.). The goal of ZKSD is to facilitate networking events in which the sustainable development expertise from and beyond these four diverse universities can come together (ZKSD, n.d.).

ZKSD's mission is to bring together students and faculty from these four contrasting universities, along with unaffiliated civilians, to share knowledge and ideas between theory and practice (ZKSD, n.d.). ZKSD hopes to utilize the expertise and current research on sustainable development from these four universities to promote discussion and education about the seventeen sustainable development goals set forth by the United Nations (UN) to be achieved by the year 2030 (ZKSD, n.d.). ZKSD is a meeting area where students from these four universities can congregate, where they encourage casual communication between each other (ZKSD, n.d.). Under the auspices of the ZKSD and in cooperation with stakeholders from science, education, business, and the general public, they aim to undertake research and build action plans focused on finding solutions to sustainability-related problems (ZKSD, n.d.). ZKSD consulted us to help make improvements to their event planning process, as well as the networking and connection aspects of their events. The purpose of our project was to provide a new viewpoint to ZKSD, as American university students who were unacquainted with Swiss sustainability culture. Our goal was to provide ZKSD with new ideas through collecting and interpreting data from these events through a different lens. In doing this, we worked closely with Matthias Huss, the director of ZKSD, and associates Cathérine Hartmann and Livia Gygax, who were our primary contacts on this project.

Figure 2

Organizational structure of ZKSD
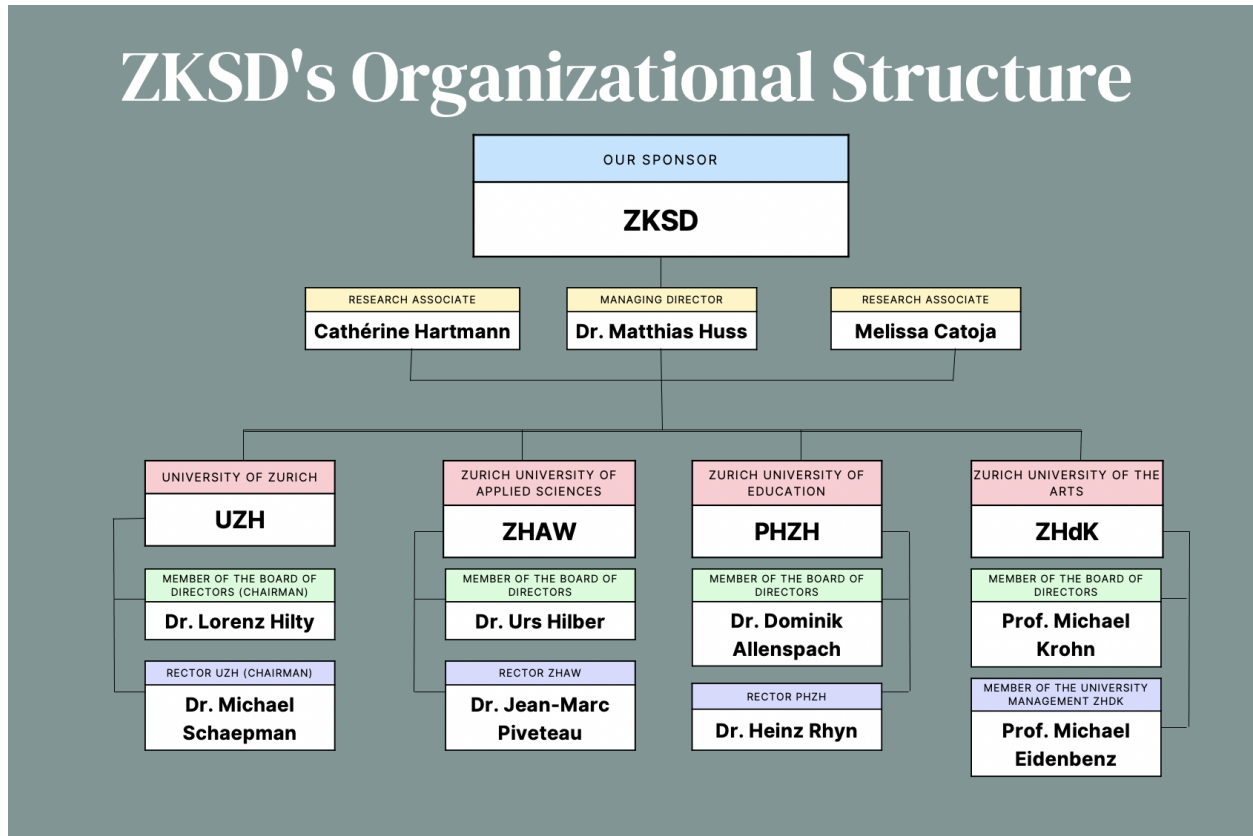
Note. There is a member from each founding university that is on the Member of the Board of Directors.

For various networking events, ZKSD provides a variety of gathering spaces. They have spaces for working, networking, and making informal connections in addition to places for presenting and debating (ZKSD, n.d.). A key component of ZKSD's objective is to act as a facilitator for these networking events, which bring together students from the four universities, as well as civilians, to converse about sustainability concerns.

Figure 3

A formal event space with a screen for presentations and debates

Note. This image shows a venue for formal networking activities like presentations and debates. A stage configuration with screen for presentations, an exhibition area, and an open event zone are all featured in this room too. ZKSD (n.d.). *Angebot.* https://zksd.ch/angebot/

Figure 4

An informal networking events area with a kitchen and tables

Note. This space is for casual networking events. It has less seating, with roughly fifteen chairs, a kitchen where you may prepare your own foods and beverages, and offers occasional catering services from nearby restaurants.
ZKSD (n.d.). *Angebot.* https://zksd.ch/angebot/

Past ZKSD sustainable development formal networking events have been a mix of informative presentations followed by interactive activities focusing on sustainable development issues. BATVISION is an example of a ZHdK student-led sustainability project. BATVISION is about experiencing virtual reality (VR) as a bat in the city to learn how bats sense their environment via echolocation and how noise pollution impacts this (ZKSD, 2021). The BATVISION project focused on three SDG goals: quality education (SDG 4), measures for climate protection (SDG 13), and life on land (SDG 15).

Figure 5

Attendees experiencing a VR experience about being a bat in the city

Note. ZKSD (2023). *Change of perspective: Of animals, people and futures.*
https://zksd.ch/perspektivenwechsel-von-tieren-menschen-und-zukuenften-2/

2.3 Project Stakeholders

ZKSD is a project center that allows and brings together the research and teaching of sustainable development. Projects formed by ZKSD, jointly are supported by universities UZH, ZHAW, PHZH, and ZHdK. All together form a common goal of achieving the United Nations' sustainable development goals using diverse knowledge managed by a steering committee (ZKSD, 2021). Employees, students, and faculty have the accessibility to submit any kind of sustainability project for affiliation with the ZKSD.

