Description: This talk will present research from my book-in-progress, which examines the role of future-oriented deliberations in transnational debates and interventions through a comparative analysis of “public interest” scenario processes since the 1990s. Drawing on interviews, case studies and documentary analysis of over 240 scenario projects from around the world, I study the "cultural technologies" for foresight and futures thinking that are being deployed in the intertwined areas of democracy, development, peacebuilding and climate change. I focus in particular on the use of scenario methods by reform-oriented activists and elites in the Global South, as well as on their links to transnational networks of consultants, donors and partners. My book examines the promise and the pitfalls of scenario work as collective exercises in re-imagining democracy in the context of global inequalities and constraints.

Ann Mische is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Peace Studies at the University of NotreDame. Currently, she is working on a book on the role of futures thinking and foresight methodologies in social and political change efforts focused on democracy, development, peacebuilding and climate change. Her first book, PartisanPublics: Communication and Contention Across Brazilian Youth Activist Networks, examined civic and political networks of Brazilian youth activism during the democratization period. She has also written about the role of anti-partisanship in the recent global protest wave.