

2025/2026

connect US

DESIGNING TOMORROW

How Innovation Shapes Sustainable Urban Life and Conscious Living

Seminar in Switzerland

About International Student Projects

Our International Student Projects Insight China, Focus India, connectUS, and exploreASEAN are flagship initiatives within the FHNW School of Business, organized by teams of students for delegations of students in their final year, all of whom are eager to learn and perform in international business. The project teams work under supervision of a FHNW lecturer. Designed to create a unique and vibrant platform for networking opportunities, these projects allow specially recruited students to gain unique business culture experiences, explore contemporary business concepts, and access valuable opportunities. Each initiative includes two major segments: a preparatory seminar held in Switzerland followed by a study-trip abroad. These seminars provide exclusive insights into the target country or regions, examining their business landscape along with cultural, political, socio-economic and demographic challenges.



Designing Tomorrow – How Innovation Shapes Sustainable Urban Life and Conscious Living

connectUS

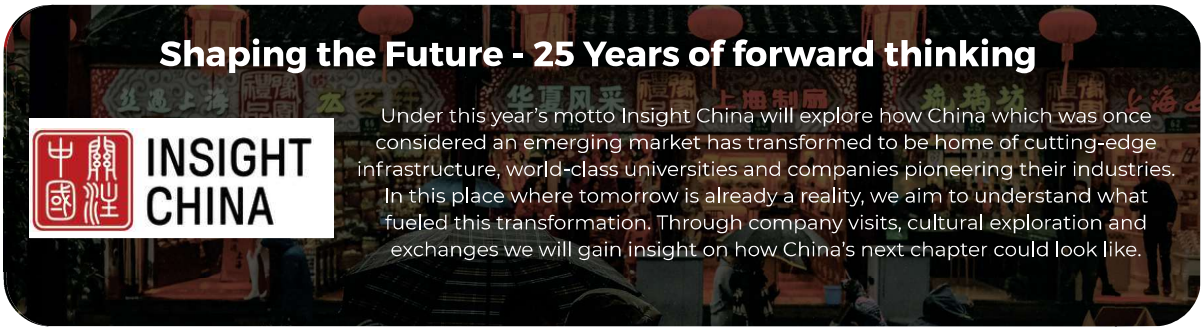
The newest edition of connectUS explores how design, data, and digital culture are transforming urban life in times of rapid environmental and social change. We examine how innovation shapes conscious living across key areas: sustainable mobility, mental health, mindful consumption, and climate-aware urban planning. By highlighting opportunities and challenges at the intersection of technology and society, we uncover how new ideas can foster resilience, well-being, and sustainability in tomorrow's cities.



Mosaic of Minds – Changemakers Shaping Impactful Innovation

FOCUS INDIA

Focus India 2025/26 explores how Swiss and Indian perspectives intersect to show that cultural diversity is a powerful driver of purposeful innovation. Through seminars, company visits, and collaboration with changemakers, the project highlights how heritage and forward-thinking ideas come together to create lasting value. By bridging cultures and disciplines, we examine how innovation can foster sustainability, empower different generations, and inspire solutions that reach beyond borders. At its core, Focus India shows that real change comes not only from technology, but also from people, vision and shared experience.



Shaping the Future - 25 Years of forward thinking

INSIGHT CHINA

Under this year's motto Insight China will explore how China which was once considered an emerging market has transformed to be home of cutting-edge infrastructure, world-class universities and companies pioneering their industries. In this place where tomorrow is already a reality, we aim to understand what fueled this transformation. Through company visits, cultural exploration and exchanges we will gain insight on how China's next chapter could look like.



SmartASEAN: Innovation Beyond Borders

exploreASEAN

ExploreASEAN is where curiosity, innovation, and global perspectives come together. This year's theme, SmartASEAN: Innovation Beyond Borders, emphasizes how smart technologies can drive progress across societies while building economic bridges between cultures.A central aspect is the comparison and dialogue between ASEAN and Swiss innovations and companies. This allows students to compare developments, exchange knowledge, and explore how different strengths can be combined for greater impact, thus identifying synergies and opportunities for cooperation and growth.



Mission Statement

At connectUS, we are dedicated to exploring how innovation can help shape more conscious, sustainable, and livable urban futures. In a rapidly changing world, we aim to empower future leaders to critically engage with the social, environmental, and technological transformations that define modern urban life.

Our mission is to guide FHNW students through key topics such as sustainable urban design, inclusive mobility systems, the influence of digital platforms on consumption and identity, and the growing importance of mental well-being in an always-connected world. From the spaces we build to the choices we make as digital citizens, we look at how innovation can inspire healthier, more responsible ways of living.

By connecting students with experts, companies, and communities in Switzerland, Canada, and the U.S., we seek to foster dialogue, encourage critical thinking, and exchange actionable ideas for more sustainable and human-centered innovation.

Join us in designing tomorrow, by rethinking how we live, move, consume, and care in a digital and urban age.



Meet Our Team.