The sponsoring universities offer a variety of projects and funding opportunities for sustainable implementation open to its faculty and students. ZKSD provides an affiliation form to request a project. This process involves criteria and decision making by the board of directors within ZKSD. Once approval is finalized, employees of the project are eligible to utilize infrastructure in the ZKSD workplace. All of these projects and ideas for sustainable

development that are put into practice promote and help achieve a good environment that conserves natural resources. More efficiency will always result in less waste. Future and upcoming generations handle an important role. Sustainability issues are known to be a global concern that not only affects us or the planet but future environments and human life involved within it. Lack of natural resources is a continuous impact that has proven to abstain from achieving a more sustainable environment in our world (Pimentel & Pimentel, 2006).

2.4 History of Sustainable Development in Switzerland

As a member of the United Nations since 2002, Switzerland has dutifully adhered to the various environmental and sustainability goals created by the United Nations council within the past two decades (UN, 2022). Within the last decade, it has become a leading country in fostering a culture of sustainability in social, economic, and environmental aspects. While this culture of preservation and sustainability had been present prior to this, Switzerland officially took a pledge towards sustainable development in 2015 as a UN member state, when the UN unanimously agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations Population Fund, n.d.). As of 2022, Switzerland ranks eighth among the 163 nations that have taken the pledge (UN, 2022). Not only did they excel in meeting these goals, the Swiss were a major influence in their inception, both advocating for them and helping to develop the review process, which was valid through 2019 (Swiss Country Report, 2018).

Although Switzerland was one of several nations that had already met many of the SDGs prior to their establishment within the United Nations, it maintains its status as one of the few nations in the advanced stage of this agreement (Swiss Confederation, 2018). Using the goals set in 2015 as a benchmark for achieving greater sustainability, Switzerland has continued to improve across several fields of sustainability, such as urban sustainability through improving its capacity for domestic resource mobilization within recent years, as well as creating and implementing a new universal, rules-based trading system. This includes "facilitating imports, eliminating trade barriers, and maintaining a bilateral path with the EU", which all highly benefit economic sustainability (Swiss Confederation, 2018). To ensure this growth continues, the MONET 2030 evaluation system was developed. Its purpose is to monitor the growth of

sustainable development and ensure that the Swiss federal government continues to meet these goals in regards to social, ecological and environmental aspects (Federal Statistics Office, 2022).

Due to these various successes and statistical proof from Switzerland's UN rating for the 2030 Agenda, the focus of further advancing sustainable development has surpassed simple legislation within Swiss borders. In recent years, the Swiss federal government has been assisting other UN member nations to meet the goals and standards that have been set. This assistance has been officially established as a foreign policy framework: the Switzerland International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24 (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2020). This policy largely focuses on countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, and aims to assist in nurturing sustainability goals in these regions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022). Furthermore, Switzerland has been an integral partner of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and is the fifth largest contributor to the program's resources. This various humanitarian and financial support has aided in stabilizing these societies and strengthening their institutions, including Bangladesh, Sudan, Palestine, Indonesia, and more (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023).

In addition to their foreign efforts, Switzerland has also been aiming to implement sustainability practices and understanding into the country's higher education in more recent years. This can be attributed to the strong sustainability culture within the country, aiding a strong trend of more universities continuing to implement sustainable practices into their curriculum. A 2021 study shows that this positive trend has continued uninterrupted, and many universities have implemented sustainability strategies at the maintenance level (State Secretariat for Education Research and Innovation [SERI], 2023). Across most majors and areas of study, the implementation of sustainable development has been found most prevalently within bachelor's programs, with a stated goal of displaying responsibility towards people and the environment within the given curriculum (Hamiti et al, 2014). Should this trend continue, it would not be unreasonable to think that this could be a lynchpin for connecting the various branches of study and academia together to assist in Switzerland's pledge for sustainability action.

2.5 Barriers and Challenges of Sustainable Development

As with any problem, there are barriers to sustainable development, both on a global and local level. Several global challenges have emerged due to COVID, which has caused enormous setbacks in all areas of sustainable development. COVID has affected progress on a local level as well, especially in regards to interdisciplinary solutions and being able to advertise events. One major part of our project was to find ways around these barriers and challenges to further encourage networking in a way that encourages finding solutions to these setbacks.

In terms of global barriers, the SDGs have suffered a setback as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the UN's 2022 sustainability report (UN, 2022). The pandemic has had an influence on the first and eighth goals: "No poverty" and "Decent work and economic growth" (UN, 2022). According to the COVID Baseline and high damage scenarios depicted below, by 2030, an additional 47 million and 120 million people will still live in poverty as a result of COVID 19's negative socioeconomic impact (UNDP, 2023).

