



# **Earth Sensations**

**Affects, Sensibilities and Attachments in an Era of  
Climate Change**

## **Abstracts Booklet**

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# Keynote speakers

## **Tangled Efforts and Writing Up**

Jane Bennett, Johns Hopkins University, USA

Through the example of two walks — one in which a man finds himself inscribed by atmospheric and vegetal powers, and one performed by a graphic line enlisting the energies of a human body to become a drawing — this essay tries to inhabit more fully the meteorological and vegetal strata of human existence. It seeks a language capable of acknowledging the ahuman within. What grammar best approximates it? How to bespeak the resonant endeavoring of human, animal, vegetal, mineral, and atmospheric vitalities? How to use words to mark the way human writing is itself enabled and infused by them? Can ‘middle-voiced’ verbs help?

## **Fermenting a Feeling for the Future**

Alexis Shotwell, Carleton University, Canada

None of us can personally fix climate change and the extinction crisis through changes in our lifestyle or consumption practices – we know this. But ask any anyone who wishes to avert our ongoing catastrophe and chances are you'll find someone who feels that there is an inconsistency between their politics and their practices. Every one of us who uses a cell phone, takes plane trips, eats food, and so on, is entangled in a web of extractivism and distributed harm. Whether it is cobalt mined by enslaved children or chocolate grown on stolen Indigenous land, nothing we consume or use is innocent of implication in this collective circumstance. This paper begins with the feeling of stuckness that often emerges from the injunction to individually solve the wicked problem of climate change. I suggest that we do well to cultivate new collective feelings, which we might not yet have words for, that will facilitate us acting in solidarity with one another towards futures that don't yet exist.

## **Feeling Deep Trans Time**

Nicole Seymour, California State University, Fullerton, USA

In this keynote, Nicole Seymour will respond to the rising tide of anti-trans sentiment in the U.S. and beyond by centering the insights of three culturemakers: writer Callum Angus, poet Oliver Baez Bendorf, and artist Mary Maggic. She will show how they imagine new futures of cis-trans solidarity, trans mutual aid, and cross-species sensitivity that respond to climate change and other environmental crises—thereby reminding us that these crises are driven in the first place by colonial cis- heteropatriarchy. She will further explore how these culturemakers engage with the concept of deep time, in the process updating existing frameworks of trans and queer temporality, which have tended to emphasize the ephemeral in opposition to heterofamilial logics of reproduction and legacy. Trans ecologies, as we see, are a matter of feeling across timescales as well as across categories of gender and species.

## Panel: Forests

### **Forest Stories: Rationality and Affects in Controversies around Forest Management in Germany**

Manuel John, Philipp Mack & Ronja Mikoleit (Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany)

Especially in times of an accelerating climate crisis, forests have come into focus as one of the most important types of ecosystems worldwide. In the broad context of environmental studies and management, forests are nowadays often viewed primarily as providers of various (and mostly material) 'ecosystem goods and services'. This view of forests remains firmly rooted both in a perspective of 'humans in nature', but especially of 'nature for humans'. Forests can be so much more, though. In the case of Germany, forest imaginaries have been part of the collective consciousness for many centuries, e.g. as part of myths and fairy tales, and are sometimes even seen as an issue of cultural and national identity (Lehmann 1999).

Between 2018-2020, a wave of consecutive droughts hit large parts of Germany, causing severe damages to large forest areas and triggering a heated political and public debate. While traditionally, the German forestry sector and researchers held a strong position as a central authority on all matters related to forests, a network of 'rogue' foresters, forest researchers and nature conservationists have openly challenged this privileged position in the wake of the perceived crisis. Faced with the rapid transformation of the ecosystem, the opposing factions both highlight the urgency to act in order to 'save' the German forest and to make it 'climate resilient'. Yet, there is a deeply rooted disagreement on how to reach these forests of the future, what they should actually look like in the first place and which 'facts' to rely on when making these decisions. Mutual accusations span from the profit orientation of the forestry sector to the romanticized forest imaginations of those with a stronger ecological orientation.

We claim that beneath the surface of a seemingly rational and technocentric debate around the future management of German forests, a deep and complex web of competing, affectively charged narratives about the relationship between humans and forests can be uncovered. By drawing from different data sources, including newspaper articles, position papers by different organizations and interviews with researchers and professional foresters, we attempt to reconstruct some of the 'deep stories' (Hochschild 2016) underlying the clash of visions for the future of German forests. These deep stories will help us understand why a simple focus on specific goals and solutions will not lead to a resolution of this conflict. Additionally, it helps us understand forests as much more than simple spaces to be used for different human purposes, instead revealing them as deeply filled with meaning, affects and stories by the humans entangled with them in different ways.

## References

- Hochschild, A.R., 2016. Strangers in their Own Land. The New Press, New York & London.
- Lehmann, A., 1999. Von Menschen und Bäumen. Die Deutschen und ihr Wald. Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg.

## Biographical note

The authors are PhD candidates in the Research Training Group ConFoBi (Conservation of Forest Biodiversity in Multiple-Use Landscapes of Central Europe) funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG). With backgrounds in Sociology and Geography, they tackle different questions related to the construction and use of knowledge in German forest management from perspectives rooted in praxeology, discourse theory and science&technology studies. For the present paper, the authors integrate empirical material and perspectives in order to reveal the (hidden) role of emotions concerning the management of German forests.

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## The Forest in the Archive / The Forest as the Archive

Lotten Gustafsson Reinius (Stockholm University, Sweden) & Flora Mary Bartlett (Nordic Museum, Sweden)

The forest in Sweden is emerging as a multifaceted site of contested more-than- human attachments in the Anthropocene. Meanwhile the role of the museum and cultural heritage is expanding, facing new challenges and opportunities in this troublesome epoch. The interdisciplinary project The Forest in the Archive / The Forest as the Archive interrogates the vibrant materiality and agency of the Anthropocenic forest in the culturally charged realms/spaces of the Nordic Museum. Working in the fertile borderland between research and curation we aim to expand the frames of heritage, beyond modern dichotomies of nature and culture. Through two theoretically interlinked case studies, we identify and compare the lingering and threatened presences of living forests and forests lost, both in the object collections and in open air parts of the museum.

Forested landscapes - as well as practical and local competences grown over generations in co-habitation with these - have left residual and overwhelming traces in the museum collections. Apart from thousands of tools, toys, and other artefacts from birch bark, differing kinds of wood and paper, there are also archival answers to questionnaires on the know-how of forest dependent tasks such as making charcoal or tar, or on the art of building houses from logs. The collections of ritually powerful objects generally demonstrate other forest agencies; those of naturally bent branches, visually striking stones, and the bones of long dead animals. How can the vibrant material agencies of more-than-human-forest-relations be traced and read through all of this? What is the role of a cultural history collections in the era of large-scale forest loss and growing calls to historicise the Anthropocene?

Beyond the walls housing the collections, the museum also owns several areas of living forest which are increasingly inhabited by the spruce bark beetle. One major thread of the project examines the more-than-human processes and claims taking place in these landscapes: the beetles thrive on the even-age monocultures of the cultivated spruce plantations that are rapidly replacing old growth forest, their migrations aided by increasingly common storms and drought caused by climate change. Meanwhile, human inhabitants and forest stewards suffer emotional and economic loss at the perceived destruction of the landscape, aesthetically altered in gray swathes of dead spruce. The cultural heritage of the forest-as-archive is threatened, if viewed through a traditional lens.

In this paper, we present the results from this pilot study addressing these two intersecting perspectives concerning the forest and the museum. We critically examine the role of the museum and cultural heritage in the Anthropocene, in the past, present, and future. How do we critically approach these Anthropocenic landscapes and competing claims through a posthumanities perspective? Is the forest in the various forms it holds within the frame of the museum a living archive of the more-than-human in the Anthropocene? How can we co-curate emotions and consciousness of climate change with hungry beetles, forests as monoculture or in patches of actively – sometimes vainly – preserved romantic wilderness?

### **Biographical note**

Lotten Gustafsson Reinius is Professor of Ethnology at Stockholm University and Hallwylsk Professor at the Nordic Museum. She has worked extensively on folklore, cultural heritage, museology, material culture and curatorial research, including as curator and museum director, and is currently working on cultural heritage and ritual in the Anthropocenic forest/museum collections. Flora Mary Bartlett (PhD) is a visual anthropologist working with Anthropocenic landscapes and experimental photography. She was recently a Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center and is now working on more-than-human relations in the Swedish forest with a grant from KSLA and as Guest Researcher at the Nordic Museum.

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### **The Broken Senses of the Becoming Environment of Data**

Liu Xin (Department of Social and Psychological Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden)

This presentation concerns two aspects of environmental data production that have hitherto received scant attention. First, the production of data is often shaped by the duration, funding and organization of specific projects. The contextual and temporal specificities of project economies inform not only how data is generated, for whom, but also the after-life of data. That is, what actually happens to a set of data after the funding for a project has run out. Second, the translation and mediation process of environmental data concerns not simply the difference between the materiality and multiplicity of nature and the digitized abstraction and numerical measurement that data is. It also includes the translation between different digital technologies and negotiation amongst various practitioners such as scientists, entrepreneurs, and engineers. Although the notion of ‘raw’ data has been widely challenged, the question as to where the environment ends and data begins in the production of environmental

data is less critically engaged with. This presentation addresses these questions. It uses as a case study my participant observation at the Finnish startup AVOIN that produces a digital map that aims to integrate established forest data and modelling that predict changes of forest soil, living biomes, and calculate the economic value of wood products. Taking inspiration from theorisations of digital sensing and the political ecology of data, this presentation suggests modalities of broken senses as the emergent and specific affective registers of the becoming environment of data.

**Biographical note**

Liu Xin (she/her) is a senior lecturer at the Department of Social and Psychological Studies, Karlstad University. She has published articles in journals such as *Feminist Review*, *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Journal of Environmental Media*, *Parallax*, *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, *MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture*, *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, *Media Theory Journal*, *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality*. Her recent research projects are located in the intersection of feminist theory, environmental humanities, critical race studies, science and technology studies, social theory and digital media research.

## Panel: Toxicity

### Eating the Ghost, Fearing the Ghost. Ryoko Sekiguchi and the Affects of Radioactive Food

Julien Néel (Yale University, USA)

An author and translator working at the crossroads of French and Japanese languages, Ryoko Sekiguchi writes about people's affective relationships to food and the social, environmental and political forces that shape them. In *Manger fantôme* [*Eating ghostly*] (2012), these forces fall under the category of the catastrophe, as they evoke the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Food has been a key component of this disaster, because the Tohoku prefectures affected by radioactivity— Fukushima, Miyagi and Ibaraki—are mostly known for their agriculture, livestock farming, and fishing. These food industries are very vulnerable to radioactive contamination, as the thousands of plastic bags containing contaminated soil shipped everywhere in Japan testify. Sekiguchi's work is at first a musing on vaporous food, whether it be close to a cloud-like texture, or embodying inconsistent elements such as a place—where a fruit has grown—or a symbol—eating kosher or halal food as a way of respecting a religion. The last of these inconsistent elements is the ghost. The author does not want to use the word 'radioactivity,' but the end of her text turns into a reflection on the ghostly presence of radioactive particles. These ungraspable particles are part of Svetlana Alexievich's 'new history of senses' (*my translation*, Alexievich, 1998) in the age of nuclear energy, as they modify people's perception of food while remaining invisible, or ghostly.

With the help of affect theory, gender, and disaster studies, I want to break down the dramatic altering of time and affect caused by the prospect or the act of eating ghostly. I wish to argue that the careful consideration of affective reactions to radioactive food open the way for an 'esteem of singularity' (Nancy, 2012). This esteem disregards the univocal and overarching representation of the disaster in favor of a renewed attention to multiple interdependencies. Not knowing when one ingests the ghost causes affects of fear and anxiety, which are further enhanced by the temporal abyss opened up by the nature of radioactivity: particles dispersed from *Fukushima- Daiichi* expand time forward, as a future of radiation beyond any human measurements contaminates the region. Affects of fear and anxiety are particularly visible in the example of the '*no-mama*,' or 'Radiation Brain Moms' (Kimura, 2016), a degrading nickname given to Japanese mothers who are afraid to feed their children food from Japanese northern regions. Deemed as 'hysterical' and 'unpatriotic' by Japanese politics, media, and even civil society, these women face public shaming for not supporting local economy and spreading '*fūhyo igai*'—harmful rumors. I will work with Aya Kimura's sociological analysis of these repressive and gendered politics that use the 'affective force of shame and guilt,' to draw attention to Sekiguchi's acuteness in deciphering the complex affective singularities born out of food and radioactivity.

## Biographical note

Julien Néel is a first-year doctoral student in French and an Environmental Humanities Fellow at Yale University, where he studies ecocriticism, affect theory, and queer and gender studies in 20th and 21st-century French and Francophone literature. His research deals with the affective responses to vulnerabilities caused by environmental disturbances and disasters in the works of Ryoko Sekiguchi and Maylis de Kerangal among others.

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## Toxic Atmospheres. A Phenomenology of Silence

Laura Fumagalli (University of Augsburg, Germany) & Christian Schnurr (Ludwig- Maximilians-University Munich, Germany)

To examine the sensational and physical dynamics generated by natural environments, in an age of ecological crises, we believe that the Aesthetics of Atmospheres, as proposed by German philosopher Gernot Böhme, is especially useful. This theory restores the original meaning of *aesthetics* as the theory of sensible knowledge and shifts the whole discourse from the aesthetics as philosophy of art to the aesthetics as philosophy of perception. It amounts to an *ecological aesthetics* in the sense that it deals with the general bodily and emotional engagement of humans with their environment.<sup>1</sup>

The *atmosphere* is primarily a spatial concept, though it lacks clear borders and a definitive place. In other words, the atmosphere is what is experienced in bodily presence in relation to people and things or in spaces. It can be described as a feeling existing outside the human mind and emanating from objects. Thus we encounter atmospheres in our everyday perceptual life, and we experience them primarily through our living or felt body (*Leib*). A phenomenological description is usually more apt to understand the concept: in everyday language, we easily speak of ‘the serene atmosphere of a spring morning or the homely atmosphere of a garden’.<sup>2</sup>

In our talk, we particularly want to introduce the topic of *toxic atmospheres*, that is, atmospheres that emerge from places that have been heavily polluted, for example by nuclear disasters or chemical spills. Contemporary ecological discussion and imagery is frequently revolving around *toxic places*, ranging from recent news about the Russian invasion of Tschernobyl to dystopian fiction movies like Blade Runner. We will characterize the aesthetic experience of toxic atmospheres by focussing on sensual perceptions, especially the notion of *silence*. With silence having a long- ranging cultural history in discourse about toxicity (e.g. *Silent Spring*), we will work towards a phenomenological description of the unique elements of ‘toxic silence’. Therefore, philosopher Hermann Schmitz’s work on the phenomenology of silence will be adapted towards the experience of toxic atmospheres.

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<sup>1</sup> The theory is, however, not necessarily limited to the human world. The aesthetics of atmospheres might as well be applied to other perceiving beings.

<sup>2</sup> The examples are directly from Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*. Taylor & Francis: London, 2016.

### **Biographical note**

Laura Fumagalli is a PhD candidate in Philosophy, specializing in Aesthetics, at the Universities of Augsburg and LMU Munich, Germany. Her research focusses on environmental aesthetics, in particular on the concept of landscape, and has connections to environmental ethics and the philosophy of art. Before moving to Germany, she worked as an assistant in a contemporary art gallery in London and a literary museum in Italy. Previously, she completed a M.A. (2020) in Philosophy and Aesthetics and a B.A. (2017) in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Milan, and a M.Sc. in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh (2018). See also: <https://rethinking-environment-idk.de/person/laura-fumagalli/>  
<https://rethinking-environment-idk.de/project/vulnerable-landscapes/>

Christian Schnurr is a trained chemist with an additional background in environmental humanities, literary theory and philosophy. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Philosophy at the Universities of Augsburg and LMU Munich (Germany), working on the public perception of chemicals. His interest lies in the aesthetics of polluted environments, as well as in the phenomenological aspects of experiences with toxicity. Schnurr has studied at Technical University Munich (B.Sc., M.Sc.), as well as at the Rachel Carson Center, LMU Munich. He has worked as a chemistry researcher at Technical University Munich and Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore, India), before moving into the environmental humanities.

See also:

<https://rethinking-environment-idk.de/person/christian-schnurr/> <https://rethinking-environment-idk.de/project/chemicals-as-foreign-objects-are-chemicals-unnatural/>

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### **Becoming Plastic: Methodological Reflections and the Research ‘Event’**

Tridibesh Dey (Department of Global Studies, Aarhus University)

This is a methodological paper. It involves sensorial attachments, detachments, affects, and processual actions co-conceived with plastic waste as part of my ethnographic research in the Indian city of Ahmedabad, one of India’s largest metropolises producing massive quantities of plastic waste daily. As a part of fieldwork, I apprenticed for over 8 months under informal foragers, sorters, and recyclers who help to sequester and renew large proportions of the plastic waste, stopping them from dispersing into the open environment.