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Project & Delegation Management

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Partnership & Finance Management

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Vanessa Studer

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Akchayan Sivakumar

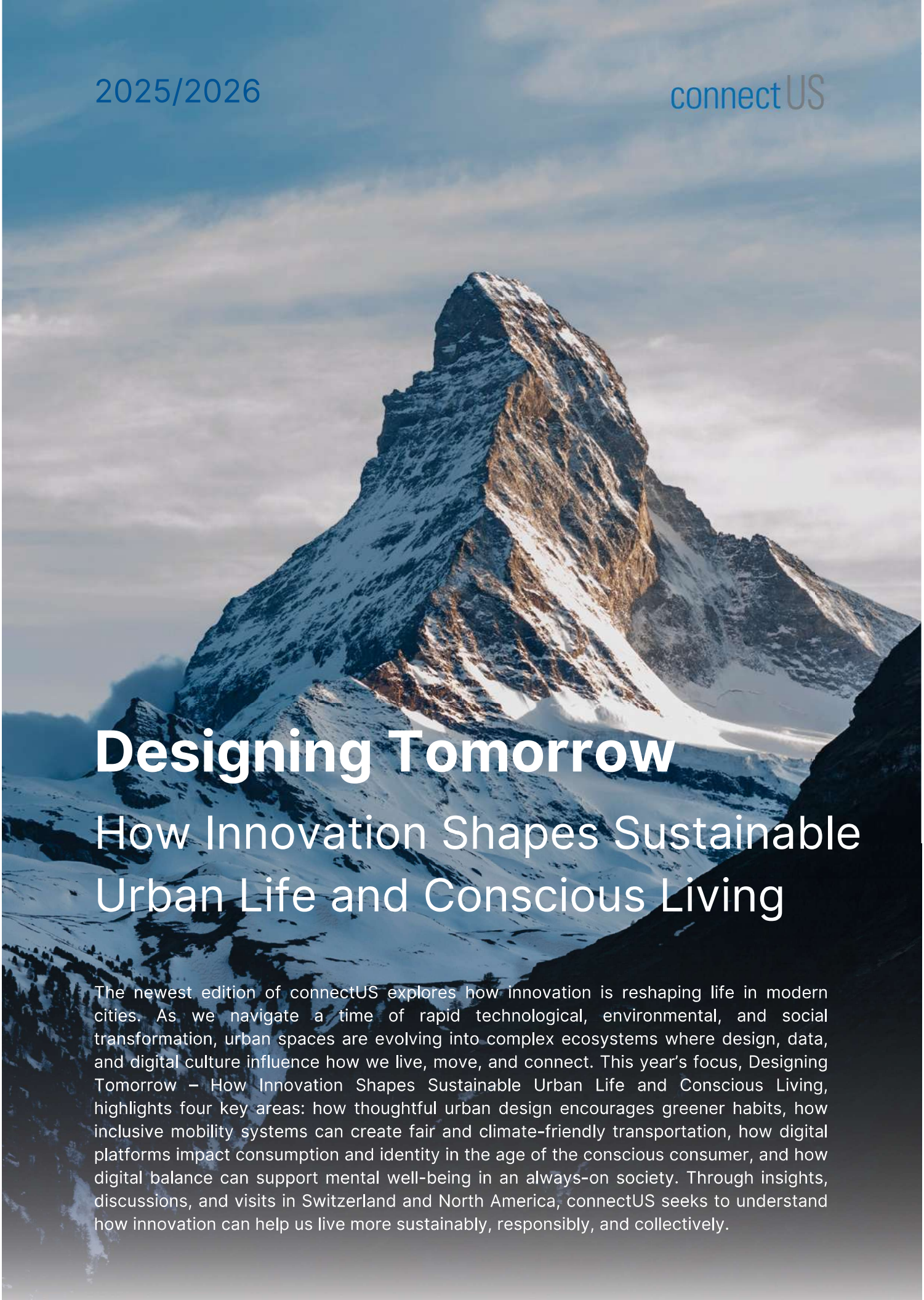
Communications Management

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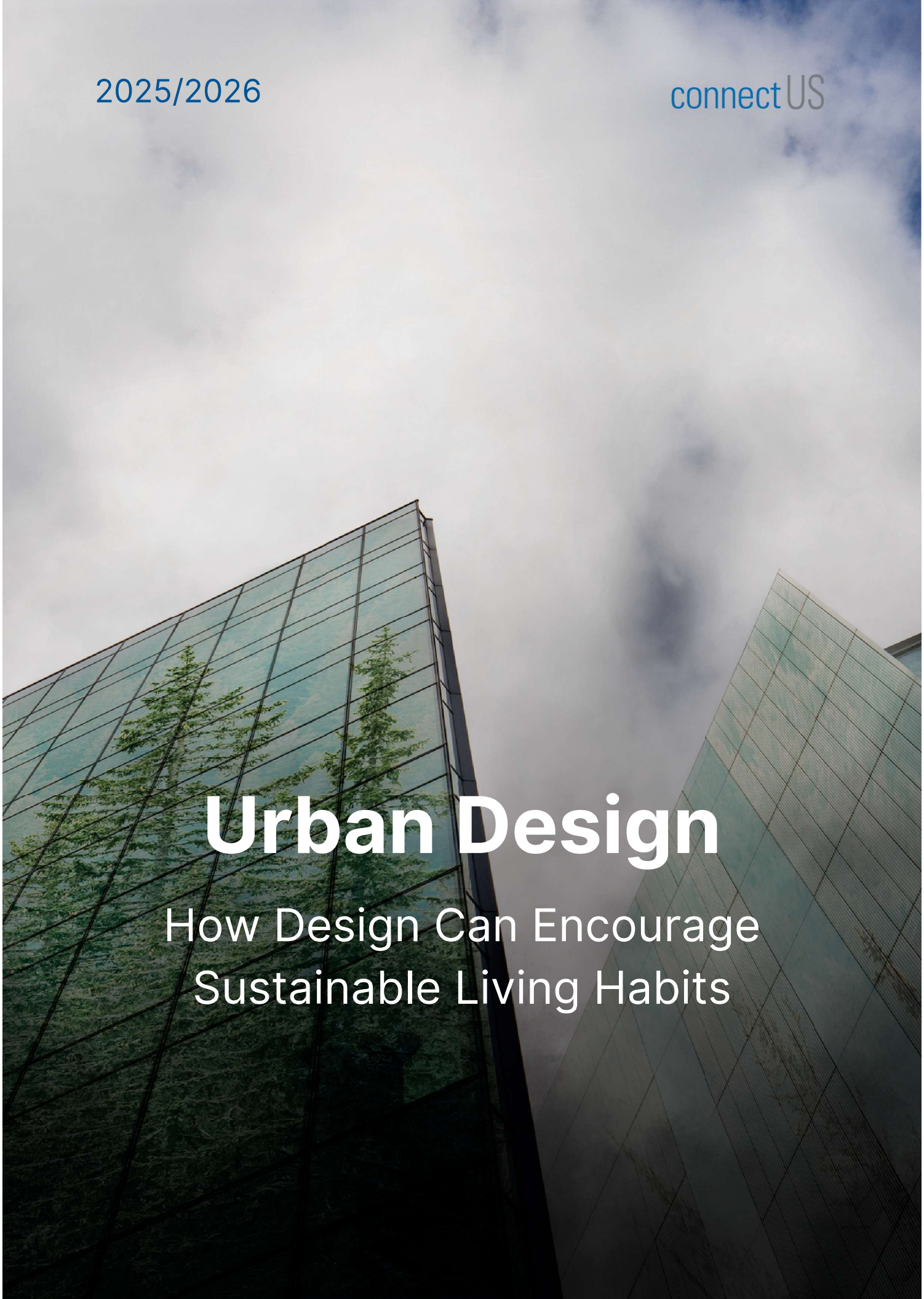
Designing Tomorrow

How Innovation Shapes Sustainable Urban Life and Conscious Living

The newest edition of connectUS explores how innovation is reshaping life in modern cities. As we navigate a time of rapid technological, environmental, and social transformation, urban spaces are evolving into complex ecosystems where design, data, and digital culture influence how we live, move, and connect. This year's focus, Designing Tomorrow – How Innovation Shapes Sustainable Urban Life and Conscious Living, highlights four key areas: how thoughtful urban design encourages greener habits, how inclusive mobility systems can create fair and climate-friendly transportation, how digital platforms impact consumption and identity in the age of the conscious consumer, and how digital balance can support mental well-being in an always-on society. Through insights, discussions, and visits in Switzerland and North America, connectUS seeks to understand how innovation can help us live more sustainably, responsibly, and collectively.

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Urban Design

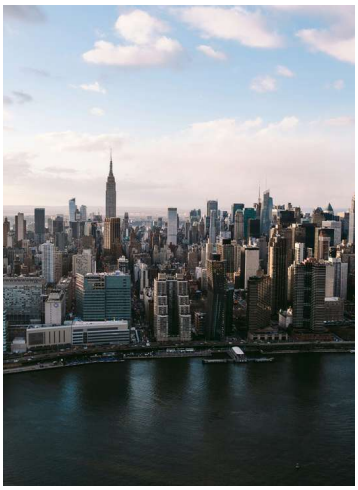
How Design Can Encourage Sustainable Living Habits

2025/2026

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URBAN DESIGN