Figure 6

Number of people in poverty under different scenarios in millions
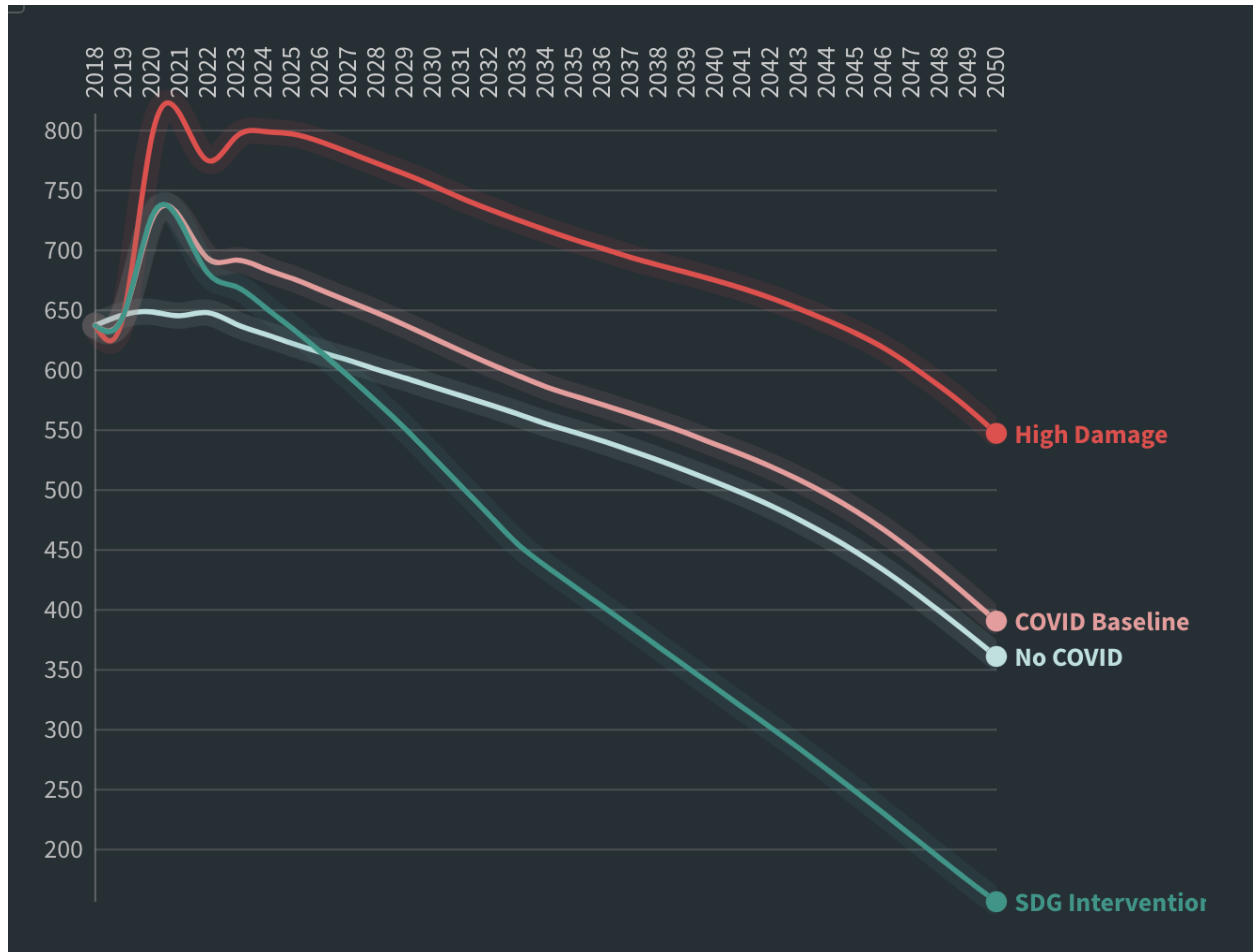
Note. This study by the UNDP employs the International Futures tools established by the University of Denver's Fredick S. Pardee Center to evaluate the probable consequences of three scenarios: COVID Baseline, high damage, and SDG Intervention.

SDG Integration (n.d.). *Impact of COVID-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals*. https://sdgintegration.undp.org/accelerating-development-progressduring-covid-19

Despite ranking among the top ten countries in terms of meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Switzerland faces sustainability concerns. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland experienced a severe economic depression (Grampp, 2020). Many other countries completely shut down, there was a significant drop in world trade, and demand for Swiss exports was substantially diminished. The Swiss government also decided to close down the country's public life, which had a significant influence on the domestic economy (Northeastern University,

2020). Though natural resource consumption within Switzerland is on the decline, consumption of resources globally is expanding in an unsustainable manner (Federal Office for the Environment [FOEN], 2022, December 20).

One challenge that our sponsor has had is bringing students and faculty across different disciplines in one room, since their only communication channel to advertise these events to students is through a personal contact at the universities. For ZKSD, this creates the challenge of bringing them all together into one room and ensuring that they gain something valuable from the events. We also faced barriers such as language, culture, and funding. Americans are more accustomed to networking events compared to the Swiss people (Hartmann, C., personal communication, 2023); this presented challenges when introducing a different approach to the networking events while keeping in mind what would appeal to Swiss.

Overall, there are global and local challenges, as well as challenges that our sponsor has relating to sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every nation without exception. The interdisciplinary nature of ZKSD's networking events and becoming accustomed to Swiss culture were the largest obstacles in this project.

Figure 7

A chart of European countries' responses to the COVID pandemic in 2020
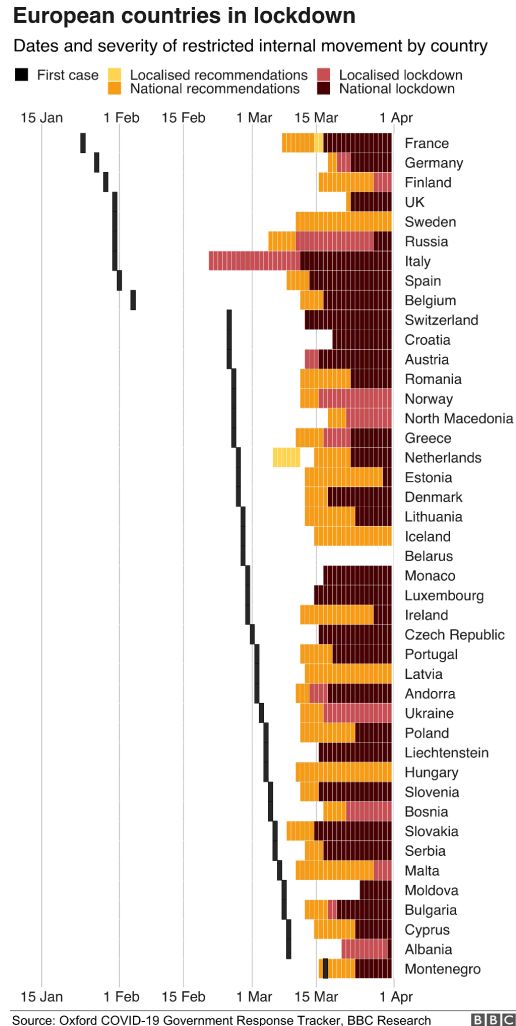
Note. Nearly every country in Europe was in a national lockdown by April.

Dunford, D., Dale, B., Stylianou, N., Lowther, E., Ahmed, M., & de la Torre Arenas, I. (2020, April 6). Coronavirus: The world in lockdown in maps and charts. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52103747

2.6 Case Studies: Past Sustainability Events

To formulate ideas for the event planning, we looked at data from past sustainable development networking events in recent years and evaluated how their approaches to these events compared and contrasted with one another. We reviewed two past university-centered sustainability events from the University of Melbourne (UniMelb) in Australia and the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg (OVGU) in Germany. The UniMelb event was an entirely virtual symposium with participation from many international guests. The OVGU event is an annually recurring series of interactive, multidisciplinary events.

2.6.1 UniMelb: SDGs, Climate Change and Cities

From September 30th to October 2nd of 2020, UniMelb hosted *SDGs, Climate Change and Cities* over Zoom. Statistics in their final report on the event state that nearly 800 delegates from twenty-five different countries attended. Among these delegates were eighty-three faculty and 400 students from participating universities in disciplines such as architecture, arts, humanities, social studies, science, engineering, and more. Additionally, UniMelb collaborated with Arup and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to organize pre-event workshops during which attendees participated in interactive activities and in-depth discussions (Oke et al., 2020) throughout the two days leading up to the symposium.