I use the broad conceptual framing of a research event (Fraser 2006, 2010; Michael 2022) to study ways in which the researcher (me) and the researched (plastic) co-emerged through fieldwork. As a male researcher working in practical roles that are culturally (locally) deemed feminine, I offer examples how my female co-workers devised techniques that re-identified me for the local community. As a non-Dalit within Dalit (socially outcast persons from South Asia with ritually sanctioned generational professions and identity) communities, I highlight and reflect on ways in which (my) caste identities were negotiated and situationally re-enacted. Parallel to and constitutive of these ‘social’ emergences, plastic materials were also becoming re-evaluated, re-qualified, and re-materialised in everyday practice, not least grappled and jostled with, at very physical, emotional and visceral levels. In other words, humans

and plastics were being configured through situated technopractical encounters. Speaking from such practical vantage points, the paper leaves reflections on STS methodology, ethics, material plasticity (or lack thereof), local and global inequalities, and the philosophical possibilities that plastic engender (or not). The paper will contribute to the conference discussions both methodologically and thematically along post-humanism, emergent materiality, feminist anti-caste technoscience and research practice.

**Biographical note**

Tridibesh Dey is a first-generation STS scholar of plastics and Bahujan anthropologist from South Asia. A systems sciences scholar and engineer in 'past life', Dr. Dey moved to the social sciences when his engineering toolbox proved insufficient in engaging the complex problems and socio-cultural nuances of plastic waste management that his professional assignment demanded. He has been combining disciplinary tools and approaches ever since, and his recent PhD thesis (Anthropology, University of Exeter) forwards such a conceptual re-working of plastic's plasticity based on care-ful feminist ethnography in Ahmedabad, India. His overlapping interests are infrastructures, inequality, time, environments, and publics. Dr. Dey is a post-doc at the Department of Global Studies, Aarhus University.

## Panel: Sensing the Future

### A Life Without Appeal? For an Earthly Ensemble of Uncivilised Feelings

Martin Savransky (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)

Perhaps the most disorienting feature of this long socioecological disaster is not its urgency, but its permanence: the fact that there is no foreseeable future in which the radical instability of the earth will have been a thing of the past. Which is to say that the nature of these planetary upheavals is such that they introduce a radical caesura, an unbridgeable incommensurability, between destruction and redemption, between loss and compensation. And if what such a planetary condition engenders is nothing short of an affective and political disorientation, it is because it upends the structure of feeling that subtends modern stories of progress and civilisation: the appeal to another life, to a better world to come. What might it take to refuse the cruelty of misplaced hope for a redemptive future without giving into the despair that such forlorn hope precipitates? Reprising a famous expression by Albert Camus for unsanctioned purposes, in this talk I ask what might be at stake in affirming a 'life without appeal' for a time neither hopeful nor entirely absurd. Recalling that stories of progress and civilisation have always also been stories of colonisation and earth-wide homogenisation, I experiment with the possibility that, in the refusal to be content with either the hope or the despair that stories of progress and ecological ruination deem proper to us, perhaps there might be something appealing about living without appeal. For a life without appeal is also a life beyond the pale, in the interstices and on the edges, outside the progressive horizon of redemption and the desolate prospect of damnation. Alive out-from-the-outside, it is a life given over to generative, ongoing, socioecological improvisations and experimentations with uncivilised forms of sensation, feeling, and valuation on an unstable earth. It might, perhaps, be a life worth living in spite of all.

### Biographical note

Martin Savransky is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he convenes the MA Ecology, Culture & Society. His work combines philosophy and the social sciences, postcolonial thought and the environmental humanities, to activate fugitive and speculative methodologies of life on unstable ecological terrain. He is the author of *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse* (Duke University Press, 2021) and *The Adventure of Relevance: An Ethics of Social Inquiry* (with a foreword by Isabelle Stengers; Palgrave, 2016), and the co-editor of *After Progress* (Sage, 2022) and of *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures* (Routledge, 2017). He has published essays in forums such as *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Social Text*, *The Sociological Review*, and *SubStance: A Review of Literary and Cultural Criticism*. He has co-curated the new *After Progress* digital exhibition ([www.afterprogress.com](http://www.afterprogress.com)), and is currently working on a new book length project (tentatively) titled *The Murmurs of the Outside: Subaltern Ecologies and Uncivilised Life*.

## **Desperate Science Fiction. On how Musk, Bezos, Gates, and Google Sense the Risk of Socio-Ecological Collapse**

Gregers Andersen (Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, DK)

With the early 2020s fostering an array of intensified climate-driven catastrophes, the fundamental question is now how humanity will respond to its irreversible and impending transgressions of key climatic and eco-systemic tipping points. In view of the fact that these transgressions risk triggering a domino effect of socio-ecological collapses, this paper claims that the most likely answer is that the world's most powerful organizations, governments, and businesses will increasingly resort to 'desperate science fiction', that is, to more and more drastic techno-optimistic ventures. More precisely, the paper will demonstrate how these ventures are liable to manifest as **1) exit strategies** i.e. as fanciful plans of leaving Earth and settling on other planets, **2) major geoengineering schemes** in which the Earth System becomes the object of terraforming, and **3) attempts to manipulate human behavior via big data** i.e. via the algorithmic governance of environments. The paper will substantiate this claim by referring to plans recently put forward and financially supported by Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, and Google. This will entail a critical analysis of desperation as being the main sentiment of some of the world's richest and most powerful entrepreneurs and businesses and therefore also as a fundamental key to understanding current developments. One of the major problems with desperate science fiction is in this regard that it siphons attention away from important democratic conversations about which degrowth-models societies across the planet should pursue and seek to develop. When desperate science fiction gains traction it delays and derails these democratic conversations, opening the door to ever more radical techno-optimistic ventures. In order to leave this spiral, it is therefore necessary to abandon the hope that fundamental political, economic and cultural transition processes can be avoided. The paper claims that this will require clearly seeing the desperate science fiction advanced by Musk, Bezos, Gates, and Google for what it is: a deceptive attempt to preserve a deeply unjust and destructive economic system.

### **Biographical note**

Gregers Andersen is assistant professor in environmental humanities at the Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University. He is the author of the monograph *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis. A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene* (Routledge, 2020) and has published articles in several journals (e.g., *ISLE*, *Symplokē*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, and *Deleuze Studies*) on how literature, film, and philosophy can shed light upon human and non-human conditions in the Anthropocene.

## **Containment of Political Possibilities through Negative Emission Technologies. Attachments, Commitments and Imaginaries of NETs**

Franciszek W. Korbanski (Department of Human Geography, Human Ecology, Lund University, Sweden)

From the latest AR6 IPCC Report (IPCC 2011-2022) to massive funding being currently rolled out by the Biden Administration (DOE 2022), negative emission technologies raise in prominence as the pressure to 'solve' the climate change becomes impossible to neglect. Symptomatically, an increasing interest and investment comes in large part from the fossil industry which presumably sees NETs as a ticket to prolong their existence. NETs then can be seen as a paradigmatic example of the complexity and ambivalence characterising the climate choices that have to be taken from within the confines of—what I would call with A. Malm and M. Fisher—fossil capitalist realism (Malm 2016, Fisher 2009).

An ample body of environmental research on the left begins to coalesce around NETs and the political implications of their implementation (Buck 2019 and 2021, Carton 2021, Carton and Malm 2021, Malm 2016 and 2021). Crucially, as of today, NETs remain largely theoretical and speculative (Carton 2021)—barely any NETs facilities operate at scale at the moment of the writing, existing instead largely as the building blocks of the projected emission reduction pathways, yet-to-be-implemented techno- fixes or variables making the theoretical maths of the Paris goals calculus add up. Ephemeral imaginaries as they are, however, they tangibly impact the world that dreams them.

The paradox, then, seems to be the following: not yet, existing, NETs already shape our reality. The intangible phantoms of the future affect the material conditions and choices of today. Building on my previous work on M. Fisher and A. Malm (Korbanski 2022) this proposed paper will critically approach NETs as ideologically loaded tools of the containment of political possibilities that permit the fossil capitalist realism to perpetuate itself. To perform this critique of ideology of NETs this paper will look at what are their underlying attachments, commitments and imaginaries—critiquing and illuminating them as much as the capitalist system that brought them about.

Against the dominant narrative of creating new futures, the paper will re- conceptualise NETs and approach them instead as a means of shutting alternative counter-hegemonic possibilities down. To do so, the paper will draw on the work of Fisher (2009 and 2021), Davis (2018), Malm (2016 and 2021), Buck (2019 and 2021) and Carton (2021)—critical theorists that offer a conceptual ecosystem to investigate the 'political unconscious' (Davis 2018) of the NETs narratives. Ultimately, the social, political and cultural functions of NETs at the current historical juncture of the 'change- driving' West will be examined to answer the key question that the ideological entanglements of NETs provoke: What role are NETs fulfilling within fossil capitalist realism without even existing?

### **Biographical note**

Franciszek W. Korbanski holds an MA degree in Philosophy and is currently pursuing MSc in Human Ecology at Lund University, focusing on ecological ideology critique. His most recent

publications are a piece on M. Fisher and A. Malm for *Roar* and an upcoming essay on trees and slow violence for *Hinterlands* (Autumn 2022). Since 2016 part of an independent, volunteer-run bookstore ark books; since 2019 running a reading group *Climate, Culture and Capitalism*. Previously involved in organising *Lyse Nætter* literature festival.

## Panel: Visuality

### **Anthropocene Nights: Sensing Transformation in the Darkness**

Andy Flack (University of Bristol, UK)

The symptoms of climate change have intensified over the course of the past several decades as images of melting ice sheets, wildfires and coastal catastrophe reshape our sense of what the world is like in the twenty-first century. These emotionally evocative images tend to depict the daytime world, and this has the effect of encouraging people to forget that the night-time – and nocturnal ecologies – are also affected by anthropogenic environmental change. Indeed, current studies suggest that the night is warming faster than the day at the same time as diverse species are becoming nocturnal to escape human activity: the dimensions of Anthropocene nights are rapidly changing.

For humans, the night is a place and time where senses and emotions configure in ways that are quite distinct than those of the daytime, and this is reflected in the ways in which we understand the world around us. In this paper, I ask what happens if we decide to look more intently into the darkness? What does night-time tell us about the sensory and emotional dimensions of the Anthropocene? To answer these questions, I examine three particular perspectives which, together, trace several dimensions of Anthropocene nights: nocturnal perspectives on illumination, from starlight to cityscapes; the night as a cloak for extinction; and efforts to 're-wild' the night through the creation of dark-sky reserves and the facilitation of nocturnal co-habitation.

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### **There Is No Exception to Extinction**

Audronė Žukauskaitė (Lithuanian Culture Research Institute)

Climate change is a kind of hyperobject which is everywhere, although it is not accessible directly to our senses. However, it can be exposed with the help of visual representation. In my paper I will explore the notion of Anthropocene visibility, suggested by N. Mirzoeff (2014). On the one hand, Anthropocene visibility makes climate change visible and comprehensible; on the other hand, it reintroduces a universal Anthropos and thus masks the real agent behind the catastrophe. The Anthropocene visibility represents the position of power, be it capitalism (T.J. Demos, 2017; J. W. Moore, 2016), colonialism (N. Mirzoeff, 2018; K. Yusoff, 2018), or patriarchy (J. Zylinska, 2018). However, in my paper I will argue that Anthropocene visibility should not be abandoned but rather reversed or redirected. Instead of visibility, working on behalf of power we have to look for new forms of visibility, exposing the mechanisms of exclusion, subjection, and colonization. In this context I will discuss an opera-performance 'Sun and Sea (Marina)' by Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė (director), Vaiva Grainytė (librettist) and Lina Lapelytė (composer), presented at the Venice Biennale in 2019.

The opera-performance 'Sun and Sea (Marina)' can be observed from a mezzanine gallery above the stage; the stage itself is turned into an artificial sand beach populated with

colourful holiday-goers, who are of different ages, genders, races, and physical appearances. Thus, the performance presents a playful crowd, and, as the libretto unfolds, we are introduced to each character with his/her trivial everyday concerns. These trivial narratives give way to themes related to climate emergency, such as the bleaching of corals, the extinction of species, and express the anxiety about the approaching catastrophe. The stage characters, although having quite distinct individualities, merge into an 'anthropological scene', reminiscent of a big terrarium in an imaginary museum of natural history. Humans are presented not as the holders of visibility and power but as one of the engendered species.

Thus, the opera-performance creates a reversed model of visibility, which helps to expose the human species as not having an exceptional power for visualization and control but as being incapable of recognising themselves as the agents of an approaching catastrophe.

### **Biographical note**

Audronė Žukauskaitė is Chief Researcher at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Her recent publications include the monographs: *From Biopolitics to Biophilosophy* (2016, in Lithuanian), and *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's Philosophy: The Logic of Multiplicity* (2011, in Lithuanian). She also co-edited (with S. E. Wilmer) *Deleuze and Beckett* (2015); *Resisting Biopolitics: Philosophical, Political and Performative Strategies* (2016), and *Life in the Posthuman Condition: Critical Responses to the Anthropocene* (forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press in 2023). Her latest monograph *Organism-Oriented Ontology* is forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press.

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### **Weirding Landscapes: Earth-sensing in Non-horizontal Planes**

Siobhan Leddy (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Anthropogenic representations of the earth often conform to the norms of landscape, flattening the earth into a visual horizontal plane. Yet as we shift into an era defined by the geological, might we need earthly aesthetic encounters that break from these aesthetic norms of visibility and horizontality, and plunge into the lithic depths of the vertical? How might earth be *representing itself to us* (Astrida Neimanis) in ways that deviate from anthropocentric ocularity and instead open up more ambiguous aesthetic encounters?

Despite continual intra-action between earth's depths and surfaces, the proprioceptive imaginary of vertical depth is often 'unthought' in comparison to the horizontal (distance/surface/landscape). This contributes to a sensibility that humans live *on* rather than *within* the earth. In its opacity, the lithic is rendered inexpressive and immutable. So, too, is its verticality often recast as horizontality: *paesine*, striated agates cut into cross sections, were popular curios during the height of romantic landscape painting. Their lithic verticality and striations were re-interpreted as horizontal landscapes, as though seen from a human perspective.

Re-thinking 'landscape' beyond a horizontality *upon* which humans merely reside, and into the verticality of the lithic as part of a co-constitutive relationality, can 'unground' anthropocentric representational norms and expand the possibilities of 'landscape'. In this paper,

I will elaborate on contemporary examples: The Otolith Group's film *Medium Earth* (2018) and Elsa Salonen's ongoing series, *Stories Told by Stones*, which both think landscape vertically, so that landscapes become geo-anthro aesthetic encounters. *Medium Earth* examines 'the hum' — the contentious idea that the earth emits a low-frequency sound, audible to geo-sensitive humans. Salonen, meanwhile, engages with earth and minerals as pigment, unfolding forms of earthly expression that far exceed the 'human's eye view' of land representation and towards an aesthetic co-constitution.

**Biographical note**

Siobhan Leddy (she/her) is a researcher, writer, and artist currently based in Berlin. Her research focuses on how artworks can offer methodologies for more-than-human sensory communication and paralinguistic knowledge-creation. She is currently working towards a PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin, where she also teaches an MA seminar in media theory and practice, as part of the Seminar for Culture and Media Management. Prior to that, she obtained her master's degree in Global Arts (Visual Cultures) at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has recently shown or presented artwork at CTM Festival, Floating University Berlin, Cashmere Radio, and Het Nieuwe Instituut. Her writing has been published in Real Life, The Outline, PULSE Journal, and many others.

## Panel: Art and Design

### Hydrologic Sensibilities in Fragile Ecologies

Michael Kjær (University of Copenhagen, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies) & Rhoda Ting and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen (Studio ThinkingHand)

In a world of acute climate change, man's relationship to the three-quarters of the globe covered by water is of vital importance. This paper reflects and builds on the development of aquatic sensibilities in the twentieth century: sensibilities that can be traced in the marine sciences as well as in the history of art. Common to these fields is that they both consider the hydrosphere as the best indicator of the climatic and ecologic state of the earth. With this line of thinking, the agency to represent the state of the earth is no longer that of man; man becomes a translator of the indications given by the matter of the earth. In this dynamic between indication and translation, the development of new hydrologic sensibilities is crucial.