How Design Can Encourage Sustainable Living Habits



Imagine a city where infrastructure inspires people to live consciously every day. Well-designed urban spaces make it easier to walk, cycle, and use public transport, while circular systems encourage repairing, reusing, and sharing instead of wasting. This is the vision of sustainable design — creating environments that guide our daily behaviors toward responsibility and resilience, transforming urban life into a driver of the circular economy.

Cities are becoming places that adapt, learn and respond to their environment. From buildings that track their own CO_2 emissions to materials that naturally break down and return to the earth, urban design plays an important role in shaping the way we live.

But even the most advanced systems depend on the people who use them. This subtopic looks at how well-designed spaces, both at home and in public, can support healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. The goal is to make conscious choices feel easier, more natural and more appealing in everyday life.



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Inclusive Mobility

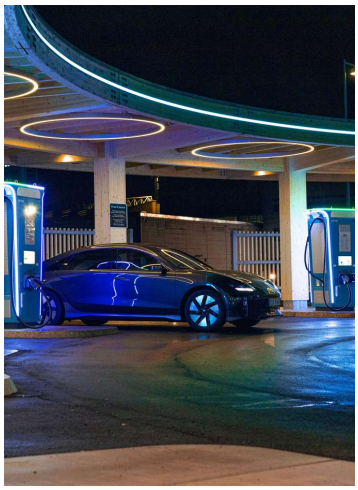
Designing Sustainable Access in Motion

2025/2026

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INCLUSIVE MOBILITY

Designing Sustainable Access in Motion



Picture a city where transportation is fair, accessible, and sustainable for everyone. Smart mobility solutions connect people seamlessly, reducing congestion and pollution while ensuring that no community is left behind. This is the vision of equitable transport — designing systems that prioritize access, efficiency, and environmental care, creating a healthier and more connected urban future.