The sessions of the main three days primarily consisted of several panels giving responses to keynote speakers. The topics of these panels were centered around urban sustainable development goals, but included a broad range of topics from city planning, to circular economy, to indigenous perspectives. During the latter half of the event, the panels were followed by breakout discussions, in which attendees reflected on the preceding panel and made connections to other aspects of sustainable development. It can also be seen in the report that despite the distance created by the virtual format, this symposium featured countless opportunities for participant interactivity through live voting and audience feedback (Oke et al., 2020).

2.6.2 OVGU: Ökosoziale Hochschultage

Ökosoziale Hochschultage, which roughly translates to "Ecosocial University Days" in English, is an event series that OVGU has planned and held every year since 2014. They were originally inspired by a similar event series by the University of Berlin, and after their first series in 2014, OVGU began scheduling events in June to allow for both outdoor and indoor activities . The goal for these Ecosocial University Days has been to "sensitize people to various aspects of sustainable development and major global challenges" (Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg [OVGU], 2023, para. 1-3) and to inspire an understanding that when we all work together towards the same goal, incredible feats can be achieved. That is to say, OVGU hopes for people to truly comprehend the importance of sustainable development so we can have as many allies as we can in this rescue mission for humanity.

The Ecosocial University Days have featured a great multitude of disciplines and activities over the years, including a lecture on gender equality and respect, a sustainable music-making workshop using MIDI controllers, and an ongoing garden project between students, faculty, and other locals with a passion for planting (OVGU, 2023).

2.6.3 Takeaways

The most important commonalities that can be seen between these events are adaptability and interactivity. Making future events adaptable can enable ZKSD to incorporate a wider variety of activities and create backup plans if any of their ideas fail. Furthermore, interactive events are more attractive to potential attendees and increase the educational value of the events by encouraging attendees' participation directly. In order for those who come to future events to get the most out of it that they can, having these features was crucial.

2.7 Summary

Due to the strong culture of sustainability already present in Switzerland, there is a strong incentive to continue to develop this trend of sustainable development both to the general public, and institutions of higher learning. With their values in interdisciplinarity and connection, ZKSD aims to unite people of different backgrounds and studies to discuss and seek sustainable

development solutions. However, to most effectively host these events and promote connection, they face several barriers, such as accessibility and communication. This project aimed to assist against these challenges through creating a process for planning events and providing feedback on how to better facilitate connection and communication from ZKSD's events.

3. Methodology

The goal of our project was to formalize a planning process for events on finding sustainable development solutions and suggest improvements to further promote interdisciplinary networking between attendees. Our sponsor, ZKSD, wished to formalize their event planning process and to further improve upon interconnectivity in their events. In order to achieve this goal, our main objectives were as follows:

1. understanding ZKSD and their purpose behind their networking events;
2. collecting and analyzing data from past and current events; and
3. proposing how to plan a networking event with evaluation methods that allow for continuous improvement

3.1 Understanding ZKSD and their purpose behind their networking events

The first objective of our project was to gain an understanding of what ZKSD aims to achieve with their events. We strove to do this by conducting a key-informant interview with our sponsor and attending events that were held during our time in Zurich. This key-informant interview was conducted to direct us towards how we could find potential improvements in these events.

On our first day in the ZKSD offices, we conducted a key-informant interview with our contacts at the center. This key-informant interview allowed us to have an in-depth dialogue directly with our sponsor in an unmoderated setting (Dungel et al., 2022), allowing us to further grasp the motivations and objectives of ZKSD within the frame of our project. This is something that a survey or focus group or some other form of indirect communication would not be able to convey as well (Taylor et al., 2014). This interview was semi-structured, and followed an ask and answer format. The semi-structured format was preferred in this context, as we wished for this interview to be an open dialogue in response to predetermined questions regarding data collection and expectations regarding the direction of the project moving forward. This format is best for understanding motivations, constraints, and beliefs of ZKSD (Raworth et al., 2019). Before initiating this interview, we followed proper Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures for obtaining consent and informed ZKSD that the information from this interview would be kept

private. Through this key-informant interview, we strove to further understand what ZKSD expected from our project, as well as to assess the available methods of data collection. Interviews such as this often provide a more tailored exchange of information because participants feel more comfortable, like they are having a conversation rather than completing a task. Based on a qualitative report from Nova Southeastern University, interviews—whether in-person or online—often provide a more tailored exchange of data (Jain, 2021). A dialogue on this topic with our sponsor was the ideal first step for laying the groundwork for our project and establishing our plans for work and data collection.

3.2 Collecting and analyzing data from past and current events

Our second goal was to comprehend the participants' expectations for the networking events and their past experiences. In order to accomplish this goal, we collected and analyzed the data acquired from both surveys and interviews with students, faculty, and other attendees of previous ZKSD events.

Throughout our project's duration, we attended three events hosted by our sponsor over the course of one month with the goal of distributing an informative survey and personally observing the format and logistics of these events. The intention of viewing these events in-person was to gain more personal insight into what the events are all about and why so many people attend them. We also attended these events with the idea that they could provide us with the opportunity to speak to many of the people who attended in a more relaxed and informal way than an interview, as if we were experiencing the networking at this event for ourselves. This firsthand experience was meant to act as a baseline for possible improvements to the networking portion of these events.

In order to formulate our recommendations, it was crucial for us to gather, analyze, and evaluate data from previous and current networking events held by the ZKSD to understand which events were successful. We measured the various success and failures of each event through both quantitative and qualitative analysis of each event in all aspects. During the events hosted while we were in Zurich, we, with the help of ZKSD, administered surveys for data collection similar to Appendix C, where each survey contained separate data from each individual event. The method of doing so was through a questionnaire on the website

LimeSurvey administered through physically posted QR codes at the event, and emails to participants post-event. Our decision to use LimeSurvey was recommended by our sponsors, who informed us of Swiss privacy laws which dictate that our survey data was required to be stored in Switzerland. This survey data, as well as our own personal observations from attending these events, were intended to be our primary source of information regarding the initial successes and failures of these events, and we analyzed it throughout the duration of the project in Zurich.

Based on the data collection mentioned previously, we analyzed this data in order to understand what students, faculty, and other attendees of previous ZKSD events expect from the networking events on sustainable development. In order to analyze the data from the surveys, we evaluated the responses with LimeSurvey's built-in analysis features. LimeSurvey has the ability to display data using a multitude of chart types, which allowed us to analyze the survey responses through several different lenses.

In addition to data, our surveys also provided us with potential interview subjects. We reached out to the survey respondents who had provided us with their emails for the purpose of an interview, and arranged to meet with them and learn about their experiences. Similar to our key-informant interview with our sponsor, our interviews with attendees followed a semi-structured, ask and answer format with predetermined questions outlined in Appendix A. These questions included demographic information such as field of study or work, as well as opinions about the event and their suggested points of improvement. We strove to gain more clarity on what was important to our subjects about the event they attended. As such, our interviews inquired into specific details of the relevant event and provided a firsthand account of how these events and their individual sections were perceived.