Within this frame of developing new hydrologic sensibilities, this proposed paper will present an ongoing collaboration between Michael Kjær, art historian and postdoc at University of Copenhagen, and Studio ThinkingHand, an artist duo comprised of Rhoda Ting (AU) and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen (DK). Michael Kjær is researching the epistemologico-historical development of aquatic sensibilities in western philosophy and aesthetics. This background knowledge he exchanges with Studio ThinkingHand to conduct artistic research in a partly speculative, partly concrete examination of the prospects of developing new aquatic sensibilities in a time haunted by worn out human imaginaries in the present critical state of environmental destruction. Studio ThinkingHands work focus on methods of listening, relating and co-creating with other than human species such as fungi, bacteria and wider ecosystems, making visible stories, intelligences, and life beyond the human gaze.

The paper will present the findings of a, at the time of writing this proposal, forthcoming research cruise to the Norwegian Sea between Lofoten and Svalbard. The cruise will be completed in collaboration with marine biologists and geophysicists from Cage (Centre for Arctic Gas Hydrate, Environment and Climate), University of Tromsø. During the cruise, conducted on the marine research vessel RV Kronprins Haakon, we will focus on microscope photographs and video footage of collected water samples. Our hope is to open new sensibilities and imaginaries in a subversion of this most modern tool: microscopic vision. How can we repurpose this tool of modernity to turn it against the terrors of said-same modernity and make visible the worlds it has ignored and damaged? Our aim is to enter what one could call the 'strange topologies' covered by the human imaginative grip of the anthropocene. The paper will take the form of a presentation accompanied by our reflections on the work in progress, we are carrying out together. This is all we can and should do at the present critical moment: devote ourselves not to targets or goals, but to stay in the troubling process (Haraway) of becoming less-dominant monsters in the feral ecologies, we are partaking in.

### **Biographical note**

Michael Kjær's research is focused on understanding the possible developments of new sensibilities in a non- anthropocentric world to come. He is particularly dealing with development of sensibilities related to the seas and the wider hydrosphere of the earth. He is contributing with his attention to the role of the human senses in the development of an aesthetics appropriate to the Anthropocene.

Michael Kjær (b. 1975, DK) 2021-2023: Novo Nordisk Post.doc., Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur, afdeling for kunsthistorie, Aarhus Universitet (from 01.08.2023: University of Copenhagen); 2017-2020: Ny Carlsbergfondet Post.doc., Institut for Kunst og Kulturvidenskab, afdeling for Kunsthistorie, KU, i samarbejde med Vejle Museerne og Holstebro Kunstmuseum.

Studio ThinkingHand, artists, AU/DK. STH is an international artist/art historian duo working at the intersection between artistic research and image making. Their works have intensely investigated the entanglements of earthly matter in human lives, bodies and cultures. They have focused, among other subjects, on queering traditional perceptions of ecology.

Rhoda Ting (b. 1985, AUS) 2002 - 2006 Bachelor of Nutrition & Dietetics 2008 - 2010 Master of Mental Health, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen (b. 1988, DK) 2011 - 2016 Bachelor of Art History, major in Theology, Copenhagen University, Denmark.

[www.studiothinkinghand.com](http://www.studiothinkinghand.com)

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### **The Otherness in the Stoniness**

Christine Laquet (independent artist)

Throughout different artworks examples, I aim to highlight how much creative productions have an important role to play in thinking about alternative modes, and promoting the conception and implementation of solutions as we traverse the Anthropocene. I will explore how aesthetic practices are able to influence relationships based on 'a combination of sensing and sense-making' (Fuller & Weizman), building a backdrop for critical investigations. I will underline how socially engaged and inclusive research methods are able to create a vibrant image of other- than-human collaborations, as they are providing unusual models that connect and integrate new frameworks by exploring unfamiliar collaborations with other Earthlings, animate and inanimate. Reflecting on our impact on our surroundings helps to figure out how to inhabit the world differently. Through the use of atypical processes of co-creation and by shaping narratives that make room for diverse forms of existence, I want to question the authorship position and analyze how artistic practice can make epistemic claims. My hypotheses is that artists can help the humanocentric point of view to move into a transition where the influence of nonliving factors are taken into better considerations.

With a concept I call *Otherness in the Stoniness*, I seek to disrupt the idea of something that seems stable/inert and I suggest to reinvest our notion of scope and to expand our terrestrial perceptions. I propose a framework of interdependent components consisting of three factions: the *geo*, the *bio*, and the *exo*. *Geo* is concerned with a lifeless thing, inorganic substance. On the contrary, *bio* is concerned with life and organic substance. *Exo* is what is foreign, alien. At scales greatly inferior and that vastly exceed us, microscopic and macroscopic forces are shaping our day-to-day lives. Every living thing is in continuity with the nonliving in constant interdependent movement. Understandings of reality built on the idea of 'entanglement of everything' (Donna Haraway) can be facilitated by artistic practices, making visible sensory relations that society doesn't always concede, think, or imagine.

### **Biographical note**

Christine Laquet (FR) is a visual artist that investigates how we relate to our environment by focusing on the nonhuman (animal, vegetal, mineral). Through graphic, performative, or installation works, she seeks to challenge our gaze, while questioning what other presents and futures become possible. By confronting varied elements, she explores how artworks are able to influence relationships or invent conceptual/practical tools to open new avenues of inquiry into our individual and collective existences. In recent years extraterrestrial objects and the cosmological scale have entered into her research; this opens new horizons to redefine what is local and to rethink our place on Earth.

[christinelaquet.com](http://christinelaquet.com)

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### **Getting Angry with Environmental Chemicals**

Lenka Veselá (Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic)

In their introduction to *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (2015), co-editors Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin argue that the Anthropocene is primarily an aesthetic phenomenon. The Anthropocene as a 'sensorial phenomenon' or an 'aesthetic event' reorganizes our sensorial and perceptive systems around our projections of the environmental collapse and thus impacts our capacity to grasp the world we are living in. When Davis and Turpin claim that the Anthropocene has emerged as an aesthetic device framing our experience of the world, they invoke the original Greek meaning of the word αἰσθητικός (aisthetikos) as pertaining to the sense of perception—the ability to perceive through the senses. In my research practice I investigate how their argument takes on a literal and material interpretation through the material effects of anthropogenic chemicals with the capacity to reassemble the physiology of our perception, cognition, and emotions.

In my conference contribution, I would like to talk about *Endocrine Disruption Tracker Tool (EDTT)*, a speculative design tool that I have developed. *EDTT* is modelled after a medical tool for tracking emotional symptoms caused by fluctuation of physiological hormones but expands the functional range to cover emotional symptoms caused by the production and interplay of both hormones and hormone-mimicking chemicals.

*EDTT* subverts the individualized medical narrative by bringing attention to how emotions, disrupted by chemicals, are encountered, experienced, and expressed within a community rather than individually. It is designed to raise awareness of how closely interwoven we have become with planetary-wide infrastructures of man-made chemicals, while also proposing to examine our anger, fatigue, anxiety, and sadness as a source of felt knowledge about environmentally ubiquitous anthropogenic chemicals that may inform embodied ecological politics of anti-toxic action.

Locating the effects of chemical disruption in our anxiety, sadness, sleeplessness, irritability, and inability to concentrate foregrounds our shared—albeit unevenly— fragility and vulnerability vis-à-vis the chemical transformation of the planet. Attending to endocrine disrupting chemicals as they interfere with our emotions can help us address the exigencies of our chemically altered lives and construct responsive care relations. *EDTT* proposes to affirm emotions caused and modulated by involuntary chemical exposure, and to seize and mobilize them as a means for confronting the oppressive conditions that make us angry, frustrated, and sad in the first place. When experienced and expressed collectively and publicly, our anger, frustration, and sadness can motivate and energize action opposing the violence that systematically impairs life in all its forms. ‘Pollution is colonialism,’ claims plastic pollution researcher and citizen scientist Max Liboiron (2021). To build on this basic idea is to stand up to regimes of extraction and exploitation and decolonize our chemical relations. The collective practice of *getting angry with endocrine disrupting chemicals* can provide initial bearings to such a project.

## References

- Davis, Heather, and Etienne Turpin. 2015. *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. London: Open Humanities Press.
- Liboiron, Max. 2021. *Pollution is colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

More information about my research projects:

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/shared/8bf626e113373b4b658e19ffa12c674f>

## Biographical note

Lenka Veselá is a PhD researcher at the Department of Theory and History of Art at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Brno, Czech Republic. Her research concerns ‘synthetic bodies’ (bodies manipulated by technological interventions and responding to technologically transformed environments) and ‘synthetic bodies of knowledges’ (knowledges synthesized across multiple sites). Recent publications include ‘Hormonal Design: Synthetic Sex Hormones and the Management of Living’ <http://vvp.avu.cz/novinky/sesit-pro-umeni-teorii-a-pribuzne-zony-27/> and ‘Artistic Research as Academic Borderlands’ <https://www.jar-online.net/artistic-research-academic-borderlands>. She is an initiator of a collective publication and exhibition project *Synthetic Becoming* bringing together work by artists, activists, and feminist technoscience practitioners concerned with sympoietic becoming with hormones and hormone-mimicking chemicals.

# Panel: Aesthetics of Sensorialities

## Four Studies on Artistic Involvements with the Human-Nature Relationship

Research cluster Art and Earth, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen

Situated against the backdrop of a planet on the verge of collapse, recent years have witnessed a plethora of emerging artistic practices engaging with human and more-than human relations. With contributions from the fields of art history, theatre and performance studies, as well as musicology and sound studies, this panel will address questions concerning sensational dynamics prompted by natural environments in an era marked by ecological change. By means of concepts such as 'contaminating encounters,' the nano-politics of smell, taste, and breath, as well as energies in the arts, and the *chôra*, the papers will discuss the ways in which artistic practices seek to reflect critically on inhabited ways of relating to earth – but to experiment in a curious manner with how to use our senses, and inhabit the earth in new and unforeseen ways, no less to sustain ourselves emotionally.

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## Encountering and Sensing Landscapes

Solveig Gade

This paper will engage with two very different kinds of landscapes: The Soil Repository located at Copenhagen's Northern Harbor and Mols Bjerger National Park. Whereas the first has become the epitome of what a 'hyper-anthropocene' landscape may mean, the other is often referred to as an 'Urlandschaft', meaning a landscape almost unaffected by human interference. For the performance project *Bodyscaping*, Danish choreographer Nana-Francisca Schottländer interacted with the Soil Repository for more than a year, while Mols Bjerger constitutes the home of the performance group *Secret Hotel* and the *Earthwise Residency*, both headed by performance artist Christine Fentz. The work of Schottländer and Fentz is, alongside a shared focus on site-specific encounters between human and more-than-human actants, defined by its long-term character and entanglement of artistic practices and living practices.

Deploying Anna Tsing's concept of 'contaminating encounters' (Tsing 2015), I wish to focus on the transformative character of the human and more-than-human assemblages entered in the works, be they physical encounters, or the touching, smelling and tasting of landscapes. Evoking Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's notion of *time care* (Bellacasa, 2017), I further wish to hone in on the ways in which the projects invite human participants to attend to and sense the many temporalities and timelines of the landscapes in question.

The paper argues that far from confirming all-too well-known modern dichotomies such as human-nature, artificial-natural, projects such as those of Schottländer's and Fentz's signal a distinct shift in how natural environments are approached and conveyed in contemporary Western art. Furthermore, the paper contends, without neither romanticising nor demonising the landscapes our ruined planet is left with, the works analysed are, in their exploration of conditions for future cross-species survival

–driven by an emotional impulse that could perhaps best be termed as a ‘curiosity in spite of’.

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### **Energies Consciousness: Artistic Engagements with the Solar Terrestrial Environment**

Ania Mauruschat

The presentation will focus on the artists Cecilia Vicuña (Chile/USA), Joyce Hinterding (AUS) and Madeleine Andersson (SE) and their investigations of the complex array of energies and their even more complex set of interactions. In contrast to the so-called ‘Energy Unconscious’ (Patricia Smith Yaeger) of most western industrial societies in the last centuries, they consciously research energies in their artistic practices. For example, the indigenous artist, poet, ecofeminist and activist Cecilia Vicuña has consistently emphasised throughout her 50-year career that indigenous cultures have always had a special awareness of energies and people's relationship to the sun and the seasons. Her work *Quipu Womb* (2017) can be understood as references to ‘menstrual blood as well as the energies, flows and cycles of nature’ (Tate Modern). Joyce Hinterding's installation *Aeriology* (1995/2015) makes Very Low Frequency Radio Waves from outer space perceivable and thus reflects Douglas Kahn's concept of ‘earth magnitude and energies’ as well as it adopts and broadens the Aboriginal notion of ‘listening to country’ (Andrew Beletty), which is not primarily concerned with biological listening to the *sounds* of country, but with sensing subaudible and vibrotactile sounds in a certain environment through situated listening. And Madeleine Anderson's multimedia project *Petrosexuality* (2022) finally takes up the groundbreaking work of Dominic Boyer and Imre Szemann on Energies Humanities and gives it a very peculiar spin. The presentation will argue that through their art Vicuña, Hinterding and Andersson make energies perceivable and graspable, so that the recipients can become conscious about them and how humans relate to them. This awareness is a prerequisite for the much-needed change in civilization in the face of climate change.

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### **Beings of Earth Sensations: The Indwelling *Id* of the Elemental**

Nicoletta Isar

Taking up Kristeva's aesthetics of transubstantiation and Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility, this paper searches to recover something of the earthly sensations embodied in the elemental of nature, as well as in the human nature of perception and artistic response. The foreground of this analysis is the *elemental* as the premise of the indwelling on Earth. It is imperative to consider that both theorists share the same vision of the world in which the chiasmic bond connects the visible and invisible, the inner feeling and its outer expression in all forms of life. This mesh that permeates everything and embraces all creatures is a carnal principle (Kristeva), the flesh – a *radiant sensation* (Merleau-Ponty), phenomenologically understood as ‘element.’

Specifically, the paper will inquire into the effects of an imaginary catastrophe that precipitates the artistic response. The artist is a psychoanalytical ‘subject in trial’ or ‘in process’ (Kristeva). Her view of art reflects the process of transference and exchange that occurred within

the medial space of the incarnate region *chôra* of the elemental, where all beings dwell and where creation, as the flow of pain and *jouissance*, becomes therapeutic. This is the miracle of the carnal. Art as the only means by which *jouissance* dissolves trauma. As a being of sensation, the artist is continuously in trial between the semiotic *chôra* and the symbolic, facing the *negativity* process of the *chôra*. Anselm Kiefer and Barnett Newman are masters of sensations that could listen to the tremor of the earth and transubstantiate the geological destruction into the *radiant* mattering of the elemental, from ashes into the dazzling golden ground regenerating itself in a continuum of opposites. It is why art exists, said Shklovsky, it exists so that one might recover the sensation of life, the feeling of the things ‘to make the stone stony.’

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### **The Nanopolitics of Smells, Tastes and Breath:**

#### **About Nina Backman’s *Silence Meal* (since 2013) and *Minimetsä / Miniforests* (since 2021)**

Holger Schulze

How can it be possible to critically reflect a culture’s sensory habits and obsessions – and how can such a critique indeed have a lasting effect on a culture’s material infrastructure? Is it thinkable to alter how you or I perceive our customs of eating, all the regulations and pleasures we embody? Could the experience of an urban agglomeration indeed be perforated and still supported by interventions on the most tiniest scale by individual actions?

Since 2013 Finnish artist Nina Backman works on these questions within the Finnish everyman’s rights concept or *Right to Roam*: first with the *Silence Meal* (since 2013) that transforms notions of gustatory and olfactory experience while eating a full meal – and most recently with inventing, accumulating, and actually planting a number of *Minimetsä / Miniforests* (since 2021). In both work series Backman crafts a peculiar environmental setup for societal purposes following sensory sensibilities: Her efforts to transform given infrastructures and societal dispositives figure as a *sensory critique* that questions the *nanopolitics* of the 21st century.

This contribution discusses how Backman expands through her artistic interpretation the *Right to Roam* and brings it closer to a concept of *sonic commons* (Auinger and Odland 2009). How can such sonic commons then actually facilitate a transformation of participants’ rapport to present materialities? Are everyday practices such as tasting, smelling, breathing and sensing actually capable of being means to perform a critique of contemporary *sensologies* (Perniola 1991)? And above all: Is it indeed possible for an artistic work to serve as counter action to pervasive sensory ideologies of the 21st century? (283)

## Panel: Industrial Landscapes

### **Voices from the Depth: The 'Tinnsjø Adder' and Industrial Heritage Naturecultures**

Inger Birkeland (University of South-Eastern Norway)

When I was a little girl, I often visited my grandparents living at Tinnoset, the tiny railway village in the southernmost end of Lake Tinnsjøen in Southern Norway. I remember sitting at the railway station glaring into the orange lights in the evenings and listening to the noise from the activities where rail wagons were let into the rail ferry M/S Storegut to be carried over the long lake to Mæl, and further on to the industrial town Rjukan, to fetch more industrial products, chemical salpetre and other chemicals, to be sent to the world markets. The water of Lake Tinnsjøen felt dangerous to me. Later, when I stopped being afraid of the dark, dangerous and deep lake water, I drove this road for many years from 2005 when researching the cultural sustainability of this post-industrial region (Birkeland 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2018). But I always saw the lake from the outside, breathing air. I never really talked with the voices of the lake, seeing their vital being.