Modern mobility is not only about electric vehicles. It is also about making transport more inclusive, fair, and smart. This means using data and new technologies to ensure that everyone, no matter their age, income, or physical ability, can move around safely and easily.
From self-driving delivery trucks to flexible bike-sharing systems, this topic explores how future mobility can become more sustainable and accessible for all.



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The Conscious Consumer: Digital, Urban, Responsible

Consuming with Intention

2025/2026

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CONSCIOUS
CONSUMER

Digital, Urban, Responsible



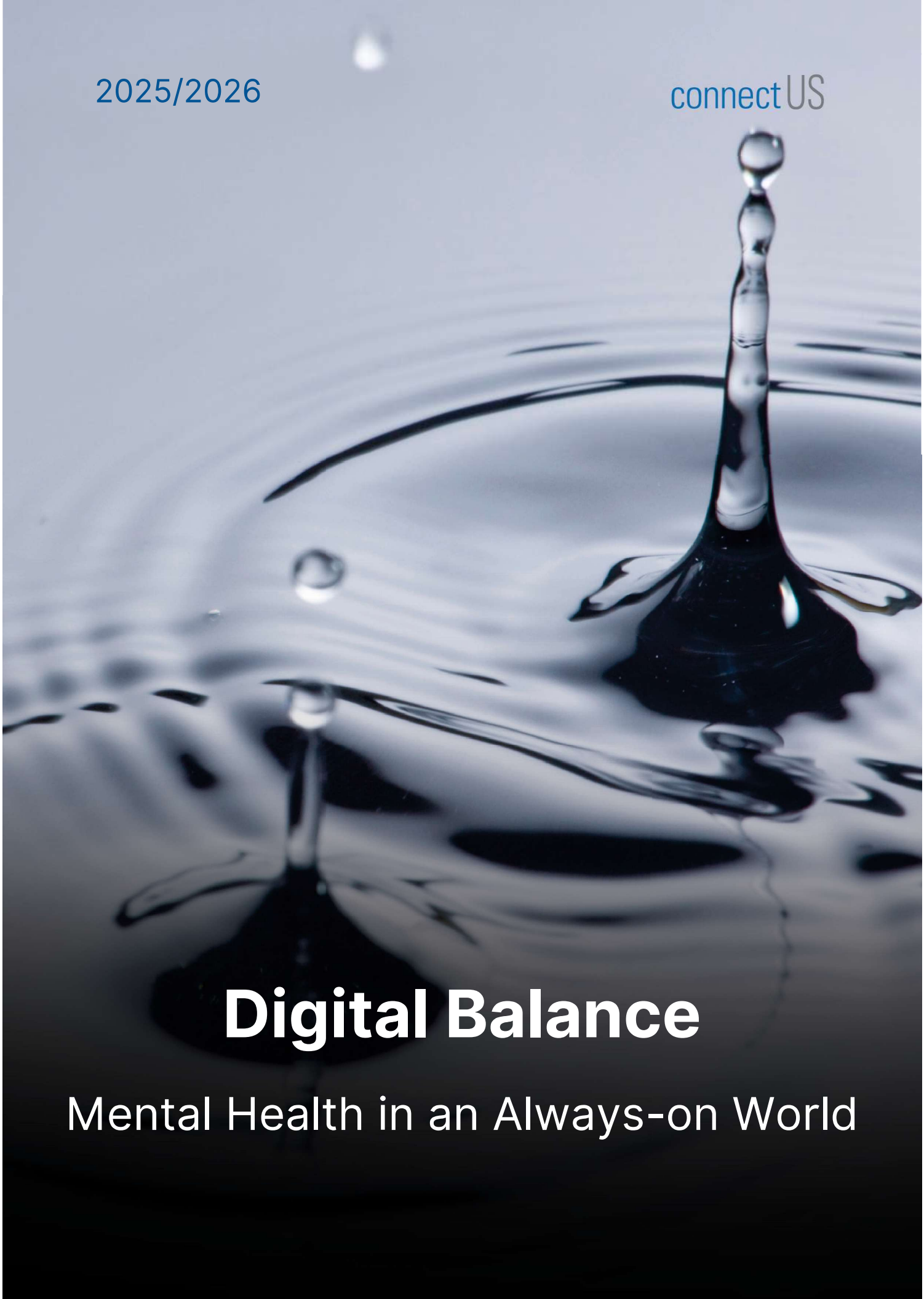
We live in a world where technology shapes not only how we live, but also who we are. From the way we shop and communicate to the choices we make about our health and leisure, digital tools influence our daily habits and redefine our identities. This is the reality of our modern lifestyle — a dynamic shift where technology drives consumption patterns, creates new cultural norms, and reshapes the way we perceive ourselves and others.

