

# Call for Contributions

## *„Fight Over the Cake or Own the Kitchen!“*

# Municipal Finance Symposium

**Expanding Municipal Agency through Non-Extractive Finance, Local Monetary Architecture, and Institutional Innovation**

**19-21 November 2026***
**Hochschule für Gestaltung HfG, Ulm, Germany**

*Please note the event will now run over three days rather than the five originally announced (18–22 November 2026) in our Save the Date.

**Abstract**

Municipalities across the world are experiencing strict fiscal austerity and unsustainable debt levels with varying severity, rooted in a systematic architectural failure in multi-level governance. In Germany, the structural financing gap between rapidly growing public needs and shrinking available resources has produced intense redistribution conflicts: between municipalities and counties, between states and national governments, over increasingly limited funds. Proposed solutions to municipal financing problems typically focus on meliorative policy adjustments — tweaking transfer formulas, lobbying for larger budget allocations, or optimising fiscal governance within existing frameworks — rather than addressing the fundamental systemic conditions.

This redistribution dynamic plays out in a space largely disconnected from different sustainable development and social change discourses, which themselves seem siloed from one another. The combined effect of these parallel disconnections — fiscal politics here, ecological transition there, social transformation somewhere else — makes any attempt to coherently address the challenges facing municipalities an intractable problem.

But is it really? This symposium advances the hypothesis that framing municipal finance as a zero-sum redistribution problem at the federal level — within institutional arrangements that severely restrict local public sector agency and reinforce an outdated top-down social contract — forecloses the possibility of an ambitious discussion about the social foundations of finance, in particular the monetary instrument itself.

This symposium is inspired by the motivation to keep the control of local finances local and to look in depth at possible monetary architectures — a design approach which opens fundamentally different solution spaces than are visible from within any single discourse.

**Format: Collaborative Working Symposium**

Rather than functioning as a conventional conference centred exclusively on presentations, the Municipal Finance Symposium is designed as a collaborative working symposium. We currently envisage the following formats:

- Keynote presentations
- Research/Paper presentations (plenary or separate workshops)
- Interactive thematic workshops / roundtable discussions
- Long coffee and lunch breaks to allow individual discussions and networking

**Themes | Contribution Areas**

- Municipal Finance Challenges | Rethinking Municipal Finance
- Innovative Financial Instruments | Local Monetary Architecture
- Ethical Banking and Collaborative Finance | Financing Social-Ecological Transformation
- Trade Finance and Liquidity Efficiency in Payment Systems | Multilateral Trade Credit Set-off (MTCS)
- Ergodicity Economics and Cooperative Economic Models
- Institutional Design for Transformative Municipalities
- Political Economy of Municipal Transformation
- Digital Infrastructure for Municipal Finance
- Dynamic Modelling of Monetary Systems

**Cross-cutting Questions**

- How can municipalities expand their economic agency beyond dependence on fiscal redistribution?
- To what extent must public sector financial innovation rely on investment capital?
- Can working capital innovations like mutual credit and liquidity efficiency innovations like multilateral trade credit set-off (MTCS) also play a role in local public sector finance?
- Which financial innovations enable municipalities to retain greater control over locally generated value?
- How can local currencies and mutual credit systems include public-sector actors (and vice versa)?
- Which institutional arrangements strengthen municipal resilience and transformative capacity?
- What is the role of a local monetary architecture in sustainable regional development?
- What governance innovations are needed to support collaborative local finance?
- How can municipalities become active designers rather than passive recipients of financial systems?
- Which institutional innovations can reconnect finance with social and ecological objectives?
- How can local financial systems improve long-term resilience rather than merely short-term efficiency?

**Timeline**

- Deadline for submissions of abstracts is **21 September 2026**
- Notification of acceptance: **12 October 2026**
- Final programme published: **9 November 2026**
- Municipal Finance Symposium: **19–21 November 2026**

**Submission Address**
Please send your abstract to: events@ecoloc.org

**Submission Guidelines**
We welcome contributions from researchers, practitioners, local policymakers, financial institutions, civil society organisations, and collaborative initiatives. Please submit:

- Title / Author / Affiliation
- Abstract (approximately 300 words) | Presentation format
- Short biography (100–150 words) | Contact details
- Contributions should be submitted in English
- Because this is a working symposium, in-person attendance is expected for all presentations. We may make exceptions based on location or individual circumstances.
- Please note that we plan to livestream the event.

**Ticketing**
Ticketing details are being finalized; pricing will be tiered to ensure fair access across institutional, academic, non-profit, and student participants.

**About the organiser**
ecoloc - local transformation design is a steward-owned think tank working on local monetary architectures and municipal institutional innovation. We develop local transformation frameworks that align economic, social, and environmental sustainability objectives through the design of non-extractive monetary and financial instruments in collaboration with local public sector actors and key local stakeholders to cultivate socio-economic transformation at the local level.

ecoloc
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Our website www.ecoloc.org is currently under construction.