Today, after engaging with posthuman and hydrofeminist approaches to these industrial heritage naturecultures, these entanglements of meaning and matter, I find that I still have more to learn about the affects and sensibilities of this watery landscape. In 2005, sensational news reached the public's attention, when a completely unknown fish species was discovered here. The fish was found at 430 meters depth, small, white and almost translucent, blind, and without a swim bladder. The little one got the nick name «Tinnsjø Adder». It is a relative of the Arctic char of Tinnsjø. The fish was first filmed by an underwater film team in 1993 searching for the wrecked steamship Hydro sabotaged in 1944 during WW2. In 2005 a new film crew searching for more information managed to catch two of these small creatures and bring them to the surface. They survived the transport from depth to surface and lived for some time.

In this paper, I will shed light on the processes of post-industrialization by tuning into the voice of the Tinnsjø Adder. The waters, rivers and lakes in the area were subjected to rigorous human manipulation, and as in the rest of the modern world, dam building, and hydro-electric power production were landmarks of an industrialist model of sustainability. What does the Tinnsjø Adder tell us? It teaches transparency and survival and transmutation, the ability to move and survive between elements, the ability to adjust to its environments, to change from invisibility to visibility. The transparency of the fish makes us see through it, just like the golomyankas of Lake Bajkal in Siberia. It teaches that we are now, in the age of the Anthropocene, not able to hide that which has been kept invisible. There is a messiness in this because things, what we think is fixed, what we know, changes and transforms. This voice brings depth and invisibility to the surface. At the surface, the lake looks very dark, almost black. But at the bottom, seeing is not important. Vital being is.

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## Biographical note

Inger Birkeland is Professor in Human Geography at the University of South-Eastern Norway. She teaches nature-society relations and cultural aspects of sustainability in teacher education and cultural studies. Her research has focused on people-place relations, heritage-making, and cultural aspects of community sustainability. A long-time research interest has been difference feminism evolving into new research with hydrofeminist, posthuman, and psychological approaches to sustainability and climate change transformation. Ongoing research on industrial heritage-making in the age of the Anthropocene and challenges of multivocality related to Rjukan- Notodden Industrial Heritage Site based in hydrofeminist approaches.

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## Turning to the Land: Ecological Awareness with and through Human Embrace of a Former Gravel Pit

Helene Illeris (University of Agder, Norway)

‘The sound of the humid putrefying substance is a deep dark tone of unbecoming human, at least in the strict sense. My moving body is taken over by processes belonging to Land. There is no landscape any more, the pit is just a black scar in the skin of the earth. The forces of Land transform me, crafting me into something different than a passer-by, something heavier, more earth-driven’. (Illeris, in press)

In this paper I explore my own efforts to embrace a recreational area, a former gravel pit, close to where I live in Denmark. Through living inquiry my aim is to craft new narratives about how ecological awareness can be practiced in sustainability art education. By ‘ecological awareness’ I intend an increased sensibility towards how we humans exist as *earthlings*, as bodies that are basically made of the same substances as animals and plants, soil and gravel. While acknowledging our common history of estrangement towards each other, I want to explore how my body becomes Land and how Land comes alive with me (Nancy, 2005). At the end

of my presentation, I introduce propositions for restoring attunement to Land through aesthetic events of 'crafting-with'.

In my explorations I adopt an experimental form of collaborative (auto-) ethnography where movement, learning and the creation of meaning are entangled in processes of creation. Instead of the discovery of preexisting facts, just waiting to be dug out by the researcher, in this 'living inquiry', movements and actions in and with the world create new realities in ongoing processes of crafting-with reality (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005). In order to challenge my immediate experiences with the pit and connect to the broader societal and natural processes of Land and Landscape, I relate to the history, geology and ecology of Danish gravel pits. In the conclusion, I offer 1-2 propositions for working with Land in sustainability art education.

This study is not so much about 'searching' and 'finding' as it is about going into deep transformative processes that entails experiences of confusion, vulnerability and humility towards forms of existence that are radically different from what we consider to be human. Thus research is considered as a non-representative voyage trying to embrace new relationships in the making rather than studying them from 'outside'. By adopting the idea of 'propositions' (Manning & Massumi, 2020) the educational scope is to create joint experiences rather than to find out what 'works' in order to create learning as 'result'.

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## Biographical note

Helene Illeris (Ph.D.) is Professor of Art Education at the University of Agder (UiA) in Norway. Her research interests include art education in formal and non-formal settings, with a special focus on aesthetic learning processes, contemporary art forms, and ecological awareness. Helene is a leader of the *Art and Social Relations* research group and a coordinator of the *Arts in Context* research platform both at UiA. She has published more than 60 books, chapters and articles in English, Danish, Swedish, and Italian. One of the latest is 'Lying on the Ground: Aesthetic Learning Processes in the Anthropocene' [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-90980-2\\_9](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-90980-2_9)

www: <https://www.uia.no/en/kk/profile/heleneil>

## **A Heritage of High Winds: On the Cultivation of Ugly Post-industrial Weather-worlds**

Chris Farrell (University of Texas at Austin, USA)

This paper works outwards from the starting premise that Stanley, the town at the centre of my ethnographic research, is a place with a reputation for ‘bad’ weather. Adopting Ingold’s understanding of the ‘weather-world’ (2007), and incorporating Hulme’s notion of weather ‘cultivation’ (2018) as well as insights from the field of somaesthetics, I argue that ‘bad’ weather in Stanley has a history, and one of which my interlocutors in the town are acutely aware. This history – of capitalist resource extraction and doomed efforts at post-industrial ‘revitalisation’ – has shaped the built environment of the town in such a way as to produce an ‘ugly’ (Ngai 2005) or even ‘hostile’ weather-world: an environment in which the weather, though not in and of itself *extreme*, is nevertheless experienced affectively as an obstruction to my elderly interlocutors’ ability to move about the landscape and *live a good life*. This paper is focused on a single point in the town’s built environment – a crossing between the pedestrianised Front Street and the town’s Asda supermarket – at which the effects of this history are most keenly felt. Here, the town’s ‘bad’ weather is felt as actively *disabling*. By describing the converging forces – natural, historical, political, economic, bureaucratic, affective, architectural – which produce and exacerbate a ‘wind-tunnel effect’ (Diaconu 2019) in this spot, I argue that affect-oriented accounts of ‘ruinous’ post-industrial space are incomplete without an acknowledgment of the way these spaces shape – and are shaped by – the weather. Places like Stanley should be understood as *cultivated* post-industrial weather-worlds – weathered landscapes shaped by histories of human action (and inaction) – and reputations for ‘bad’ weather should be interrogated rather than simply written off as banal complaints or natural quirks of geographic situation.

### **Biographical note**

Chris Farrell, whose ethnographic work is focused on elderly sociality in post-industrial Britain, recently obtained his PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. Previously, he received his bachelor’s degree in Archaeology and Anthropology from Durham University and a master’s in Social and Cultural Anthropology from University College London. His research interests include affective engagements with landscape, contemporary class divisions, ‘ugly’ political feelings, mobility and disability, and anthropological ethics.

## Panel: Temporality

### **Engaging with Phenology to Sense More-than-human Climate Change Temporalities**

Michelle Bastian (University of Edinburgh, UK)

Many scholars have argued that the climate crisis is in part a problem of time, with ecological, political and social systems thought to be out of sync or mistimed. Discussions of time and environment are often interdisciplinary, necessitating a wide-ranging use of methods and approaches. However to date there has been little to no engagement from humanities or the social sciences with the scientific field of phenology, the study of life cycle timing across species, including plants, animals and insects. In this paper I will discuss findings from a new field philosophy project that works with ecologists and citizen scientists to ask 'what is time?' via the study of phenology. I will suggest that phenology can offer environmental humanities scholars novel inroads to thinking through temporal relations across species and environments. Drawing on Elaine Gan and Anna Tsing's (2018) interest in the way time participates in processes of 'how things hold' I'm interested in how the flexibility of time and timing, issues at the heart of phenology, play a role in adaptation to change. What can we learn about the range of temporal strategies that plants, animals, fungi and others use to respond to changing climates, and what can we learn from them? In particular, I'm interested in how phenology can challenge the idea that climate change can only be understood as an insensible hyperobject, outside direct experience. Drawing on my own experiences of performing phenology recording, I will make the case for phenology as a method that makes both climate change, and time, sensible to touch, smell, hearing and sight.

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### **Embodied Time and Animals Specimens in the Past and Present**

Alice Would (Historical Studies, University of Bristol, UK)

In this paper, I suggest how engagements with an idea of embodied time can help us to understand our current troubled times. Specifically, engaging with the bodily time incorporated into the making of animal specimens – which the anthropologist Adrian Van Allen describes as produced through a 'folding' of past, present, future – I argue that time is critical to ways in which humans sensorily engaged with the more-than-human world. The Anthropocene is a measure of time in relation to space, and I propose that, within this wider conception of time, it is important to view the smaller temporalities; the meetings of different rhythms, directions, speeds, and bodies. With regards to natural history specimens, these temporalities also include extinction, acceleration, and an idea of timelessness. I suggest how it is critical to ground timely ideas in the material changes to both human and non-human animal bodies and their interactions with the wider environment.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, taxidermy was an attempt to suspend animal skins through a meeting of human hand, tacit knowledge, chemical preservatives and tools. For the taxidermy process, animal lives (and lifetimes) were ended through hunting and museum collection, as part of the wider colonial mission to secure and display bits of nature – an effort

we now know contributed to the sixth mass extinction event. Nevertheless, the ‘afterlives’ of these creatures continued, and their bodies were still frequently drawn into dynamic temporal processes such as decay, retouching and remodelling. I will suggest, then, that this coming-together of animal and human skin – incorporating craft, and the haptic processes of skinning and making – were a physical manifestation of different temporal realities and imaginaries. My research draws on British museum and natural history collections, and focusses on the period between 1814-1920. However, I also suggest how these temporalities have meaning in and for the present, and specifically for understanding the ways in which the meetings of different bodies, times and processes continue to play out and produce the Anthropocene.

### **Biographical note**

Dr Alice Would is an environmental historian at the University of Bristol, interested in animal-human relationships in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and working on time and temporality, materiality and the senses. In September 2021, she passed her PhD (Bristol and Exeter) titled ‘Taxidermy Time: Fleshing out the Animals of British Taxidermy in the Long Nineteenth Century.’ She is currently a Research Associate on the AHRC Leadership Fellowship project ‘Dark-dwellers as more-than-human misfits’, working alongside Dr Andy Flack to investigate dark-adapted animal senses, combining approaches from environmental history, sensory studies and disability studies.

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### **‘I’m still but I sense rocking!’ Geological Sensibility in Charlotte Smith, Virginia Woolf, and Ida Marie Hede**

Sebastian Ørtoft Rasmussen (Comparative Literature, Aarhus University)

The shock of the Anthropocene has thrust upon us new ways of not just understanding but also sensing the world around us. As increasing scholarly attention has brought forward, the last centuries’ unprecedented upheavals in, and radical new conceptualizations of, the Earth’s system have given rise to new ways of experiencing and being in touch with our earthly environment. In this context, my monograph in process traces the appearance and development of what I propose to call a geological sensibility in western literature from the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century till today. A sensorial encounter rather than a cognitive conceptualization, such a sensibility appears in a broad array of literature as a way of experiencing the environment through the lens of the geological: It is present as for instance a vulnerable mood stemming from the powerful forces of geological catastrophes and events, a hopeful feeling of togetherness and commoradierie led on by new perspectives on the entanglement between the biological and the geological world, or a sense of vertigo in front of the dizzying views and large timescales of deep geological time.

In this paper, I look closer at such sensibility as it comes to light in representations of encounters with the geological world in the literary works of three different earthly engaged authors: romantic poet Charlotte Smith (1749- 1806), modernist novelist Virginia Woolf (1882- 1941), and contemporary writer Ida Marie Hede (1980- ). Although different in both form, scope, and historical context, the literary works of these authors seem to share attention to the way in which our sensibilities attune to both the state of the world around us, as well as to cultural notions of our relationship with it.

In Smith, emotional and physical disorientation follows along with new perspectives on the geological world from the immense geoscientific discoveries of her time. In Woolf, seemingly everyday objects open up unsettling sensations, infusing the everyday perspective with deep geological time. In Hede, bodies, capitals, and minerals intermingle in the context of large-scale capital extraction, exploitation, and destruction of geological environments. As such, I argue, these works provide us with a sense-historical 'prism' in which the very real bodily consequences of our era of climate change are rendered visible – if not themselves sensuous.

**Biographical note**

Sebastian Ørtoft Rasmussen is a Ph.D. fellow in Comparative Literature at AU. His research studies how the immense changes in our perception of the geological world from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century till today, have affected our sensorial relationship to the world around us, by looking closer at representations of the material world of rocks, mountains, caves, and crystals in Western European art and literature.

## Panel: Sensibility and Health

### Sensing Fungal Oddkin: Queer Attachments, Mental Health, and Green Time

Marianne Kongerslev (Aalborg University, DK)

‘Fungi are ideal guides’ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing states in *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015, 143), and in this paper I think with fungi to explore queer attachments, disability, and ‘green time’—a kind of mental health downtime that allows for slowing down and connecting with wild things and ‘oddkin’ (Haraway) in ways everyday life does not necessarily accommodate.

As a sensorily sensitive person, I experience everyday life as hyper-stressful. I have no sensory filter and even small everyday noises, lights, and smells are crippling. Therefore, green time is time to recharge, to think, to disengage the senses from the overwhelming sensory profile of life, and to instead engage the senses generatively. Giving myself green time is not a luxury; it is a necessity. During green time, I commune with my fungal friends and regulate my sensory system. Green time is not just ‘encounters with bewilderment found *in the wild*’ (Halberstam 90, *my emphasis*); it bleeds into other times of my life. When I read about fungi, when I cook and eat mushrooms, when I look at other people’s mushroom adventures on social media, or talk about mushrooms, I extend my green time. Like the complex mycelia that make fungi unique in our world, my kinship with mushrooms seeps and crawls into all areas of my life. In a very real sense, mushrooms remake me. Eating mushrooms is one way, but in a more important sense, if I did not seek out my fungal friends, I would not function. They renew me. In turn, as Tsing points out, humans remake and co-create landscapes and ‘interspecies relations’ between mushrooms and their tree cousins in often productive ways as well (Tsing 138).

Exploring my own complex assemblages of kinship with mushrooms, the paper explores how my wanderings in the wild enable queer entanglements, affective modes of knowing, and a form of ‘crip time’ (Kafer). The paper is exploratory and experimental. Using autoethnographic creative vignettes (Humphreys), and what Nina Lykke calls an ‘autophenomenographic-poetic’ method, I present a series of sensory and affective encounters that illustrate interspecies relationality and interdependence.

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### **Biographical note**

Marianne Kongerslev is Associate Professor of American literature and culture at Aalborg University, Denmark, and was visiting scholar at the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky in 2019. Her research on Native American literature, US popular culture, queer/gender studies, feminism, and critical race studies has been published in both English and Danish and has appeared in international journals including the *Polish Journal for American Studies*, *American Studies in Scandinavia* and *Women, Gender, and Research*. She is currently working on a book project titled *Spiteful Fictions*.

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### **Hypersensitivity in an Era of Climate Change: Material Flows and Currents of Sensory Awareness**

Julie Gemuend (Brock University, Canada)

The tendency in Western culture to see matter as inert or static — an entity upon which humans project meaning or purpose — has been challenged by the burgeoning field of posthumanities, which advance matter as more than mere physical substance. Matter is taken not only as a noun (a thing) but also as a verb, emphasizing the dynamics of process — a kinetic doing, a becoming, a confluence of agency. Matter can modify, mesh with, move through, enhance or diminish bodily compositions.

By engaging the hypersensitive body as an imaginative intervention that figures embodiment as porous, co-composed, infected and infectious, my paper aims to articulate and elaborate a material conception of the human as contaminated by otherness and thus inseparable from the environment. Serving as an implication of the crumbling sustainability of Western liberal humanism and its autonomous, self-contained notion of the human, hypersensitive bodies are acutely aware of the 'trans- corporeal' movements which make and unmake us.