This topic explores how digital platforms, urban culture, and brand communication are shaping how we live, consume, and define ourselves in a time of rapid technological and social change. In today's world, social media and artificial intelligence have become deeply embedded in everyday life, influencing not just how we communicate, but also how we shop, dress, and express who we are. From refillable beauty products and circular fashion to algorithm-driven content and AI-powered personalization, the focus lies on how modern living spaces intersect with digital innovation and sustainability. It also considers how design, branding, and storytelling can help encourage more responsible and conscious consumer behavior, while questioning the role of AI in shaping our values, preferences, and lifestyle choices.



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Digital Balance

Mental Health in an Always-on World

2025/2026

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DIGITAL BALANCE



Mental Health in an Always- On World

Imagine a digital world where technology strengthens our well-being instead of draining it. Thoughtfully designed online spaces and remote work practices can support balance, reduce stress, and foster healthier habits. This is the vision of digital well-being — creating environments that nurture mental health, encourage meaningful connection, and help us thrive in an increasingly connected world.

In an increasingly digital society, constant connectivity has become the norm. From smartphones and messaging apps to virtual meetings and social platforms, people are exposed to continuous input, interaction, and expectations. While these technologies enable communication and access to information, they also present challenges to mental well-being.

This subtopic explores the impact of digital lifestyles on psychological health. It considers how the structure of digital platforms, remote work dynamics, and information overload contribute to stress, anxiety, and emotional fatigue. The aim is to understand how innovation can help restore balance, through responsible design, digital self-care tools, and work environments that promote mental resilience.

Rather than viewing technology solely as a risk factor, this perspective highlights its potential to support well-being when applied thoughtfully.



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SEMINAR IN SWITZERLAND - PROGRAM

Monday, 09.02.2026	Tuesday, 10.02.2026	Wednesday, 11.02.2026	Thursday, 12.02.2026	Friday, 13.02.2026
Joint Welcome Address with Michele Canonico & Marcel Hirsiger All ISP's, 08:30 - 09:15	**Seminar Abroad Preparation** connectUS Team 8:45 - 9:30	**Daily Briefing** connectUS, 9:00 - 9:15		
Joint Morning Coffee & Photo Session ISP's and connectUS 09:15 - 10:30	**Break**	**Digital Business** Camilla Mentesana, Equipe One AG 09:15 - 10:00	**Traveling by Carpooling**	**Joint Welcome Address** 08:45 - 09:00
Sustainable Real Estate Management as a Driver of Urban Resilience Miryam Sohm, Nele Keshishian, Corina Salomon, Wincasa 10:30 - 11:30	**Digital Balance and Responsible Innovation** Haris Besic, Previon, 10:00 - 10:50	**Break**	**Meeting Point at Brack** 10:15	**Career Fair:** **Presentations of Companies** 09:00 - 10:00
Welcome to connectUS 2026 11:30 - 12:15	**Short Break**	**Canada: Culture, Innovation, and Sustainability** Hauke Harms, 10:30 - 11:15	**Company Visit Brack** Rossgassmoos 10 6130 Willisau 10:30 - 12:00	**Company Walk + Speed Interviews + CV Checks** 10:15 - 11:30
Lunch Break	**US Political System Unlocked** Dr. Kevin Stringer, FHNW 11:00 - 12:00	**Get to know the Canadian Culture** connectUS 11:15 - 12:00		
	Lunch Break	**Lunch Break**	**Lunch Break** Traveling by Carpooling	**Lunch Break**
Let's Connect: Exchange with connectUS Alumni's Michael Schranz, Deborah Libardi, Saskia Lafond-Rive 13:15 - 15:00	**Sustainability and Key Impulses** Anina Döbeli, SBB 13:15 - 14:15	**Daily Briefing** connectUS, 13:15 - 13:30		**Closing connectUS** 12:45 - 13:00
		A UNESCO Region as a Living Lab for Sustainable Innovation Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schatz, Biosphäre Entlebuch 13:30 - 14:15	**Join Insight China: Lessons from 25 Years of Sino-Swiss Engagement: Navigating Opportunity and Geopolitical Complexity** Simon Michel, Jean-Philippe Albert, Jean-Michel Ah Kong, Lukas Zuest, Bin Sheng, Fiona Gao, Beat Berner, Mathias Binswanger, Huawei, Moderator Michael Jeive, 13:00 - 14:40	**Delegations Reflection Presentation** Preparation 13:00 - 14:15
Break	**Break**	**Short Break**		**Short Break**
	Insights from the Swiss Federal Office regarding Urban Design Dr. Stefan Wittwer, ARE, 14:45 - 15:30	**Fintech** Christian Gmür, Leonteq Marco Stauffacher, Raiffeisen Bank 14:30 - 15:45	**Short Break**	**Delegations Plenary Reflection Presentations** All ISP's, 14:30 - 15:10
Perspectives on Sustainable Transformation Frederike Harms, Marie Bäumer, KPMG 15:30 - 16:30	**Break**		**Reflection Lounge** connectUS Team, 15:00 - 16:00	
Daily Briefing 16:35 - 16:50	**Reflection Lounge** connectUS Team, 16:00 - 16:30	**Short Break**		**Closure + Apéro** All ISP's & Antje Leukens 15:15 - open end
	Break	**Engineering Sustainable Infrastructure** Martin Bachmann, Mageba 16:00 - 17:00		
	Insights into the American Politics, Culture and Business (Online) Jens Korte, New York German Press 17:00 - 18:30			

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Location

The seminar in Switzerland takes place at the FHNW campus in Olten. We will meet every morning for the first block in room OVR A014.