After conducting these interviews, we carefully reviewed our notes that we took during them to try to gain an understanding of the main points that were made. We evaluated the subjects' thoughts about the networking portion, such as what they perceived as positive or negative about it, and compared them to results found from survey data. By using multiple methods of data collection, we were able to utilize the strengths of each; though interviews were more difficult to coordinate and took more time, they provided us directly with less measurable information and a greater insight into the event overall (Rev, 2022). The interviews, in conjunction with our surveys, were intended to provide us with telling information from primary

sources, all of which contributed towards our recommendations for building better opportunities for networking.

3.3 Proposing how to plan a networking event with evaluation methods that allow for continuous improvement

Following analysis of survey data from the events attended, we used this information in conjunction with interview data and observational analysis to evaluate needed improvements and developments to the planning process of ZKSD events. We and ZKSD were able to build a strategy for reviewing future events using qualitative methods (Atkinson, 2017). These methods aimed to incorporate improvements for current weak points and enhancements to current strengths reported by the feedback surveys. Our deliverables for this goal were providing a rough timeline for event preparation, and suggesting strategies to improve the events' allowance for networking, and finding ways to appeal to different event demographics. Proposing a planning process for ZKSD is a key part of our project that finalizes the process of analyzing data and delivering a recommendation for their future events.

To achieve ZKSD's goal of continuous improvement for these events in the future, we first sought to understand the needs and preferences of the two main demographics for attendees: university students and business professionals. There are key differences between these two groups of potential event participants that must be considered in all aspects of the event. In order to address these differences, we proposed two approaches to both planning and data collection, with each approach seeking to appeal to its target demographic. These approaches included tailored feedback surveys and advertising strategies depending on the anticipated audience. We did a group brainstorm on important considerations for student events, professional events, and both, to direct our research for our suggestions.

An essential need voiced by our sponsors was to improve the networking aspects of their events. Interdisciplinarity and connections made by participants are extremely important to ZKSD, and thus these were things upon which we wanted to put a large emphasis. For this purpose, we studied the effectiveness of current networking portions in order to formulate our suggestions and account for differences between the two demographics.

4. Results and Analysis

Our interviews and surveys provided us with key information about the networking events we attended and revealed to us opportunities for improvements. These methods of data collection informed our recommendations reflecting what participants would like to experience. To improve upon events currently held by ZKSD, we learned that the key aspects of a successful networking event typically included a mix of presentations, interactive workshops, and time to socialize and freely interact. These findings, which were a direct result of both survey data and results of interviews with attendees of previous events, are outlined in the sections that follow. This information dictated the direction of our research and allowed us to propose changes that addressed the participants' needs.

4.1 Comprehension of ZKSD's standards of success

We were able to gain an understanding of our sponsor's values and objectives as an organization through direct communication with them and attendance of their events. The result of this led us to better formulate an idea of expectations for events that ZKSD will hold after the conclusion of our project. ZKSD has established that the current framework of their networking events would benefit from improvements to the interconnectivity and networking aspects more so than the actual information provided through presentations and information sessions. Through attending the events in question, we were able to assess the success of the current means of encouraging interdisciplinary connection. A crucial part of the success of these events was found to be the team- and relationship-building and workshop segments which we found to be an effective means to build upon interconnectivity through both surveys and interviews.

4.1.1 Expectations discovered through sponsor dialogue

During our partnership with our sponsor, several open dialogues and key-informant interviews revealed that ZKSD intended to focus on and improve the networking aspect of their events in particular. Our sponsor informed us that this would be considered a success if we were able to develop and enrich this aspect of the events. We learned through our many conversations

with ZKSD that they place great importance on bringing people together, especially in an interdisciplinary sense. Our suggestion to analyze events through feedback surveys was well-received in this regard. This also fulfilled ZKSD's second objective for success: finding a way to collect and compile data from events in a format that could be reused beyond the time of our collaboration. Another struggle to which ZKSD had been seeking a solution was determining the optimal time and setting for the best results from their event. Their request was that we try to come to a consensus on this matter through statistical collection and analysis, which emerged in the form of our feedback surveys.

4.1.2 Observations and parallels noted through event attendance

As an additional means to assess the events we were evaluating, ZKSD also asked for our personal attendance at the events occurring during our IQP term to find points of improvement through observationally assessing the events. We attended several for the purpose of discovering how event attendees perceived various aspects of each event in a more in-depth, non-statistical manner. Among our most significant findings was the fact that workshops appeared to generally be well-received. This idea was supported through personal communications with various event organizers who confirmed this fact.

4.2 Importance of interactivity, dialogue, and connection

Through attending and surveying several events during our time in Zurich, we were able to grasp some key concepts that led to a successful networking event. These concepts were the interactive components of each event, successful dialogue between attendees, and the ability to make interdisciplinary connections at each event. Our process of conversing with the hosts of each event, collectively forming a survey that included event-specific questions, and administering them at the close of the events, resulted in organized data from each unique event that showed us the importance of these concepts. Each event we attended particularly excelled in one of these aspects, which we were able to combine together into suggestions for better networking events overall.

Figure 8

A pamphlet from Make it Circular

4.2.1 Make it Circular

The first event we attended, Make it Circular, was an Ikea-sponsored event about establishing a circular economy for furniture. The Swiss Federal Office for the Environment defines a circular economy as when "raw materials are used efficiently and for as long as possible" (FOEN, 2022, March 31). Make it Circular featured multiple keynote speakers, interactive workshops and brainstorming sessions, and culminating presentations made by the participants themselves.

From watching this event take place and collecting data in the form of surveys and interviews, we recognized some features that contributed to the event's success. The most well-supported of these ideas was an interactive component with attendees in which they think and work together in groups to create new sustainable projects, which was something we took note of and planned to reflect in our recommendations. This workshop encouraged people to generate new ideas and exchange possible solutions on the topic of the event. Therefore, we were able to derive that a key-component to these events could be a successful workshop portion. This idea was corroborated by the following events as well.

From the Make it Circular event, we were also able to collect data from our survey and an interview with a participant, both of which provided insight as to which portions of the event stood out to attendees and any possible points of improvement. In particular, those who responded to our survey seemed to greatly appreciate the level of interdisciplinarity among the participants, and the large variety of perspectives and insights they gained because of it. We learned more about what was well-received from our post-event interview with attendee Monica Beusch. She reported that the workshop added a more engaging aspect to the event, and that

without it, the event may have felt somewhat boring. Additionally, she told us that she really enjoyed having the opportunity to network over lunch and gained a lot from doing so (Beusch, M., personal communication, 2023). Overall, our experiences being at the Make it Circular event and speaking to its attendees helped us recognize the importance of interactivity and interdisciplinary connection at networking events.