Thin-skinned and exceedingly responsive, my paper conceives of hypersensitive bodies as possessing the supernatural awareness of a clairvoyant or prophet. We live in a 'risk society' where we can no longer assess the dangers of life and must ask ourselves on a daily basis: what is safe? What is not safe? How can we know? Like a canary in a coal mine, the intelligence offered by the hypersensitive body should be perceived as a warning to those who might not sense the murmurings of nuclear, chemical, and ecological dangers. Hegemonic constructions of agency in Western culture result in the dismissal of hypersensitive foresight together with the profound forgetting of our entanglement with externalized nature. Framing hypersensitive bodies as differently-abled, as is often the case, reveals that ableism can

sometimes prevent us from sensing the world in strange and unforeseen ways that hypersensitive beings might be better suited to perceive.

My approach builds upon a deconstructed, decentered, unfixed understanding of a world changeable through art. My paper will mine trans-corporeal evocations of contamination across the arts seeking the ways in which the world takes up residence in the body — as in the case with modern dancer Martha Graham, who, during WWII, observed how daily newspaper headlines affected the muscles in the bodies of her dancers. My paper will invoke an ethics that is not circumscribed by the human but is instead accountable to a material world that is never merely an external place but always the very substance of ourselves and others. Hypersensitive bodies serve as sunrays that bring the contours of our material entanglements to light. They not only disclose the flows and interchanges between bodies and environments but they drive narratives of contamination that are capable of combating apathy, expanding environmental consciousness and sparking new modes of thinking about and being within the emergent material world.

### **Biographical note**

Julie Gemuend is a Canadian artist-researcher. Her practice is aligned with a number of intersecting movements that emerged in the 1960s, including performance-based video and land art. Powered by the materiality of the body and its engagement with the physical world, Julie aims to explore our profound connection with externalized nature by probing the edges of identity and environment, interiority and exteriority, and the places where the two merge. She is currently completing a research-creation Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Humanities at Brock University.

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### **Reorienting Ourselves in a Rapidly Transforming World: What Role an Animist Sensibility?**

Matthew Adams (University of Brighton, UK)

*Maybe a grammar of animacy would lead to a whole new way of being in the world*

- Robin Wall Kimmerer

The focus of this talk is animism, meaning, at its broadest, ‘that nature is alive and there is a social space for humans and non-humans to interrelate to each other’ (Elina Helander-Renvall). It begins with the story of a Sámi drum, considered to play a central role in Sami animist traditions. The drum was confiscated in the 17thC as part of the aggressive Christianisation of the region. The Danish government promised to return it in January 2022. We consider whether the drum's journey usefully illustrates a growing critical acknowledgment of anthropocentrism – a human-centred ontology, ethical framework and interconnected set of beliefs, in which all other beings are subordinate and effectively a means to human ends - in the natural sciences, Indigenous Knowledge, and the humanities and social sciences. Going further, we can also ask if the drum's return speaks to a belated recognition of the value of an alternative animist ontology and cosmovision. We examine what animism and ‘new animism’ as an alternative to anthropocentrism looks like in theory and practice, paying particular

attention to what Robin Wall Kimmerer refers to as a 'grammar of animacy'. Finally, the talk turns to how these developments might register at the level of experience and subjectivity for non-indigenous peoples steeped in anthropocentric traditions, and in the context of ongoing ecological crises.

## Panel: Anthropocene Experiments

### How to Do More-than-human Politics: Lessons from an All-too-human Experiment

Stephanie Erev and Lars Tønder (Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen)

The goal of this paper is to examine what it might mean to change our institutions to allow for the more-than-human to participate in politics. What does a more-than-human politics look like, and what kind of changes – procedurally, sensorially, or otherwise – might it effect? To answer these questions, the paper proceeds along two tracks. The first track engages a series of interventions in contemporary democratic theory that draws on process philosophy and complexity theory to develop an account of democracy as ‘swarming.’ The paper is particularly interested in examining how these interventions envision collective learning and collective action within nested entanglements of human and nonhuman life. How does attention to the entanglements strengthen our shared concern for life broadly understood, and how might this concern provide the impetus for a less hierarchical – more democratic – mode of more-than-human politics? Along a second track, the paper draws on lessons from a two-day role experiment with approximately one hundred participants commissioned to develop an alternative COP21/Paris Agreement. Developed in collaboration with the Copenhagen-based ‘Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology,’ the experiment is an attempt to put more-than-human politics to work in order provide an alternative to the current state of affairs. While some participants will represent traditional political actors like states and interest groups, other participants will represent more-than-human actors such as the oceans, the microbiome, and the birds. Overall, the experiment offers a unique perspective on the limits and possibilities of more-than-human politics. Using observations and interviews with participants in the experiment, the paper will outline and discuss these limits and possibilities, folding them into the paper’s theoretical forays into the concept of swarming.

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### Overcoming Earth Forgetfulness in the Anthropocene – From Ecology to Zoölogy

Michael Paulsen (University of Southern Denmark)

The aim of this paper is four-fold. First, it argues that the tremendous environmental problems of the Anthropocene, are products of *Earth forgetfulness* (Heidegger 1977; Paulsen 2022a). Second, it assesses and appraises new materialism and especially the concept of *onto-sympathy* developed by Jane Bennett (2010; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2020) as a potent strategy to overcoming Earth forgetfulness, helping ‘us see and feel the many non-human activities, attachments and entanglements’ (Skiveren 2020:199). The assessment is based on theoretical considerations, but also experiences and reflections from a practical art-research workshop held on Odderøya in Norway 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022. Yet, third it suggests that it would be valuable to complement new materialism and the onto-sympathy model, with new idealism and an *ethico-sympathy* model (Paulsen 2022b), moving from ecology (similarities) to zoölogy (radical otherness). The core of this alternative is a (kind of wu wei) strategy, where we as human beings *suspend* our manipulations of the world, withdraw, and try to let more-than-humans (re)appear, act, make us responsible and perhaps take contact to us, leading

to zoölogical dialogue, where we learn *with* and *from* others, *not being like* ourselves (Paulsen 2022c). Fourth, a roleplay game experiment is reported, in which different strategies for creating hope and overcoming Earth forgetfulness are tested on an imaginary level, where a *biocentric future* (Oziewicz 2022) is speculatively invented.

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## Biographical note

Michael Paulsen is a Danish philosopher and associate professor at the University of Southern Denmark. His research focuses on the ontology and axiology of education. He is working on developing a new understanding of education and life situated in the Anthropocene. Together with Shé M. Hawke and Jan Jagodzinski he has edited the book 'Pedagogy in Anthropocene – Rewilding Education for a New Earth', 2022 Palgrave.

See <https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/en/persons/mpaulsen>

## **Orienteering Futures**

Kristina Lindström (senior lecturer), Li Jönsson (associate senior lecturer), Jonas Larsen (lecturer), Per-Anders Hillgren (professor) from School of Arts and Communication and Christina Lindkvist (associate professor) (Urban Studies at Malmö University, Sweden)

In its Scandinavian origins, orienteering refers to the activity of crossing unknown land with the aid of a map and a compass. The scale of the map permits to identify any single items like big rocks or streams, to give different options to find the way towards the goal. Then now, how do we orient ourselves for uncertain futures, ecological degradation, in changing landscapes, with no definite goal to reach?

Instead of running in wild terrain, the project Grief and Hope in Transition invited citizens in spring 2022 to explore a form for orienteering in rural landscapes where different futures can be sensed and where western ontologies can be questioned. We visited places that are affected by climate change, the development of renewable energy and that raise hopes for local commitment and action. Replacing the map and compass for various exercises and discussions, we collaboratively explored how these places, their history and possible futures can help prepare for an uncertain future.

As researchers drawing from participatory design, feminist techno-science and cultural geography we will give account from an ongoing research project meant to mobilize a heterogeneous understanding of hope as well as grief (Head 2016, Schmitz & Ahmed 2014) in a transition towards a fossil free society. Our experimental set-up to understand the transition and invite citizens to participate, have been guided on Dewey's (1934/1980) notion of aesthetic experience and Ingold's (2013) alternative accounts of making. In extension of these, we will propose future orienteering as an aesthetic practice that engages with the affective dimensions of living with uncertainties and potential losses when trying to undo our fossil dependence every day.

Each place was thus selected to evoke a series of questions and dilemmas, such as how to live with the loss of loved places, how to extend care and responsibility beyond places that we have a strong sense of belonging to, how to rework and rethink traditions and embrace change. While these dilemmas were far from resolved, each gathering made explorative proposals of how to orient ourselves within these uncertainties and potential losses to create hope (Miyazaki 2006). This was done through practices such as taking cuttings from trees that were about to fall into the ocean, making casts from landscapes that might be lost and preparing a fossil free midsummer feast. In other words, the orienteering that we explored did not have a clear end point or predefined goal. Instead they should be understood as proposal for how to practice grief and hope and restore a sense of responsibility to the unfolding of futures (Adam and Groves 2007) in specific places and their attachments.

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### **Biographical note**

The Grief & Hope project is a collaboration between Kristina Lindström (senior lecturer), Li Jönsson (associate senior lecturer), Jonas Larsen (lecturer), Per-Anders Hillgren (professor), from School of Arts and Communication as well as Christina Lindkvist (associate professor) from Urban Studies at Malmö University. The project is financed by Formas and the overall aim of this project is to engage diverse publics into imaging and performing fossil free futures, that encompasses loss as well as hope, and to develop forms and methods for how these futures can be discussed and debated amongst heterogeneous publics.

## Panel: Grief, Breakdown, and Trauma

### Ecological Grief – Between the Personal, the Political and the Planetary

Mikkel Krause Frantzen (University of Copenhagen)

The climate is changing. We see changes in temperature, in the ocean, in the atmosphere. But it's not just the climate that is changing; what's changing is also how humans live and feel in a changing climate. As recent studies draw connections between environmental decline and the rise of mental illnesses (Albrecht et al 2007; Pūras 2017; Cunsole and Ellis 2018), it has become increasingly clear that the climate crisis as such is a deeply entangled matter tying the personal body and mind to elaborate, environmental systems. In this paper I will explore this entanglement – and the connection between the ecological crisis and the mental health crisis – by focusing on and developing the concept of *ecological grief*. The paper is thus to be understood as is an attempt to address environmental losses, to rethink what mourning is and does in the context of global warming. While a majority of grief researchers tend to focus on grief as it stands in relation to bereavement, i.e. as the personal reaction to the loss of a loved one, an argument is here made for taking seriously the phenomenon of mourning climate change and the losses that global warming entails (loss of nature, of home, of work, of a whole way of life). Drawing upon the work of Judith Butler (2004; 2009), Félix Guattari (2014) and queer death studies (Radomska, Mehrabi, Lykke 2019), the paper argues that ecological grief is to be located and analyzed at the intersection of the individual and the collective, the existential and the political. By doing so I hope to interject an alternative avenue into discussions around grief and the psychology of climate change, yet the goal is emphatically not to get ecological grief recognized as a mental illness and included in the diagnostic manuals – what is at stake is finding interdisciplinary ways forward that do not resort to personalizing, pathologizing and depoliticizing the issue in question (Frantzen 2021).

### Biographical note

Mikkel Krause Frantzen (b. 1983), postdoc at the University of Copenhagen. The author of *Going Nowhere, Slow—The Aesthetics and Politics of Depression* (2019) and *Klodens Fald* (2021), his work has appeared in e.g. *boundary 2*, *Third Text*, *Theory, Culture, and Society*, *Differences* and *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

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### Re-inscribing Life in the Wasteland: Trauma and Creativity in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* (2014)

Jessica Maufort (Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium)

In the 2014 novel *The Back of the Turtle* by Native/First Nations writer Thomas King, the reader follows characters variously involved in or affected by the devastating testing of a new defoliant which killed all the animals and inhabitants of a reserve near a North American coastal town. Connecting the eco-disaster with the capitalist economy of First World countries, King's novel deals specifically with toxicity and its (post- or neo-)colonial ramifications in environmental, social justice, and political issues. For the purposes of this AIAS conference,

this paper concentrates on the traumatic impact of King's toxic eco-catastrophe and on some of the characters' creative/artistic projects to re-inscribe life back in this wasteland.

Indeed, Gabriel, the lead scientist who created the herbicide, returns to the town after the disaster. A man of Indigenous descent, Gabriel is not only a perpetrator, but also an indirect victim, as his family died in the mass poisoning. Oscillating between melancholia and disturbing lucidity, he contemplates suicide. This disenchanted character contrasts with the creative figures of Mara and Sonny. By painting and placing portraits of the victims (including her own family) in the abandoned reserve, Mara re-inscribes in situ the memory of the absent, and by extension their enduring presence, in a constructive move to revitalise this wounded no-man's land. Mara's encounter with the passive Gabriel forces him to work through his guilt and defeatism towards emotional and moral re-investment. Sonny's similarly regenerative project involves an interspecies dialogue with the local fauna: his makeshift lighthouse made of organic and manufactured salvage is intended to call back the sea turtles that used to nest on the beach. The muteness of this enigmatic character echoes the silence of the animal figures in the narrative. This signals a significant change in King's techniques, which have been mostly associated with magic realism and vocal non-human entities.

This paper also discusses King's sober style and disrupted structure in light of the ontological and/or emotional dislocation experienced by the characters in the ambivalent context of the Anthropocene, i.e. a 'world made by us and [a] world without us or beyond us' (Schuster 165). Finally, the author complicates the concept of 'solastalgia' through Mara's and Gabriel's ambiguous relationship with 'home,' namely the contested terrain of Indigenous reserves in North America. King's novel suggests a positive transformation of one's affective attachment to the local reserve thanks to creative practices that re-enact networks of relations between the human and non-human, reason and affect, the absent and present, life and death.

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## Biographical note

Jessica Maufort currently investigates the ecopoetics of trauma in the Anthropocene. She specialises in postcolonial ecocriticism, ecopoetics, and magic realism examined in Indigenous and non-Indigenous fiction from Australasia and Canada. Related research interests include zoocriticism, material ecocriticism, affect studies, and ecospirituality. Jessica is the Book Reviews Editor of the *Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies* and an Assistant Editor of *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*. She recently published a co-guest-edited special issue on 'New Scholarship' in *New Zealand and Pacific Studies* (2021).

## Reading in the Breakdown: A Critical Consideration of Textual Breakdowns as Environmental Relations in Jenny Offill's *Weather*

Hannah Nelson-Teutsch (University of Würzburg, Germany)

In the Anthropocene, breakdown is a given. The ongoing, overlapping environmental crises that have surfaced in the geologic record can be read as the story of a planet breaking down. Reading the geologic record to become intimate with the breakdown requires its own kind of breakdown – the coring, boring, culling work that Kathryn Yusoff terms *white geology*, which is not only a way of seeing and knowing the earth, but also a means of distinguishing between matter and being. To read for the breakdown is vital work, and not only because of what the breakdown can tell us about crude oil and carbon molecules. What the breakdown offers is intimacy (Lowe) – the dirty (Hamilton and Neimanis), hot (Haraway), sweaty (Ahmed), cruel (Berlant) and care-full (Puig de la Bellacasa) coming together of a self and a more-than-human environment in crisis.

To look to the breakdown, then, is not only to go where things get crude – to seek out the environmental devastations of the climate crisis by way of ‘geology’s epistemic and material modes of categorization and dispossession’ (Yusoff Preface) – but also, and perhaps more pointedly, to attend to the devastations of environmental breakdowns as common (Federici), visceral (Holland et al.), and crippling (Chi Wing Lau). This paper looks to the breakdown by way of Mad, Queer, Crip, and Womanist studies that have always operated in close proximity to the breakdown in order to conceive of new ways of knowing environments in crisis that move beyond the dominant affective binaries of hope and despair (Seymour) – beyond ecological anxiety (Grose) or even ecological cynicism (Gersdorf). Thinking thoughts with Mad, Queer, Crip and Womanist studies matters. In the words of Donna Haraway, ‘it matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds’ (35). This paper asks what thoughts the breakdown thinks; what worlds breakdown worlds? And to begin to answer that question takes up Jenny Offill’s *Weather*.

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### **Biographical note**

Hannah Nelson-Teutsch is a PhD candidate and lecturer in the department of American Studies at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. Working within the Environmental Humanities Class at the graduate school, Hannah's doctoral thesis considers the making and meaning of apocalyptic landscape in the American context throughout what Wai Chee Dimock has termed 'deep time' (3). Hannah has authored scholarly articles for publications such as *The Sage Handbook on Nature and COPAS*. She is currently co-editing a volume that engages the climate crisis through creative approaches to academic writing to be published in 2022 with Würzburg University Press and developing interests in ethics of care, commoning, and material poetics for publication in alternative media environments.