Time

Please ensure to always be seated 5 - 10 minutes before the session starts, so that we can start on time and show our appreciation for the speakers and our guests. In case of delay or emergencies, please contact: Lars Kleeb +41 79 969 37 15.

Offline Mode

Please make sure you switch off your phones during all sessions. This ensures that we can follow the seminar without any distractions.

Dress Code

The dress code during the seminar in Switzerland is business casual.

Laptop & Headphones

Please bring a laptop (or another electronic device) and headphones. in case a session needs to move online at short notice. During the speeches, only the Communication Team and the two participants working on the assignment are allowed to have their laptops on the table.

General Etiquette

Please take all notes only with pen and paper during presentations and workshops. No laptops or electronic devices are allowed unless specifically stated. No eating food or chewing gum during presentations. Please show respect to our guests by always showing up on time and actively participating.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Monday 09.02.2026



Michele Canonico

School of Business FHNW

Michele Canonico has been a Management Board Member and Head of Services at the FHNW School of Business since January 2006. As the Head of Services at the School of Business, he oversees various administrative functions and ensures the efficient operation of the school's services.

Marcel Hirsiger

School of Business FHNW



Marcel Hirsiger is a lecturer at the FHNW School of Business in Olten and an expert on Eastern Europe. He studied Business Administration with a focus on Controlling at FHNW and later specialized in Eastern European Studies at the Universities of Bern and Fribourg.

SUSTAINABLE REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT AS A DRIVER OF URBAN RESILIENCE

wincasa



Miryam Sohm

Senior Sustainability Project Manager



Nele Keshishian

Sustainability Project Manager



Corina Salomon

Head of Community & Promotion Management

Wincasa is Switzerland's leading integrated real estate service provider, offering its clients a broad portfolio of services covering the entire real estate life cycle: from planning, construction, and management to revitalization and repositioning of properties. Founded in 1999, the public limited company is present in all parts of the country and has been part of Implenia since May 2023.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Monday 09.02.2026

LET'S CONNECT EXCHANGE WITH CONNECTUS ALUMNI'S



Michael Schranz

Co Founder & Project Manager of connectUS

Founder of AHEAD OF TIME, specializing in digital transformation and holistic marketing.



Deborah Libardi

Project Manager

M&A / Corporate Finance Senior Associate at PwC Switzerland.



Saskia Lafond-Rive

Project Manager

Global Employer Brand Manager at Hitachi Energy

PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION



Frederike Harms

Assistant Manager Sustainability & ESG Services



Marie Bäumer

Assistant Manager Corporate Sustainability Services

KPMG International is a global network of legally independent and autonomous firms providing audit, tax, legal, and business and management consulting services, headquartered in London with its operational headquarters in Amstelveen, serving clients across a wide range of industries worldwide and supporting organizations in navigating complex regulatory, financial, and strategic challenges.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Tuesday 10.02.2026

DIGITAL BALANCE AND RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION



Haris Bešić
Head of Customer Success

With over ten years of experience in marketing and digital strategy, Haris Bešić helps organisations drive brand development and digital transformation in a strategic and user-centred way. He is responsible for Customer Success, Marketing and Sales, leading strategy, budgets and end-to-end project delivery while driving company-wide digitalisation initiatives from process design to implementation and change management.

US POLITICS UNLOCKED

Dr. Kevin Stringer
Lecturer at the FHNW

Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz



Dr. Kevin Stringer is an Associate Professor for Modern Warfare at the Military Academy of Lithuania and a Lecturer in Strategy and Leadership at the University of Northwestern Switzerland. With 30 years of commissioned military service, he served as a Eurasian foreign area officer and strategist in the special operations community. As an academic practitioner, his expertise and research focus on irregular warfare, special operations and multinational operations.

At FHNW he teaches Business Communication 4: International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Leadership and Corporate Governance, and Gray Zone: Conflict in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Tuesday 10.02.2026

SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY IMPULSES

SBB CFF FFS



Anina Döbeli

Project Leader Energy Efficiency and Sustainability

Anina Döbeli is an energy efficiency and sustainability expert with experience in the Swiss energy sector, including work related to Pensionskasse SBB and SBB Energie. She is engaged in promoting sustainable energy practices and sharing insights on career fields and opportunities within the energy industry.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SWISS FEDERAL OFFICE REGARDING URBAN DESIGN

Dr. Stefan Wittwer

Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)



He earned his PhD in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Bern, where he worked and taught in the fields of public policy and policy evaluation and conducted research on economic development policy in small and medium-sized Swiss towns. He then worked as a postdoctoral researcher at ETH Zurich, focusing on spatial planning in Switzerland, particularly on public acceptance of local densification measures. He is currently responsible for the “Research, Evaluation and Innovation” unit at the Federal Office for Spatial Development, where he works on topics such as measuring the drivers and impacts of sustainable densification, the role of spatial planning in times of urban housing shortages, and impact assessment across all areas of the ARE.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Tuesday 10.02.2026

INSIGHTS INTO THE AMERICAN POLITICS, CULTURE AND BUSINESS (ONLINE)

nygp



Jens Korte

President & Senior Correspondent, New York, German Press

Jens Korte has lived and worked in New York since the late 1990s, reporting daily on economic developments in the world's largest economy for radio, television and print media. His work covers major economic and political events in the United States, including multiple economic cycles, global crises and U.S. presidencies from Clinton to Biden.