4.2.2 Zunkuftsapéro 6

The Zukunftsapéro event series hosted their sixth iteration while we were in Zurich. This particular instance focused on "growth, happiness, and sufficiency." Similar to Make it Circular, this event included a keynote speaker as well as an interactive portion. However, the interactive section of Zunkuftsapéro largely focused on dialogue and exchange of ideas between participants. The event included creative activities such as a "starting fresh" exercise involving writing down old or overused ideas and then shaking them up in a carpet by flapping it up and down together. With their minds refreshed, the participants then brainstormed on the topic and recorded their ideas on colorful poster paper, and had an open dialogue guided by pre-established questions.

Figure 9

Poster paper which participants used while brainstorming, sitting upon the carpet in the refresher exercise
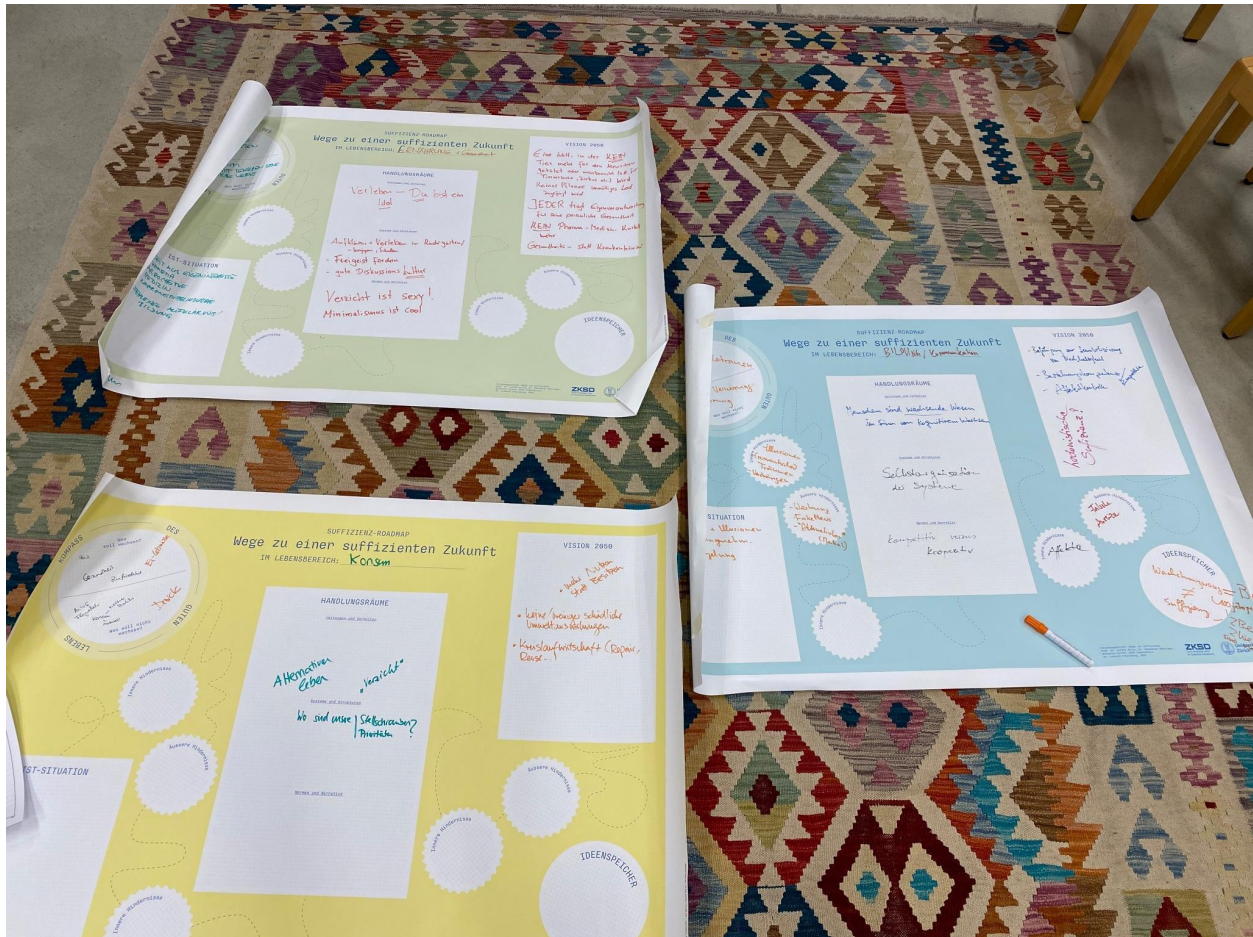
Note. Photo taken with permission from event host René Inderbitzen

When we entered the room, the first thing we noticed was the way the chairs were arranged in the room. They formed a circle that allowed everyone to see each other clearly and communicate easily with anybody else. This emphasized the main focus of this event, which was a dialogue on the event topic. We recognized through our observations that another key aspect to a successful event was a clear and continuous dialogue among attendees, something which was also shown in part by the prior Make It Circular event. Another event feature that boosted dialogue was the apéro immediately afterward. An apéro is a small, social gathering that commonly occurs after a professional event, usually at the same or a nearby location. It features food and drink for people to enjoy, and allows for attendees to speak more casually with each

other. This is where participants would typically have a chance to network and create new connections. At this apéro, we saw many participants talking and getting to know one another, and we, too, were able to talk with several people. In addition to being a nice way to wind down at the end of the event, this apéro provided an excellent setting for people to continue their dialogue with individual attendees, as well as connect with them outside of the context of the event. We firmly believe that without this encouragement of dialogue and sharing of ideas, the Zukunftsapéro event series would not have garnered the amount of popularity and success that it does.

4.2.3 IMPULS

The final event we attended in Zurich was IMPULS, an event organized directly by our sponsors. This event largely consisted of three separate presentations, one from the keynote speaker, who was speaking on sustainability in urban planning, as well as two ZKSD associates, who spoke on their projects working directly with ZKSD. Following these presentations, there was a question panel at the end with the three presenters to encourage audience participation. While the three speakers were the main focus of the event, there was also an apéro following its conclusion where everyone had the chance to interact with each other and discuss further.

Despite the success of the presentation and question panel portion, we noted that there was little opportunity for networking to occur during the event itself. Upon arrival, each person was given a name tag and immediately sent to find a seat, leaving little time to converse with others before the presentations began, at which point their attention was on the speakers for the remainder of the event. In comparison, the apéro provided a far more conducive setting for connection, and encouraged networking across several disciplines and demographics. Participants were talking and discussing throughout the whole space, which was a stark contrast from the quieter atmosphere of the main event.