## Panel: Decolonialisation and Migration

### **The Vanishment of Miedzianka Village as a Result of the Energy Regime Powering 'Atomic Communism'. The Affect Studies and Postcolonial Ecocriticism Perspective**

Maja Wróblewska (University of Warsaw, Poland)

The aim of this paper is to trace the process of coming to terms with the gradual vanishment of Miedzianka, a Silesian village where the Soviet uranium mine was shortly located in 1948-1952. My goal is to try to tell about the catastrophe through the landscape in which nature becomes an important carrier of meanings concerning both the event itself and its social and cultural consequences. For there is a scarce number of reports or written testimonies regarding uranium mining and its perennial consequences (including human and non-human fatalities) in Miedzianka.

As I argue, apart from the censorship present in the People's Republic of Poland, it is also the ongoing emotional suppression of the inhabitants of the region that leads to such sparse testimonies. Drawing from affect studies, I attempt to scrutinize the image of people who on one hand, were treated as a cheap labour force in the energy regime powering 'atomic communism', and on the other, witnessed described by Rob Nixon 'slow violence': the gradual disappearance of their homeland and community.

Because of the described nature-culture phenomena, the second theoretical perspective of this paper constitutes postcolonial ecocriticism. Scrutinizing the given study case, I intend to expand the notion of neocolonial dependencies between the satellite state and the imperial USSR. Thus, I would like to address the issue of resource extraction and its environmental consequences that are occurring in Poland: the country situating itself on the verge of the hegemonic European centre and its periphery.

Whereas the majority of mining settlements have ceased to exist due to the political-economic factors of the second half of the 20th century, in the case of Miedzianka, the cause was of a geological nature. Excessively intensive resource extraction over the period of seven hundred years (aimed at copper, silver, zinc and ultimately uranium) led to the rapid collapse of further plots of land in the village. As a consequence, in 1972, the rest of Miedzianka's population was forcefully resettled to Jelenia Góra, and most of the village's remains were demolished. The majority of residents became aware of the health consequences of uranium exposure scarcely in the 1990s when a few of them sadly died prematurely. The present condition of the mountain 'Miedzianka', inside which the mine was located, is a powerful image. Whilst, it presents a material testimony to the human quest for nuclear weapons, the mountain's perforated inside at the verge of total collapse might as well be read as a metaphor for the state of the Earth in the Anthropocene era.

#### **Biographical note**

Maja Wróblewska is a researcher at the College of Interdisciplinary Individual Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw, where she studies liberal arts and law. She is interested in environmental humanities, the so-called Italian theory and critical legal

studies. In the work, she combines her activist experience with the acquired theoretical background.

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### **Genre Flailing and the Contemporary Climate Migration Novel**

Bryan Yazell (Department for the Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark)

This paper identifies a consequential rupture between contemporary Anglophone literature about climate migration and an older tradition of literature about climate *and* migration. Non-governmental agencies have longed warned that widescale displacement of human populations will be the preeminent societal consequence of anthropogenic climate change. Since the 1990s, climate fiction novels imagine a near-future world where such warnings have come to pass. The forward-looking framing to these novels extends to their presentation of migrancy: rather than dealing only with migration in the time of their composition, they anticipate *future* migrants that will be generated by rising sea tides and permanent drought. The task of representing climate migrants as a real population as-yet invisible in the global north instigates in these texts what Lauren Berlant elsewhere termed genre flailing, a turn away from established literary norms in the face of an acute crisis. The presence of decidedly non-realist genre forms in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Ministry for the Future* (2020), thus posits a clear break from earlier fiction about climate and migration—most famously exemplified by John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). By identifying this point of rupture, this essay provides a critical framework for evaluating the formal and thematic continuities (and discontinuities) among some of the most prominent examples of contemporary climate migration novels.

### **Biographical note**

Bryan Yazell is an assistant professor in the Department for the Study of Culture at the University of Southern Denmark and a fellow at the Danish Institute for Advanced Study. His forthcoming book, *The American Vagrant in Literature: Race, Work and Welfare* (Edinburgh), examines vagabond figures in literature alongside the development of welfare state infrastructures in the US and Britain. His current project draws from ecocriticism, genre studies, and sociology to study climate-induced migration in speculative fiction.

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### **Emotional Loss of the Ex-pastoralist Highlanders in the Eastern Himalayas**

Ru-Yu Lin (Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK)

Research regarding emotional responses to climate change calls for a conceptual frame establishing pathways from emotions to decision making and behaviours. However, current research works tend to make a distinction between the indigenous and non-indigenous minds, and by large focus on cases in middle-to-high-income countries. This paper challenges these distinctions by reflecting the cultural and social contexts in detail, taking the case of a small, diverse, moving ethnic group which has lived through rapid environmental change (including

climate change) in the past 70 years. The Monpa people were mainly yak and sheepherders who also practised swidden farming and forest forage. The closeness of their livelihood and aesthetics with nature coupled with strong attachment and rational beliefs to explain droughts, diseases and weather effects. Rich folklore and storytelling reflect Monpa people's philosophy and taste to regard the mountains, water, forests and wildlife as co-living agents in the ecosystem, and Monpa people have economically deployed religious practices and rituals to communicate and maintain a mutual relationship with these non-human beings. This kind of human-nature relationship was challenged when the post-colonial territory dispute forced the Monpa pastoralists to engage in a prolonged military tension between China and India. The 1962 Sino-India war greatly shaped the landscape and sense of place of the Monpa homeland. And the integration into the post-colonial nationalist country and the capitalist market has changed the modes of production and transactional tools of the Monpa's economic and ecological life. In the recent 30 years, increasing temperature and drying springs further threaten the water supply, and melting glacier causes profound sadness. Despite the spiking stress from intensified landslides and delayed development, the Monpa community does not engage in outmigration, like other small Himalayan societies, to compensate for their cash-poor situation. Instead, they adapted quickly to new political powers, realistic investments, and seeking means to alleviate grief. This paper will discuss the different kinds of emotional loss of three generations of the Monpa people, it aims to argue that (1) earth-based emotions are linked with pan-religious practices, (2) feelings towards the environment cannot be separate from political-economic issues and conditions, (3) popular environmental emotion concepts need to address inequality, especially the unequal factors that link to the meaning of existence for the subjects.

### **Biographical note**

Ru-Yu Lin is currently a PhD student in Development Studies at the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on micro-level emotional experiences of development, and how they combine with the migration decision and choice of livelihoods co-living with nature. Before her PhD study, she spent 10 years studying the lives of three generations of Tibetan refugees (exile and stateless) in rehabilitation camps. Taking the case of the pastoralist societies in the Eastern Himalayas, one chapter of her PhD dissertation unpacks solastalgia and seeks to establish the pathway of environmental emotions to explain eco-anxiety.

## Panel: Companion Species and Death

### Re-attuning to the World through a Posthuman Phenomenology of Mourning

Nina Lykke (Gender Studies, Linköping University, Sweden)

Through an autophenomenographic and poetic-philosophic approach which draws on my recent book *Vibrant Death. A Posthuman Phenomenology of Mourning* (Bloomsbury, London 2022), I shall in the paper explore sensual, corpo-affective and philosophical dimensions of my relationship with the micro-algae, diatoms – in order to establish an argument for an ethics of compassionate planetary companionship. In fossilized form, diatoms built the cliffs and seabed at the island of Fur in the Danish fjord, Limfjorden, where my life partner's ashes are scattered. The waters of the fjord are also today abounding with living diatoms, sometimes in excess. In hot summers, a quickly growing mass of diatoms sometimes result in so-called 'harmful' algal blooms, oxygen depletion and fish death - caused by surrounding agrobusinesses' outlet of too much nitrogen and phosphate to the waters of the fjord. My relationship with the - fossilized as well as living - diatoms has unfolded against the background of what, in a Deleuzean sense, I define as molecular mourning. This is a mode of mourning that rather than addressing the molar subject that was (the memory of my partner as the subject she was before she died), also implies a co-becoming with the new molecular assemblages – the diatom-rich waters - with which my beloved's ashes have become one. The paper will give a glimpse of the spiritmattering mourning practices, and the new aesthesis, corpo-affective and eco-critical commitments they have involved, through snapshots from a few of the poetic texts which crosscut my book's philosophic contemplations. To underpin my plea for an ethics of compassionate planetary companionship, I shall also, briefly, present the posthuman phenomenology of mourning and the intersections of vitalist materialism, immanence philosophy, and spiritual materialism that frame my argument.

### Biographical note

Nina Lykke is Professor Emerita of Gender Studies at Linköping University, Sweden, and Adjunct Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark. She is also a poet and writer, and has recently co-founded an international network for Queer Death Studies. Her current research focuses on feminist theory; queering of death, and mourning in posthuman, queerfeminist, new materialist, decolonial and eco-critical perspectives; autophenomenography; and poetic writing. Author of numerous books such as *Cosmodolphins* (2000), *Feminist Studies* (2010), and *Vibrant Death. A Posthuman Phenomenology of Mourning* (2022).

## **Extinction Companion Species. Bare Death, Response-(in)ability, and Human-non- human Dis/connections**

Monika Rogowska-Stangret (Institute of Philosophy, University of Białystok, Poland)

Donna Haraway coined the term ‘companion species’ (2003) to indicate how inherently human and non-human animals co-constitute each other and how relationalities (rather than autonomous, independent individuals) take center stage in the posthuman scholarship. In this paper I wish to revisit the concept of ‘companion species’ in the context of 6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction and anthropogenic climate destabilization we face in ‘*our today*’ (Bunz et al. 2017) and offer a concept of the extinction companion species in order to grasp environmental mourning as a transcorporeal practice that is reconfiguring what it means to be *human\** today. As the extinction studies scholars point out extinction is a process not limited to dying off of one species, it results in vanishing of the whole worlds and their flourishing, life-giving relationalities (Rose et al. 2017). Thus, the notion of extinction companion species is aimed at grasping how extinction ethico-onto-epistem-ologically reformulates the human-non-human entanglements, sensations, and worldings.

The concept of extinction companion species is theoretically organized around the figure of the wound that is a frame used by Hugo Reinert (among others) to refer to ‘environmental toxicity, colonialism, or the Anthropocene’ in order to ‘open them [...] to the knowledge of the injured’ (2019). Together with Reinert I wish to ask: what ‘new analytics radiate’ from this ongoing wounding? How ‘the knowledge of the injured’ and accompanying death and extinction reshapes human-non-human relationalities? Might it still contribute to caring and flourishing relations (Bellacasa 2017) in times of extinction?

To answer those questions, I mobilize three concepts. That of ‘bare death’ (Rogowska-Stangret 2020) is used to reflect on the extinction as disrupting the transformation of death (wound) to life (regeneration). ‘Bare death’ asks how the revival from the wound is possible given the fact that death cannot be simply rewritten in affirmative terms as entering into the ‘generative powers of a Life’ (Braidotti 2006) because it risks being erased. The concepts of human-non-human dis/connections (Wright 2014) and response-(in)ability (Rogowska-Stangret 2017, Rose 2012) follow up on ‘bare death’ to search for ethics of mourning, accompanying, and sensing the extinction in ‘*our today*’.

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### Biographical note

Monika Rogowska-Stangret is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy, University of Białystok. She works at the intersection of feminist philosophy, environmental humanities, and posthumanism. She was a member of the Management Committee in the European project *New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter Comes to Matter'* (2013-2018). Monika published in *Feminist Theory* (2020), *Philosophy Today* (2019), *The Minnesota Review: A Journal of Creative and Critical Writing* (2017). She co-edited *Feminist New Materialisms: Activating Ethico-politics through Genealogies in Social Sciences* (2019).

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### Intimacy and Extinction: Caring for the Lost Orangutan

Sara Bédard-Goulet (University of Tartu, Estonia)

A growing number of scholarship is paying attention to the cultural meaning of the current ecological catastrophe and, more specifically, of its sixth mass extinction of species (Heise 2016). While attention is paid to the emotional impact of climate change (Albrecht 2019) and environmental narratives (Weik von Mossner 2017), my attention turns, in this paper, to the human response toward endangered animals and the surprising intimacies that arise between humans and disappearing animals. Considered an 'interspecies literature' by some (Cazaban-Mazerolles 2015), contemporary French author Éric Chevillard's novels seem to offer a genuine posthuman interest in nonhuman protagonists such as a hedgehog (*Du Hérisson*), an ant and an anteater (*L'auteur et moi*). *Sans l'orang-outan* (2007) (*Without the Orangutan*, untranslated) starts with the death of the last orangutan couple in captivity, which brings about the collapse of the world. The narrator, who was their zookeeper, gets the orangutans taxidermized to keep them in his bedroom but as they start to get too many visitors, he agrees to the building of a glass dome on a pedestal, where the stuffed couple will be visible for everyone but cared for by him only. This leads to a general cult to the orangutans and to an odd relationship between the narrator and the taxidermies that he grooms daily. In this paper, I aim to analyze, through close-text analysis, the strange, yet anthropocentric, intimacy taking place between the zookeeper and the dead orangutans to understand what it reveals about our relationship to endangered or extinct species, which, in turn, structures the institutional response to species endangerment and loss. My analysis will draw on ecocriticism as it is challenged by queer theory (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson 2010; Seymour (2013), material

ecocriticism (Iovino and Oppermann 2014) and animal studies (Mackenzie & Posthumus 2015), as well as notions of object relation and loss theorized in psychoanalysis (Lacan 2021, Freud 1984).

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## Biographical note

Sara Bédard-Goulet is ASTRA Professor of Romance Studies at the University of Tartu, where she works on contemporary French-language narratives and artworks. Her research interests are based on ecocriticism, reader-response theory and psychoanalysis. Among her publications that are most significantly connected to this paper's topic are 'Cauliflowers and Plane Trees: Cultivated Vegetal in *Le Méridien de Greenwich* (1979) by Jean Echenoz' (*L'Esprit créateur*, 2020), '14 or the Missing Arm: Ontological Instability of the French Contemporary Novel in Jean Echenoz's Work' (*Queer(y)ing Bodily Norms in Francophone Culture: Transformation, Fragmentation and Aestheticization*, edited by Polly Galis, Maria Tomlinson and Antonia Wimbush, 2021) and '„Postmodernne loomalikkus": antropoloogiline detsentreerimine Jean Echenoz'i loomingus' (*Humanitaaria 100-aastases rahvusülilikoolis*, edited by Mari Mets, 2019).

## Panel: Affects and Activism

### Shared Hope – Emotions of Climate Activism

Alfred Sköld (Aalborg University, DK)

Research on climate-related emotions often focuses on climate grief, eco anxiety and solastaliga. Given the current state of the planet and human societies' inability to respond to the climate crisis in more sustainable ways, this abundance of negative emotions seems quite reasonable. While many young people of today are mentally burdened by climate-related issues, an unprecedentedly young and non-ideological political movement is materialized in *Fridays for Future* and similar groups worldwide.

In this presentation, I will present the initial results from an ethnographic and interview- based study of the role of hope among young climate activists in *The Green Youth Movement* (Den grønne ungdomsbevægelse) in Denmark. What drives such a movement? Are emotions relevant if we wish to understand activist work, and if so how? In what ways does grief, anxiety and despair interact with hope, care and collective action? Does the climate crisis – and the political awakening it currently spurs, represent an end to decades of political standstill?

From Sophocles' *Antigone* to *Black Lives Matter*, grief and mourning has been a vital political force. The guiding assumption of this study is that hope constitutes a vital mediator in the movement from grief and action. Without hope, otherwise crucial political struggles tend to end in either despair or mindless rage. What then, does it mean to be hopeful? How do we distinguish hope from optimism, desire and wishful thinking?

Theoretically positioned in the intersection between existential (Kierkegaard, Hägglund) and Marxist and neo-Marxist (Bloch, Eagleton) thought, I seek to develop a non-individualistic notion of hope that is equally rooted in a confrontation with finitude. In close dialogue with the empirical material from the everyday lives of climate activists, I will seek to establish hope as a relationally anchored virtue, closely related to our ability and willingness to act in the light of limitations and disappointments.

### Biographical note

Alfred Sköld (M.A., MSc, PhD) is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Aalborg University. His PhD dissertation *Relationality and Finitude – A Social Ontology of Grief* (2021) dealt with the existential and ethical aspects of grief. His current project *Shared Hope – Emotions of Climate Activism* investigates the role of hope in youth climate activism.

## **Kind Pessimist Aesthetics in Climate Fiction and Activist Practice**

Macon Holt (Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School)

Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism (2011) – a desire for something that the pursuit of which can only serve to impede one's flourishing – is understood to be a consequence of the increasing unattainability of representations of a particular notion of the 'good life' under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism. Berlant's analysis understands this as the 'waning' of certain realist genres from social life. The representations of the good life these genre's put forth could be characterised as individualistic, consumerist and politically reactionary and indeed the activities required to attempt to fulfil them – capital accumulation, indebtedness and kleptocracy – have brought about further impediments to their attainability; not least among these is the climate crisis.