After studying economics in Berlin, he moved to New York and founded new york german press in 2003. He is a guest professor at PHW Bern and has been a member of the board of the German International School New York (GISNY) since 2022.

Wednesday 11.02.2026

DIGITAL BUSINESS

equipe

Camilla Mentesana

Head of Strategy



Camilla Mentesana is a global marketing leader with over a decade of experience driving brand transformation, market expansion and digital innovation for some of the world's most recognized consumer brands. She specializes in scaling marketing impact across international markets, having led high-profile campaigns and go-to-market strategies across EMEA, APAC and the Americas.

By combining creative vision with strong analytical rigor, she delivers measurable business growth through brand launches, digital transformation initiatives and omnichannel strategies in fast-paced, dynamic environments.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Wednesday 11.02.2026

CANADA: CULTURE, INNOVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY



Hauke Harms

Trade Commissioner

Hauke Harms is passionate about sustainability and innovation, providing market insights, business opportunities and valuable connections to clients. He focuses on bringing the right people together as a key driver of innovation and a more sustainable economy, leveraging his scientific background to identify commercial potential and his strong soft skills to align stakeholders.

He is a Trade Commissioner at the Embassy of Canada | Ambassade du Canada, supporting companies and institutions in fostering international collaboration and sustainable growth.

A UNESCO REGION AS A LIVING LAB FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schatz

Director



Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schatz is an experienced education manager with over 18 years of experience in higher education and currently leads the UNESCO Biosphäre Entlebuch. His work focuses on sustainable development and the creation of a future-oriented society, shaped by strong expertise in management, sustainability and the higher education sector.

Together with his team, he develops innovative solutions and strengthens the UNESCO Biosphere Entlebuch as a model region for sustainable development. Through effective management and strategic planning, he aims to create a lasting positive impact on both society and the environment.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Wednesday 11.02.2026

FINTECH



Christian Gmür
Managing Director

Christian Gmür is a Managing Director at Leonteq and a Founding Partner at ConveneX AG. He has a long track record in sales and financial services and now focuses on connecting people and opportunities, supporting companies with growth, commercial strategy and corporate culture topics.

Marco Stauffacher
Head Structuring & Development - Structured Products



Marco Stauffacher is a finance professional currently serving as Head of Structuring & Development – Structured Products at Raiffeisen Markets in Zurich. In this role he specialises in structuring financial products, developing solutions for institutional clients and contributing to the growth and innovation of structured products within the bank.

ENGINEERING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE



Martin E. Bachmann
CEO

Martin E. Bachmann is a senior executive and investor with extensive international experience in private equity, infrastructure, energy, and water & environmental sectors. He has held top leadership roles as MD, CEO and Group Executive Committee member, leading large-scale, multi-billion-dollar infrastructure projects worldwide. As a board member, shareholder and advisor, he supports CEOs and management teams in strategy development, M&A, post-merger integration, business growth and international expansion.

COMPANY VISIT

Thursday 12.02.2026

BRACK

BRACK is one of Switzerland's leading e-commerce companies, recognized for its strong commitment to innovation, efficiency and customer-centric digital retail. With a broad and continuously expanding product portfolio, BRACK serves both private and business customers through a highly integrated and technology-driven online platform.

The company places a strong emphasis on operational excellence, supported by advanced logistics, automation and data-driven processes that enable fast, reliable delivery across Switzerland. By continuously investing in digital infrastructure, platform development and scalable logistics solutions, BRACK drives sustainable growth and sets benchmarks in the Swiss e-commerce landscape.

Guided by a clear focus on quality, transparency and long-term value creation, BRACK combines technological expertise with a deep understanding of customer needs. This approach allows the company to adapt quickly to changing market demands while maintaining high service standards and strengthening its position as a trusted and innovative leader in Swiss online retail.

SEMINAR SPEECH

Thursday 12.02.2026

LESSONS FROM 25 YEARS OF SINO-SWISS ENGAGEMENT: NAVIGATING OPPORTUNITY AND GEOPOLITICAL COMPLEXITY

In the afternoon, we will join Insight China for a session on Lessons from 25 Years of Sino-Swiss Engagement: Navigating Opportunity and Geopolitical Complexity. The program will feature expert insights and discussions with Simon Michel, Jean-Philippe Alber, Jean-Michel Ah Kong, Lukas Zuest, Bin Sheng, Fiona Gao, Beat Berner, and Mathias Binswanger, with an additional speaker from Huawei (TBD).

CAREER FAIR

Friday 12.02.2026

COMPANY PRESENTATIONS - 9:00 - 10:00

Each company will have the opportunity to present to the full delegation of all student projects.