Our observations were supported through the results of the survey administered at the conclusion of the event. One of our questions asked attendees to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how well the event facilitated interdisciplinary networking, and our response mean was only a 2.71. While close to average, this is not the reception that ZKSD hoped to achieve with this question.

Bridging connections between people is a huge part of ZKSD's overall vision as an organization (ZKSD, 2021), and below average is not their goal for such an important value.

4.3 Planning timelines around different event types

Through our personal communications with our sponsor as well as other event organizers, we were able to explore the details of the time required to plan a successful event. We found that effective planning of an event relies on the consideration of two key factors; the target audience, as well as the scale of the event. The two main groups which ZKSD hopes to appeal to in particular are university students, and non-students that are typically looking for a professional networking setting. In a conversation with Cathérine Hartmann, our primary contact at ZKSD, she made a point to us that the processes of planning for students versus non-students differ greatly in many ways (Hartmann, C., personal communication, 2023). This includes finding a speaker if necessary, creating an attendee or contact list, and preferable times of day to host. These all have different time frames depending on which of the two audiences the event is intended for, which is substantiated by our own communications with local student groups and event organizers.

Figure 10

A visual showing various considerations for different event demographics

When planning a student-oriented event, the first important step is to reach out to student associations at local universities, usually those associated with ZKSD, as both a way to seek out a keynote speaker, if applicable, and begin to get the word out to university students. This is also the beginning of the creation of a contact list for invitations. This process typically happens about three to four months in advance of the event, but should not begin outside of the semester during which the event is set to occur. Additionally, it is preferable to reach out to student organizations with a flier for the event, which would look different than a flier for a more professional demographic. The student flier typically features an attractive, eye-catching design, and has simple and brief information regarding the event. These fliers also have the partnering university and organization that are running and hosting the event displayed prominently. A flier for a student event is distributed by the student association in their biweekly newsletters in addition to being displayed around campus. From responses to this newsletter which includes a link to sign up, the aforementioned attendee list is formed. Besides advertisement, finding catering, as well as a venue outside of the ZKSD offices if necessary, are also time requirements to be considered. In regards to catering, a smaller event would typically be handled about a month in advance, whereas for a larger event, it should be organized at minimum three months

prior. As for venues, while ZKSD has their own office as a reliable venue, should they need to find an alternative, it would take roughly three weeks to find and book.

Figure 11

Example flier templates for student and non-student audiences

Note. Left: student flier, Right: non-student flier. Created by Antonio Ruiz.

On the other hand, planning a non-student event has a slightly different timeline to organize. The process begins with finding a keynote speaker, which, according to Cathérine Hartmann, takes three to four months at the absolute minimum (Hartmann, C., personal communication, 2023). A reason that the keynote speaker is confirmed so early on is because of the general structure of a professional event flier. Compared to a student-oriented flier, a professional flier should put more of an emphasis on the inclusion of details regarding event content. Though the flier should still be visually appealing, that should not be the focus of the advertisement. With ZKSD's current method for forming an event contact list, it takes roughly a month to a month and a half to research and create, and this process begins at minimum four

months prior to the event. Once the contact list and estimated number of attendees are accounted for, the search for catering and confirming a venue will begin. Booking both of these for non-student events follows the same timeframe as for student events, including the same alterations for event scale. The timeframe required for both different scale events and events for different demographics is detailed in the timeline referenced in Appendix B.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

Throughout our time working with ZKSD we had many eye-opening conversations, collected informative data, and made several observations that shaped our understanding of ZKSD and their events. Based on these insights we gathered during our project, we were able to pinpoint key areas of improvement in the aspects of planning and facilitation of networking. From these insights, we were able to form several recommendations to ZKSD through formal documents to be used as guidelines to assist in their planning and evaluation processes, as well as general recommendations to help them better encourage attendees to make connections.

5.1 Recommendations

Our first and primary recommendation to ZKSD detailed the time and necessary steps to plan an event based on several key variables. The variables our recommendations focused on were the size of the event and the target demographic between students and non-students. As detailed in the planning guideline document we provided to ZKSD, the range required for planning certain aspects of a large scale event compared to a small scale event can vary as much as two months without any anticipated barriers. This was reflected in the timeline tables that we included in our document, as well as in this report as Appendix B. In terms of target demographics, we recommend that an event which is geared towards non-students has up to three additional months of planning accounted for in comparison to an event aimed at students. The event's target demographic will also influence the advertisement of the event, such as how a contact list is formed and the type of flier that will be distributed. Our recommendation for advertising an event aimed at non-student attendees is to begin advertising once an attendee list is formed and a speaker is accounted for. We recommend allotting about four months for both finding a keynote speaker and forming a list of participants. Immediately after a speaker is found, a flier should be constructed including this speaker and various event details such as specifics regarding content. In comparison, an event aimed at a student demographic should have a flier made before reaching out to student associations to create an attendee list, which we recommend doing roughly three to four months before hosting an event. This flier should put

more emphasis on design, and generally only contain basic details such as time and place of the event, with a title that gives a premise for the topic.

Additional recommendations we made to ZKSD included insights to the interconnectivity of their networking events. These recommendations were formed through both our observation of these events and administration of feedback surveys. Through the data we collected, we found that interactive aspects and dedicated time for participant interaction greatly increased attendees' ability to effectively make connections at events. Our data reflected that events which heavily encouraged interactivity and conversation had a notably higher amount of networking and interdisciplinary connection compared to those with a lesser emphasis on dialogue. Due to this, we recommend that events with an emphasis on connecting participants include additional dedicated times for attendees to speak freely amongst themselves. Examples of such include encouraging attendees to chat amongst themselves before the event commences, incorporating a break in the middle of the event for them to network with each other, or implementing activities in which they are grouped together with one or more attendees. We believe that this will in turn allow participants to form more connections than before, which will be reflected in surveys administered post-event.

Our final recommendation is that ZKSD continue to utilize surveys based off of our own to give them a consistent method of evaluation for their events. Our own survey went through many different iterations throughout our project, and we found that tailoring it for the event from which it would collect data made the resulting information much more useful. Therefore, we encourage ZKSD to continue to use and improve these surveys so that they can use the feedback to evaluate their events. This would be a vast improvement over current feedback methods, which mainly include responses to a post-event newsletter. Additionally, it would passively contribute to building a contact database for future events on similar topics.