Reading Berlant's concept with contemporary ecocriticism (Morton 2016, Yusoff 2018, Stuart 2020, Serrano-Muñoz 2021, Cole 2022), this paper will outline what an oppositional relation might look like, namely *kind pessimism* – a dread that spurs one to endeavour to produce new forms of flourishing – as it is articulated in the aesthetics of both the genre speculative ecological fiction (*Annihilation* (Garland 2018) and *Emergency Skin* (Jemisin 2019)) and, on the basis of interviews, the climate activist practices of Extinction Rebellion. It will be argued that in specific contexts, climate fiction, a genre proper to *kind pessimism*, functions 'more-than-representationally' (Lorimer 2005) to produce an affective embodied experience of 'futurity' (Shaviro 2018, Massumi 2002) that renders the future as something dire yet contestable by some kind of agency.

Form this it is necessary to consider what might constitute such an agency and the resurgent, problematic role of representation as collective practices attempt to generate and actualise other forms of flourishing. Engaging with strands of new materialism (Barad 2007, Bennet 2009, Haraway 2016), posthumanism (Braidotti 2019) and ecological affect theory (Wark 2015, Yusoff 2017, Grosz 2008, Guattari 2019), this paper will articulate an operative affective relationship between climate fiction and activist practices. Doing so will provide insight in to how the aesthetic particularities of the genre may contribute to the construction of kind pessimist imaginaries that may inspire the actions needed to move past the impasses the ongoing crisis.

### **Biographical note**

Macon Holt is a cultural theorist, critic and the author of *Pop Music and Hip Ennui: A Sonic Fiction of Capitalist Realism*. He is an editor at *Passive/Aggressive* and has a PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London. He is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School. His work explores the political affects of cultural production.

**(Un)thinking with Poetry: Climate Scientists' Perceptions and Responses to Apocalypticism**  
Aikaterini Lontou (University of Leeds, UK)

In a widely quoted excerpt, Laurence Buell argues that 'Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal' (p. 285, 1995). Apocalyptic thinking and language have a long and complex pedigree, which permeates religious texts, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, film-making, and pop culture. The trope of the Apocalypse (theological and secular), which involves thinking about the imminent end of the world as we know it and future projections into what will follow after this, pervades much of the contemporary rhetoric of climate change as well, leading to what can be phrased as an emergent 'deadline-ism' (Asayama et al, 2019). For example, the most recent IPCC report (2021) stressed the urgency of the impacts of anthropogenic climate change and called for more radical interventions in order to stop what seems to be a foretold ecological catastrophe of global scale, with particularly severe impacts for vulnerable individuals and populations. Similarly, environmental activist groups like Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Fridays for Future make public interventions with the demand for more committed actions to prevent a massive ecological collapse and the ambition to deliver climate justice. Emerging -and often conflicting- tropes of hope and eco-anxiety, eco-utopias and post-apocalyptic dystopias, anthropocentrism and post-anthropocentrism, stasis and action, are indicative of the central role of the Apocalypse and its conceptual variations in our social imaginary and public discourses of climate change. The Apocalypse, being a dynamic trope, offers the terrain to explore how the sense of an imminent end can affect knowledge-making processes, can question ideas of human superiority over the non-human world, and can ultimately reveal the need for new onto-ethico-epistemological commitments. Employing poetry-based interviews as a method, I explore if and how the trope of the Apocalypse resonates with climate scientists. Climate scientists are privileged as central stake-holders in producing new knowledge about the mechanisms that sustain our planet and as such they contribute to the common social imaginary regarding our understanding of climate and our envisioning of the future. Featuring data from 12 semi-structured, creative interviews, this presentation aims to critically examine climate scientists' beliefs about the Apocalypse and their affective responses to tropes of uncertainty, geo-dynamism and eco-apocalypse, while it will also explore the extent to which these beliefs and feelings interweave with their visions about the future of the planet and our ability to collectively avert a mass-scale ecological collapse.

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**Biographical note**

I am currently a fourth-year PhD student at the University of Leeds, expecting to submit my thesis in March 2023. My research focuses on Romantic catastrophist writing of the planet and its long-lasting impact on contemporary perceptions of climate change, which I put to the test through semi-structured interviews.

My research is interdisciplinary, as it employs analytical and critical tools both from the humanities and social sciences. I am familiar with a wide range of methodologies and paradigms, including new materialism, posthumanism, qualitative methods, close reading and ecocritical approaches to literature. Through this project I aim to bring new insights into the continuous presence of Romantic tropes of disaster in Western thinking, as well as to provide a better understanding of how literary texts are read in extra-literary contexts by non-specialists and especially in view of our current ecological predicament. My secondary interests include nature writing, philosophy and history of science, and environmental communication.

## Panel: Anxiety, Uhygge, and the Eco-weird

### **'Ancient Lights' and the Eco-Weird: Environmental Loss and the Goodness of Being Haunted**

Brian Hisao Onishi (Penn State Altoona, USA)

This paper will offer a phenomenology of environmental loss and the goodness of being haunted by that loss. Often, we attend to looming environmental disasters like climate change through a lens of gloomy pessimism and blame. While I do not deny that we are heading toward drastic environmental and climatic change, I look to the goodness of loss as a ground for building new futures. This goodness on offer here is a non-normative goodness in that I do not prescribe anyone to seek out loss. Rather, I take up an eco-phenomenological approach to environmental loss and approach that loss as a kind of haunting.

In part, this haunting mirrors the experience of grief when we lose a loved one. We build worlds with our loved ones that are spatially, temporally, and intercorporeally meaningful, and when we lose those loved ones to death, we are met with an uncanny feeling of simultaneous presence and absence (Fuchs, 2017). Likewise, when we lose an environment, a landscape, or a home, we are confronted with a world that no longer reflects our spatial, temporal, and memorial understanding of the place. We are confronted with a new world that requires a readjustment of intercorporeal meaning. But because that adjustment takes time, we are confronted by moments when our memories and our anticipations become mixed up, when we anticipate the possible completion of a project only to later realize that we are living in a memory rather than an anticipation. It is this mixing of intentionalities that I call haunting.

Weird fiction has a long history of mapping out these lost feelings in houses, woods, and cities. More than simply a dramatization of the horror of loss, weird fiction articulates the dizzying tension between attachment to the familiar and the realization of the strange. Alongside accounts of environmental loss, I will use weird fiction to identify the making of meaning at the intersection of human and non-human, while pointing to loss and haunting as mechanisms for embracing new environments brought about by climate change. To do this, I will appeal to the short story, 'Ancient Lights,' by Algernon Blackwood and to Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*. While phenomenology, especially that of Merleau-Ponty and David Abram, is the theoretical heart of my argument, the fiction of Blackwood and Danielewski showcase a dramatization of the feeling of loss that can magnify the possible goodness of loss. Ultimately, the goodness of being haunted is twofold: first, the haunting I describe is founded on previous experiences of pleasure taken from the environment. This makes the goodness of being haunted highly qualified and applicable in only some cases. Second, the experience of being haunted plays a role in the process of overcoming the trauma of loss. As time goes on, a new world of meaning emerges that incorporates the acknowledgment of loss and opens a time of deliberate reshaping of our world. It is through the haunting of our loss that we can flourish in our new and weird world.

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## Biographical note

Brian Hisao Onishi is an assistant professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies at Penn State Altoona. His research focuses on the intersection between environmental philosophy and continental thought, with particular emphasis on wonder. He has published articles in *Environmental Philosophy*, *The Heythrop Journal*, and *Trespassing Journal*, and has authored multiple book chapters on race, film, and environmental ethics. His most recent projects include a book on wonder and the development of a speculative eco-phenomenology that combines speculative realism and weird fiction. His article on weird environmental ethics is forthcoming in Fall of 2022 from *SATS—Northern European Journal of Philosophy*.

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## Scandinavian *Uhygge* as Timely Ea(a)rth Sensation

Peter Mortensen (Aarhus University, DK)

In the twenty-first century, the Danish and Norwegian concept of *hygge* has gone viral, spawning a massive cultural industry of self-help books, glossy magazines, tourist campaigns, and lifestyle advice peddled by self-appointed *hygge* gurus. In this presentation, I seek to mobilize the antipodal concept – *uhygge* – as a resource for thinking human finitude and precarity in the Anthropocene age, on a rapidly changing planet that appears increasingly unwilling to function as a stable and inert background for human projects and desires. Compared to *hygge*, *uhygge* is much less well-defined and -developed, even though the sentiment pervades the work of some of the best-known writers and artists in the Nordic region, where the great outdoors often appears hostile, and where winters are invariably long and dark. In my presentation, I first situate *uhygge* with reference to key theorists like Sigmund Freud, H. P. Lovecraft, Eugene Thacker, and Mark Fisher, and in relation to adjacent concepts like ‘the Gothic,’ ‘das Unheimliche,’ ‘the uncanny,’ ‘the weird,’ and ‘the eerie.’ The most powerful articulations of *uhygge*, I argue, emerge in acute responses to ‘outsideness,’ in furtive moments when human at-homeness is disrupted and the world reveals its ineluctable non-compliance with anthropocentric modes of apprehension and conceptualization. Scandinavian texts like Isak Dinesen short story ‘The Monkey’ (1934) and Karl Ove Knausgaard’s novel *The Morning Star* (2020), for example, posit a fundamental strangeness at the heart of things, a history beyond mundane reality, and a world filled with terrors and depths. In such texts, an *uhyggelig* atmosphere spreads from anomalies which seem to indicate the presence of dark, unknown and perhaps unknowable forces lurking beneath the surface of the familiar world, and which challenge characters’ and readers’ experience of living in a familiar, predictable, and rule-governed universe. I am interested in *uhygge*’s ability to inspire a range of complex associated feelings (including wonder, awe, fear and humility) and defamiliarize familiar ways of

seeing, sensing, and understanding the world and human beings' place in it. *Hygge* may have stolen most popular attention, I argue, but *uhygge* appears an earth sensation for our time, as we find Earth itself transforming into the inhospitable, alien, *uhyggelig* planet that Bill McKibben calls 'Eaarth.'

### Biographical note

Peter Mortensen (Ph.D. The Johns Hopkins University, 1998), is associate professor of English at Aarhus University, Denmark. He is the editor (with Hannes Bergthaller) of *Framing the Environmental Humanities* (Brill, 2018) and the author of *British Romanticism and Continental Influences* (Palgrave, 2005) as well as many ecocritical essays on European and American literature and culture.

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### Breaking Things Up, Blanking Things Out: Maintenance and the Climate Anxiety Novel

Molly MacVeagh (University of Groningen, the Netherlands)

As the narrator of Lucy Ellmann's 2019 *Ducks, Newburyport* muses on the complexities of tarts tatins and accidentally steps on her children's toys, she also frets over extinction, rising sea levels, and environmental degradation. But even as she frets, she also has a plan for navigating life in climate crisis: 'There's a lot you just have to *blank out* if you want to get through,' she says, '...I try not to remember anything if possible' (307). The narrator's other suggestion for maintaining sanity is communicated formally. When she's too overwhelmed by the sublime terror of life in the Anthropocene, she grapples with the future by breaking it up into the form of list: no matter what happens, she explains, 'we will buy certain essentials regularly, Toothpaste/Toothbrushes/Milk/Cheese/Butter/Paper Towels/Bacon...' (638). Throughout the thousand-page, one-sentence novel, Ellmann returns again and again to the necessary work of blanking things out and breaking things up. In both explicitly recommending these strategies at the level of content, and implicitly asking the reader to practice them while navigating such an enormous book, Ellmann offers a literary response to recent critical diagnoses of information overload as an obstacle to climate action (Norgaard, Houser).

Texts that foreground climate anxiety and its management are a growing category in contemporary fiction. Other recent examples include Jenny Offill's *Weather* and Madeline Watt's *The Inland Sea*, which share *Ducks*' first-person approach to narrating climate crisis. In presenting anthropogenic climate change through the everyday experience of a single narrator, these stories are sometimes critiqued as reinforcing a kind of climate footprint individualism: all we can control, they seem to say, are individual actions and individual emotional responses. This paper argues that *Ducks, Newburyport*, for all its concern with managing individual angst, offers surprising insight into anxiety as a collectivizing structure of feeling. While the narrative dwells on the work of maintaining a nuclear family—work that is both politically limited and requires a certain amount of disengagement from large-scale crisis—it also refuses to condemn the desire for felt stability, or to consign domestic labor to inevitable complicity with the violence of the present. Instead, *Ducks* suggests that the anxiogenic effect of these recent climate novels lies less in individual experience than in the fundamental instability of their conservative structures.

In the context of environmental crisis, a simple desire for maintenance—for the luxury of boredom or the stability of home--will necessitate large-scale, radical change.

**Biographical note**

Molly MacVeagh is a lecturer in Modern English Literature at the University of Groningen. She received her PhD in English from Cornell University in 2022, where she served as a Public Humanities Fellow with Humanities New York. Recent essays can be found in *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Public Books*, *Contemporary Literature*, and *A.R.I.E.L.*

## Panel: Utopia, Enchantment and Pleasure

### Sharing the Future: Affinity and Queering in Joan Slonczewski's *A Door into Ocean*

Celina Stifjell (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Joan Slonczewski's 1986 posthuman feminist ecotopian novel *A Door into Ocean* acts as a subversively queer intervention into the supposed essentialism of feminist ecotopian fiction as well as capitalist-colonialism's foreclosure of the future in the racial Capitalocene (Vergès 2017). Set on the idyllic ocean planet Shora, the novel follows the all-female anarchist Sharers and their symbiotic companion species (Haraway 2003) as they engage in non-violent struggle against the extractivist intergalactic empire called the Patriarchy. At first, this plot makes Slonczewski's novel appear to maintain the gender essentialism attributed to ecofeminism and feminist ecotopias since feminist theory's 1980s 'flight from the troublesome terrain' of nonhuman nature (Alaimo 2000). However, many critics have noted the way Slonczewski deliberately sets up the conceit of the lesbian separatist utopia in order to deconstruct biologically deterministic dichotomies and autopoietic conceptions of the body (cf. Slonczewski 2001; Vint 2010; Otto 2012; Tidwell 2020). What remains undiscussed is the way *A Door into Ocean* subverts other categories of difference like sexuality and race to imagine a utopia based on solidarity and care across multiple mutable lines of social and environmentalist struggle. In this context, I read Slonczewski's novel against the grain and argue that, contrary to initial appearances, it works to rehabilitate affinity ecofeminism as a grounds for intersectional solidarity and struggle in concert with nonhuman nature (Gaard 1997), specifically by presenting the ocean planet's more-than-human worlds and trans-corporeal relationships as 'undomesticated grounds' for the expression of queer desires and kinships (Alaimo 2000). My analysis centres moments of queer social and bodily transformation in the text, including the Black male protagonist Spinel's metamorphosis into Sharer, his queer-coded relationship to the Sharer Lystra, and the choice the two face at the end of the novel between investing in present and future forms of utopian change and worldmaking (Muñoz 2009).

### Biographical note

Celina Stifjell is a PhD student in environmental humanities at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology's Department of Art and Media Studies through the HAVANSVAR Blue Humanities initiative. Her PhD dissertation *She-Monsters and Sea-Changes: Speculative Feminist Representations of the Ocean* examines posthuman encounters in feminist speculative fiction across genres and media through the feminist figuration of the sea monster, touching upon feminist utopian novels, Hollywood monster movies, and Afrofuturism. She has recently published a short piece on mermaids in the 'Oceans' issue of *Feminist Review* (vol. 130, March 2022).

## Earthly Affects and Reenchantment: An Ecopoetic Approach to Worldly Entanglements

Bénédicte Meillon (University of Perpignan, France)

What light can ecopoetics shed onto our potential responses to the ecological crisis? When many seem to waver between despair, hope, anxiety, and anger, this paper looks at ecofeminist works of art that channel negative feelings to best transmute them into individual and collective forms of empowerment. Rather than dissociation, psychic numbing, or denial, works such as Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing*—an early cli-fi novel—or Ann Pancake's *Strange as the Weather Has Been*—a 2007 polyphonic novel indicting Mountain Top Removal mining in Appalachia—prompt us to work through our darkest emotions while simultaneously encouraging resistance and reenchantment.

Relying on some of my most recent research, this paper taps into contributions from scholars of affective ecologies (Alexia Weik van Mossner, Laura Sewall), ecophenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, David Abram), ecofeminism and ecopsychology (Glen Albrecht, Peter Khan Jr., Richard Louv, Theodore Roszak, Robert Pyle, Starhawk, Joana Macy, etc), and new materialism (Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann). It explores the ecopoetic power of literature and arts that revitalize our earthly connections with the living world. I show how the fiction and *poiesis* under study banks on our corporeal and emotional responses to ecopoetic reading, triggering powerful somatic and affective reactions. In part via the materiality of language itself, ecoliterature can reawaken our numbed senses and innervate psychomotor neurological pathways in ways that prove to be grounding, reconnecting us with our bodily natures and performing a kind of reenchantment that fleshes out the many ways in which humans are interlaced within the vibrant earth.