CAREER FAIR - 10:15 - 11:30

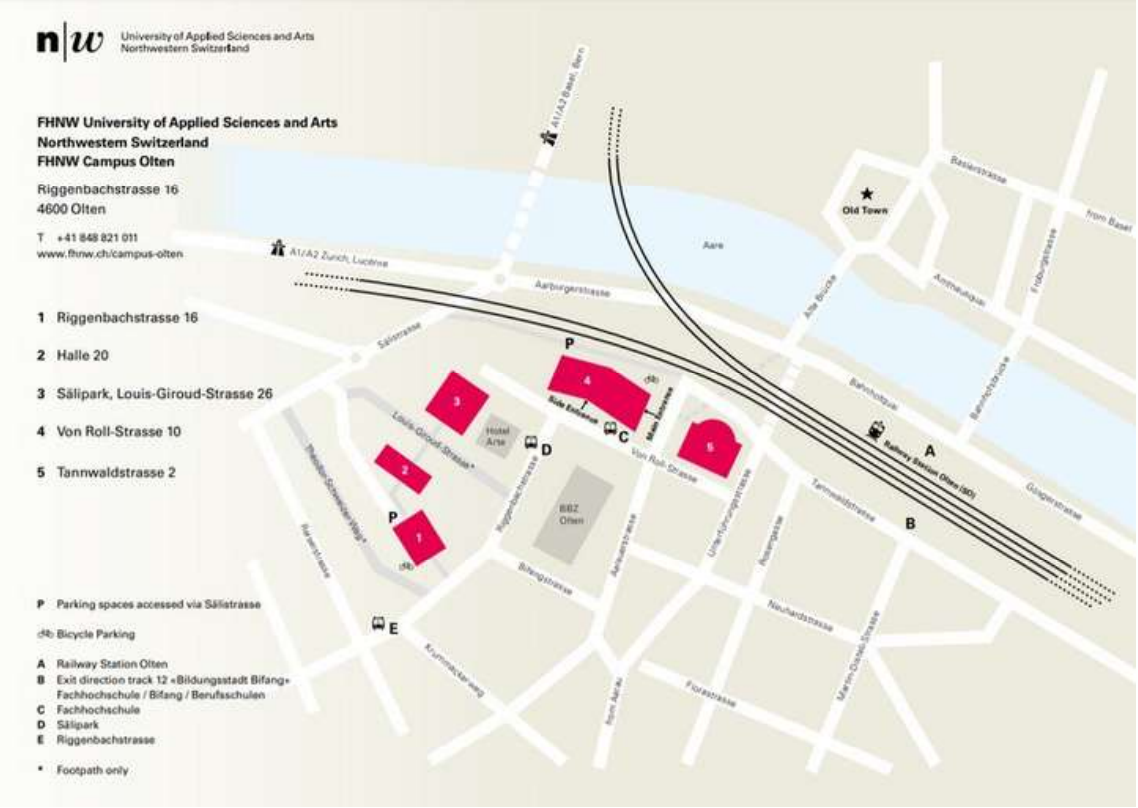
Students have the opportunity to individually chat and network with our partners at their respective stands.

Speed Interviews + CV Checks 10:15 - 12:00

NextCareer Services will offer exclusive CV checks for all delegation members of the ISPs. Checks will be done on a first come first-serve basis. During 15 minutes you will receive personal advice on your CV.

Parallel to the career fair, speed interviews with all partners of the ISPs will be conducted. Selected students will be informed in advance and invited for their 15 minute speed interview.

LOCATION



ARRIVAL BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

You can reach the campus Olten by public transport from Basel, Bern, Lucerne, and Zurich in about 30 minutes. The campus can be reached within a few minutes from the SBB railway station. You do not need to take an additional bus. Leave Olten station on the south side at platform 12 and follow the signs.

ARRIVAL BY CAR

From the highway exit 46 in the direction of Aarburg / Olten, it takes about 15 minutes to get to Olten. Often, there is heavy traffic, so it can take much longer to arrive in Olten. At the campus Olten, there are several parking possibilities available (subject to change):

- Von Roll underground car park (building 4, charging stations for electric vehicles available)
- Riggenbach underground car park (building 1, charging stations for electric vehicles available)
- Sälipark underground car park

PARTNERS

JOINT PLATINUM PARTNER

Blaser. SWISSLUBE

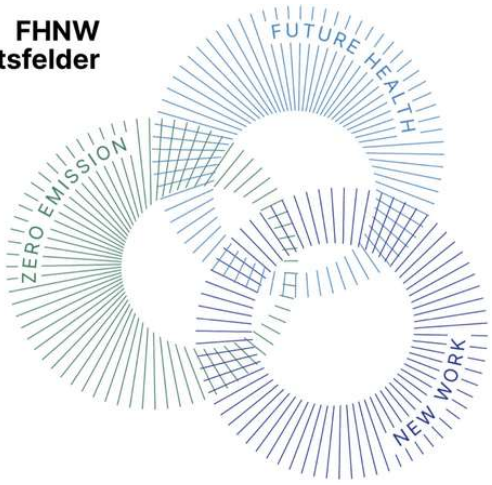
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BRANDS FOR STUDENTS

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Join Us in Rethinking How we Live, Move, Consume and Connect.

Our mission is to explore with our delegation of FHNW students how innovation is shaping sustainable urban life in a time of rapid change. Together, we examine how thoughtful design enables more conscious lifestyles, how inclusive mobility can serve both people and the planet, how digital platforms influence consumption and identity, and how constant connectivity affects our mental well-being. Through this journey across Switzerland and Northern America, we aim to uncover new perspectives, exchange ideas, and find solutions for building more resilient and responsible futures.



ARE YOU READY FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE?

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