5.2 Conclusion

Our final recommendations and deliverables to ZKSD will enable them to more easily plan and organize interdisciplinary networking events with means to evaluate their success more effectively. With a more streamlined planning process in addition to plans to better facilitate networking, we predict that ZKSD will identify an increase in interdisciplinary connections

made. This will allow them to educate more people about sustainable development and further their goal of connecting people from all sorts of backgrounds and studies. Increasing awareness of sustainable development efforts is a crucial part of finding new solutions for sustainability. The furthering of SDG 17, which is "partnerships for the goals", feeds back into all other goals by increasing this education and discussion about sustainable development practices. When large numbers of people work together for a common cause, we can make more progress than ever imagined before, and ZKSD can be an even greater contributor to bringing people together in this way.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Goal: To understand what students and faculty want from these networking events and what they have learned in the past.

Type of Sampling: In person interviews with students, faculty, other potential attendees

General questions for all interviewees:

1. How many sustainable development networking events have you attended by ZKSD?
   a. Were these events focused on social, economic, and/or environmental sustainability?
2. What did you like about these networking events?
   a. Do you prefer formal or informal networking events?
3. What did you dislike about these networking events?
4. What would you like to learn more about during these networking events?
   a. What would you like to see improved or changed about these networking events?
5. What is your field of work?
6. Did you prefer a more interactive/workshop format, or presentation portion of the event?
   a. What is one way you would improve the workshop/interactive portion?
   b. What is one way you would improve the presentation portion of the event?
7. Have you applied anything you learned from the event since you attended?
8. Have you contacted any connections made at the event?
9. Do you plan to attend any future ZKSD events?

Specific questions for students and faculty:

1. With which university are you affiliated?
2. What is your field of study?
3. What are common communication channels used at your university?

Appendix B: Proposed timelines for event planning

Goal: After discussing with ZKSD, various event coordinators, and student associations, we determined effective timeframes for planning events depending on both size of the event and target demographic. We provided these visual representations of the timelines to ZKSD in a formal document detailing recommendations for planning events.

Timeline of planning non-student events:

Non-Student Event Timeline		4 month	3 month	2 month	1 month	Weeks before
Small Scale	Speaker		▓			
	Venue		▓	▓	▓	
	Advertising		▓	▓	▓	▓
	Catering				▓	▓
Large Scale	Speaker	▓	▓			
	Venue		▓	▓	▓	
	Advertising	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
	Catering		▓	▓	▓	▓

- Speaker: Finding a speaker for a non-student event typically begins shortly after the idea for the event forms. It involves reaching out to professionals or those knowledgeable in that specific field and can take months to organize.
- Venue: ZKSD has their own office to use as a venue, and the additional backup venue of Kulturpark that takes no longer than three months of notice to use
- Advertising: Advertising for a non-student event begins as soon as the idea for the event forms. It involves reaching out to various organizations and companies to first compile an attendee list, which the time required scales in proportion to the sizeof the event. Then, ZKSD will begin to spread fliers and promotions about the event about a month and a half to a month before depending on scale.
- Catering: ZKSD has two catering services it uses for most events. For a larger scale event, they need three months' notice to be able to prepare, whereas smaller scale events

can be done on a shorter notice, no more than a month.

Timeline of planning university student events:

Student Event Timeline		4 month	3 month	2 month	1 month	Weeks before
Small Scale	Speaker		▓			
	Venue		▓	▓	▓	
	Advertising			▓	▓	▓
	Catering				▓	▓
Large Scale	Speaker	▓	▓			
	Venue		▓	▓	▓	
	Advertising			▓	▓	▓
	Catering		▓	▓	▓	▓

- Speaker: Finding a speaker for a student-oriented event is typically handled by a student association, beginning when ZKSD reaches out regarding holding an event. Finding a speaker for a larger-scale event takes longer due to finding a more qualified and well-known speaker

- Venue: ZKSD has their own office to use as a venue, and the additional backup venue of Kulturpark that takes no longer than three months of notice to use

- Advertising: Advertising for a student event is done through the student associations, and typically involves the student group sending out an email to students with a flier. This is typically done as soon as a speaker and venue is confirmed

- Catering: ZKSD has two catering services it uses for most events. For a larger scale event, they need three months' notice to be able to prepare, whereas smaller scale events can be done on a shorter notice, no more than a month.

Appendix C: Post-Event Questionnaire Templates

Goal: To receive feedback about our event that will inform future events and how to improve them

Type of Sampling: Population sampling of attendees, we will request at the end of or after each event that they complete the form to provide us with feedback.

Student Event Questionnaire:

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your enjoyment of [insert event feature here]?
    (1 = Did not enjoy, 5 = Enjoyed a lot)
2. On a scale from 1 to 5, how well did the event help you to interact with people in disciplines or majors you do not typically interact with?
    (1 = Did not help, 5 = Helped a lot)
3. On a scale from 1 to 5, how engaged did you feel about the topics discussed at the event?
    (1 = Unengaged, 5 = Very engaged)
4. Do you have any suggestions for an event format that would allow you to better connect with other attendees?

Textbox

5. [Optional Dropdown List] Which of the following universities are you from?

Dropdown list

6. [Optional Multi-select] What broad field(s) does your major fall under?
    a. Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics
    b. Humanities or Arts
    c. Social Sciences
    d. Business or Finance
    e. Another field

Non-student Event Questionnaire:

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your enjoyment of [insert event feature here]?
   (1 = Did not enjoy, 5 = Enjoyed a lot)

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, how well did the event help you to interact with people in disciplines you do not typically interact with?
   (1 = Did not help, 5 = Helped a lot)

3. On a scale from 1 to 5, how clearly do you think you understand the topic after attending this event?
   (1 = No understanding, 5 = Great understanding)

4. Do you have any suggestions for how we could more effectively facilitate attendee networking?

Textbox

5. [Optional Dropdown List] Which of the following organizations are you from?

Dropdown list

Appendix D: Verbal Interviews Consent Script

As a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, United States, we would like to invite you to participate in an interview for our research to learn more about your experience at past ZKSD networking events for sustainable development. The purpose of our research is to coordinate networking events across multiple universities and disciplines to develop tomorrow's interdisciplinary solutions for today's problems in the area of sustainable development. The kind of information that we aim to get from the interview is what you have liked, disliked, or would like to see improved with ZKSD's networking events on sustainable development. We anticipate that the interview should take about ten to fifteen minutes.

This is a collaborative project between the Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development (ZKSD) and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. Information from our project will be published in a publicly available academic document at the end of our term and we can share a copy of our results if you are interested. No names or identifying information will appear in any of the project reports or publications unless you give us consent to do so.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This also means that you can skip any questions that you want. Do you have any questions for us about this interview?

For more information about this research and the rights of research participants, you may contact us by email gr-ZurichNetworking@wpi.edu or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Manager (Ruth McKeogh, Tel. 508-831-6699, Email: irb@wpi.edu) or Human Protection Administrator (Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu). Thank you very much!