In a first part, I will explicit my intricate take on an ecopoetics of reenchantment via ecofeminist readings of the sensitivity of both male and female characters in the novels under study. I will then tackle the 'liminal realism' (Meillon) both novels depend on, immersing us in worldviews that are emancipated from the alienating and disenchanted realism that has characterized modernity. As I will demonstrate, these initiatory novels spur a reincorporation of humans into the more-than-human world, while insisting on our belonging to an *en-chanting*, more-than-human biotic community. Eventually, *ecopoiesis* performs a rewearing of world to word which may restore deficient perceptions of the world's synesthetic thickness and thus stitch back together human sensitivity and consciousness within the soundscapes, odorscapes, feelscapes, and landscapes of the world.

### Biographical note

Bénédicte Meillon is Associate Professor of English Studies at the University of Perpignan Via Domitia, where she runs the Perpignan ecopoetics research workshop as well as the <https://ecopoetique.hypotheses.org/> platform. She is currently a research fellow at the LARCA-CNRS at the Université Paris Cité. She defended her *Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches* in 2021. She has written numerous papers on the ecopoetics of Barbara Kingsolver, Annie Proulx, Linda Hogan, Ron Rash, and Ann Pancake. She has also published work on Paul Auster, Russel Banks, and Roald Dahl's literature. Her research explores ecopoetics of reenchantment, focusing mostly on neoregionalism, on 'magical' or 'liminal' realism, mytho-

poeia, and ecofeminism, paying close attention to the intra-actions between the languages and forms of nature and the texture of ecopoetic language itself. She has co-edited a special issue of *Crossways Journal*, with Dr. Margot Lauwers, *Lieux d'enchantement: approches écocritiques et écopoét(h)iques des liens entre humains et non-humains*, published online in 2018, and has edited an international volume *Dwellings of Enchantment: Writing and Reenchanting the Earth*, 2021 in Rowman & Littlefield's Ecocritical Theory and Practice Series. She has also co-edited two cross-disciplinary and bilingual online issues (with Rachel Bouvet and Marie-Pierre Ramouche, and with Sylvain Rode and Hélène Schmutz) on the ecopoetics of urban wildness, for *Textes & Contextes*, in 2021. Her monograph on *Ecopoetics of Reenchantment: Liminal Realism and Poetic Echoes of the Earth* will come out in 2022, in Rowman & Littlefield's Ecocritical Theory and Practice Series (Lexington Books).

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### **Flourishing on a Damaged Planet: Reconsidering Pleasure as a Tool for Survivance, Activism, and Cultural Transformation**

Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

Recent scholarship has pointed to the blind spots of Ecocriticism and Environmentalism at large, with its dominant 'ecological agenda' of crisis and catharsis and its relative neglect of more diverse environmentalisms. The evocative essay by literary scholar Lawrence Buell 'Can Environmental Imagination Save the World?' is a case in point: Buell turns from his engagement with apocalypse to a 'counter-vision of planetary life' (407): 'I once maintained that apocalypse was environmental rhetoric's most potent weapon. I have since changed my mind. Partly that is because ecoapocalypse-talk has become banalized, but chiefly because it does not match either the facts on the ground of humankind's failure to internalize the sense of inhabiting evolutionary time' (416). In line with this conference's focus on the orientation towards affects and sensations, Lawrence Buell argues that an 'environmental-ethical revolution' is only possible if the interdependence of human and environmental *flourishing* is collectively remembered (417, emphasis my own). While dystopian narratives should of course not be demonized, as they form important genres of environmental rhetoric, research into affective ecocriticism seems to suggest that it is also pivotal to shift attention to the formerly neglected 'positive' affects related to human reciprocity with the environment, such as pleasure.

My paper aims at illuminating the importance of pleasure for countering the emotional disorientation that climate change and the Anthropocene are likely to engender. Recent thinking on pleasure has centred this sensation both for individual and collective survivance in the context of socio-environmental crises, but also as a strategy for movement building. As such, my paper offers a genealogy and contemporary situating of pleasure by drawing attention to its ancient roots, its (Black) feminist tradition, and its recent rearticulation through related ideas of 'bad environmentalism' (Nicole Seymour), 'pleasure activism' (adrienne maree brown), and the pleasure of inhabiting and 'exposure' (Stacy Alaimo). With the help of a literary example by Indigenous Australian author Ellen van Neerven, which imagines an erotic

relationship between a human person and a ‘plantperson,’ I argue that attention towards pleasure can help sustain ourselves and our environments—especially amidst narratives (and perhaps realities) of decline—and, therefore, harbours immense socio- eco-political power.

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### **Biographical note**

Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer at the Institute of English and American Studies, Goethe University. She earned her PhD as part of the ‘Joint PhD program’ from Monash University (Melbourne, Australia) and Goethe University with a thesis in the Environmental Humanities titled ‘Unsettling the Anthropocene: Cosmological Readings of Contemporary Australian Literature,’ which will be published as a monograph with Routledge soon. Her postdoctoral project explores Intergenerational Justice in Anglophone Transcultural Literature.

# Panel: Beyond the Canon. Kierkegaard, Psychoanalysis, and Deconstruction

## The Hot-Blooded Whale and the Bott-Fly

Zsuzsanna Ihar (History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge, UK)

In his 1923 novel, *Kangaroo*, D.H. Lawrence introduced readers to two warring forms of consciousness — mental and vertebral. Unlike the former, which held individuals firmly under a tyranny of restraint and respectability, vertebral consciousness was a form of collective telepathy for Lawrence. It was ‘radium effluence’ which moved between human and nonhuman beings, disrupting the insular confines of the mental and the epistemic. It existed in sperm whales, ants, bees, humans, and birds, inspiring ‘perfect ganglia communication’. Lawrence recognised this embodied slash multi- bodied knowledge as the driving force of revolution itself, inspiring shared outbursts against class exploitation and violence. Reflecting on the vertebral psyche, this paper places Lawrence within a particular school of thinkers; bound together by their shared belief in the biological unconscious as a tool of radical politics. Instead of following in a Freudian tradition which prioritised the mind and the individual, it will be argued that Lawrence's concept of vertebral psyche, Theodore Adorno's addendum, Giambattista Vico's anima, and Sándor Ferenczi's teratoma, all located liberatory collective action within vestigial biological sensations, organs, and parts. Indeed, all four thinkers came into conflict with modernist psychoanalytic thought by shifting attention to the jolts, motions, shivers, gut feelings, and stirs capable of eliciting a desire to resist and disrupt. The non-secularity and biological sense of history present in the concepts listed provide an even more-striking intervention within the context of the present — particularly when it comes to the ongoing climate crisis and the violence inflicted by late capitalism. It will be suggested that the biological unconscious provides a different way to combat the psycho- and bodily pathologies of the contemporary, tilting focus to oft ignored by-products, latent forces, and shared appendages.

## Biographical note

Zsuzsanna Ihar is a PhD candidate and Gates Scholar in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, at the University of Cambridge. Her dissertation, titled ‘Armed and Arable: The Greening of a Cold War Archipelago (1942-2022)’, examines knowledge making practices and scientific expertise within the militarised pastoral landscape of the Hebrides, in North-Western Scotland. Prior to her PhD research project, she worked on a number of different research themes — from multispecies justice, the concept of biolegality, to DIY epidemiology/community health activism in the oilfields of Azerbaijan. She is extremely interested in discovering and reviving underutilised theories from history, as well as developing tactics of critical epistemology.

## **Moods and Meteors as Incidents in a Ghostland**

Niels Wilde (University of Stavanger, Norway)

The study of how moods and meteorological phenomena (meteors) are interlinked goes back to the epics of Homer, Dante's comedy, the poetics of Romanticism and the new phenomenology and aesthetic theory of Schmitz and Böhme. It is less known, however, that meteors play a significant role in the *ontological* analysis of moods in thinkers like Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Fundamental moods like anxiety and boredom are climatically structured to the core. What happens then to these moods when climate is changed, ecosystems are destroyed, and species go extinct? Death brings about ghosts. Ghosts need hosts and hosts must be able to receive, contain and preserve—to affect and be affected.

The atmospheric attunements generated by g/hosts (donor and recipient) cut across the temporal divide of past, present, and future. If feelings can be poured out into the surrounding space, as Tonino Griffero has argued, they might also be poured into the future? If the radical change in the material conditions such as climate can re-attune fundamental moods in the present, can the spectral presence (g/hosts) of the future such as techno fossils attune the fundamental moods of future generations? Can ghosts be mediators of intergenerational and inter-objective attunements? In Bennett's vital materialism, the distributed agency of an assemblage is explicitly defined as a force emanating from spatio-temporal configurations, for example of moods. Kierkegaard defines anxiety as a vibrant spatial opening of attraction and repulsion, but it is also a temporal opening. Anxiety is in fact an incident in a Ghostland, or what Kierkegaard refers to as Eden, a place with plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi, where that which haunts, is the *future* itself.

### **Biographical note**

I hold a PhD in philosophy from Aarhus University. My main areas of interest are phenomenology, deconstruction, existential philosophy, weak theology, speculative realism, and new materialism. Currently, I am seated at the Greenhouse, University of Stavanger, Norway working on a postdoctoral research project granted by the Carlsberg Foundation. The project is entitled 'Horcruxology: distributed identities and postmortem life', where I develop an object-oriented hauntology.

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### **On Ecotechnical Archives**

Donovan Stewart (Leiden Centre for Continental Philosophy)

It is evident that contemporary hegemonic assemblages tasked with the constitution of human and non-human thriving are insufficient, and that if there is to be a future for recognisable collectivities, then the relations that compose them must undergo radical re-evaluation and transformation. While the task of identifying entropic relational structures that obfuscate and exploit non-human actors and forces may seem manageable, the other challenge of presenting new life-affirming techniques of co-habitation proves to be far more difficult.

I offer two preliminary steps that may help with this experimental task. First, I emphasise that the relations that make up these always localised individuating assemblages are best understood as *techniques*. That is, technique must not be understood primarily from the basis of objects that are deemed technological, artificial, or as means, nor even as this or that being, but as *differential relation*, the finite, always distinct *ways* of sense, contact, touch, articulation. From this basis, assemblages are to be thought prior to the opposition of nature and artifice, *physis* and *techne*, giving an *ecotechnical* form of thinking that modifies how future techniques are to be appropriated and developed. Indeed, the ‘natural world’ today is a phantasm, that must instead be understood as an *archive of pre-anthropotechnical techniques of well-being*.

Prior to the anthropotechnical determination of technique, we find a pre-history of different relations: a chirp, flower, sonar, hand; feeling and testing, touching and being affected. It is such relation that gives world, that is always of technique, as Jean-Luc Nancy describes, ‘world is the name of a gathering or being-together that arises from a *techne*.’ The history of life can thus be approached as an archive of an infinitely complex series of attempts of relation, which Jacques Derrida articulates in *Of Grammatology* as ‘the history of the *gramme*’, as the remnants of a ‘double movement of protention and retention [...going] far beyond the possibilities of the ‘intentional consciousness.’ To study ‘nature’ is to conduct a historiography of ancient techniques of survival, response, hospitality, and world building. Such archival research is necessary for the organisation of new ecotechnical assemblages conducive of thriving as these techniques have proven durable in the so-called natural world. However, the anthropotechnical development of new techniques threatens to render these relations obsolete, disrupted, or destroyed, and thus, while we must learn from these old techniques as many thinkers currently do in different expressions of materialism and ecological thought, we must not let this archival work obfuscate the need for the experimentation, the joy, and the urgency of thought that is needed for this task, that must be far more creative, and more willing to take risks than any historiography could handle. There can be no return to nature, for there never was *one* that was not always already a mesh of differential techniques; it is this fact that we too must appropriate for the assemblages of thriving to come.

### **Biographical note**

Donovan Stewart is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Leiden Centre for Continental Philosophy (NL). His research investigates the ontological and ethical ramifications of contemporary ecological thought and philosophy of technology stemming from the post-Kantian philosophical tradition, especially phenomenology and deconstruction. He received a ReMA and MA at KU Leuven (BE) and a BA at Bard College Berlin (DE).

## Panel: Wild or Cultivated Landscapes?

### **Rewilding, Re-indigenization and Retrieval: The Value of Nostalgia in Seeking Reconnection with the Natural World**

Linde De Vroey (Center for European Philosophy, University of Antwerp)

Rewilding has lately gained popularity among scholars, conservationists and cultural activists. Rewilding is praised not only as a promising nature conservation practice, but also as a way of reconnecting humans to nature and bridging the nature-culture divide. Cultural or human rewilding is especially focused on the latter aspect, encouraging individuals and communities to 'rewild' themselves by retrieving ancient tools, skills, practices, worldviews and sentiments (Gammon 2018, Pike 2019). But rewilding is also criticized as just the next revival of the romantic movement, founded on the nostalgic longing for an idealized past (Jorgensen 2015, Bone 2018). Although advocates defend it as a 'future-oriented vision' (Foreman 2004, Monbiot 2013), nostalgic feelings and sentimentalized memories are never far off in rewilding. While some nostalgia is often present in ecological rewilding, it is arguably even more forthcoming in cultural or human rewilding, reviving traditional and indigenous culture, language and spirituality. Rewilding can even become a form of 're-indigenization', searching for a sense of belonging and a lost connection between the human and non-human worlds in (partially) disappeared indigenous worldviews and life-styles.

In this paper, I explore the role of nostalgic sentiments in cultural rewilding and re-indigenization in Europe. I start from an example in Scotland to illustrate the importance given to disappeared indigenous culture in rewilding. In 2023, the world's first Rewilding Centre will open in Dundreggan. The Centre will be an educational gateway to the outdoors, as well as hosting a 'Gaelic resource Centre'. Gaelic language and Highland culture are believed to encourage people to rewild themselves and restore their connections to nature and landscape (Trees for Life, n.d.). While this cultural revival may seem like a product of popular nostalgia, encouraging escapism and historical fictions, I defend the value of re-indigenization based precisely on its (nostalgic) appeal to the 'longing to belong' in the natural world.

Rewilding recognizes that concrete places are steeped in layers of memory and tradition. The acknowledgment of old traditions rekindles a relationship between humans and nature that was kept in the interplay of language, culture, art, and place. Rewilding thus creates the potential to encourage strong emotional attachments to natural places, sustained by memory and tradition. Rewilding thus might be able to transform people's mindsets and habits, sustained by a different emotional and spiritual relationship with the more-than-human natural world. Lastly, rewilding and re-indigenization can be used as critical tools against colonial, capitalist and exploitative patterns and practices, challenging hegemonic modern mindsets by actively remembering and reviving alternative ways of thinking, feeling and existence.

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## Biographical note

Linde De Vroey (she/her) is a PhD researcher at the Center for European Philosophy of the University of Antwerp. Her project focusses on the role of history, memory and tradition in cultural rewilding and 're-indigenization' in Europe. Linde holds a Master's degree in History and Philosophy. Before starting her PhD research, she worked as a historian for musea, exhibitions and research institutions in the fields of memory studies, ecological history and public history. She also makes philosophical podcasts about wilderness and audiotours in Belgian nature.

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## Nonhuman-human Working Groups in Agriculture

Sophie von Redecker (Kassel University, Germany)

This talk will look at 'earth sensations' from an agricultural perspective. Thus, the talk will not only cross disciplines, but show how inter- and transdisciplinary intra-actions are needed to understand highly-needed versions of radical change to „make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible' (Haraway, 2015). Nicole Seymour argues that „the kind of empathy that environmentalism at large calls for so urgently right now is by definition queer [...]: one must care for nameless, faceless future beings, including non-humans, to which one has no domestic, familial, or financial ties.' (Seymour, 2013 :185). With insights from farmers, the talk will investigate how this empathy and cross-theoretical naturecultural versions of change are lived out already and are waiting to be implemented in broader contexts.

Earth sensations in agrarian contexts are not only metaphors or radical theories of non-anthropocentric worlds, but materialisations of more than human becomings. In agriculture „nonhuman-human working groups' (Bennett, 2010) are the foundation of daily practices. Thus, anthropocentric worldviews get destabilized and less exploitative encounters get field-tested. With a special focus on two particular nonhuman-human working groups (the alpine shepherding at Stilfser Alp in South Tyrol, Northern Italy and human-soil-relations between different farmers and their land), the reading of notions like „interdependent care-relations' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2015), sympoiesis (Haraway, 2016), intra-actions (Barad, 2003), or

„earth sensations’

will receive new directions. Thereby, also the hegemonic understandings of concepts like „environment’, „nature’, or „agency’ will be questioned.

What is more, the agricultural insights will lead to a broader rethinking of how the understanding of climate change and the discourse and struggles around it would change if we began to take seriously Donna Haraway’s (2016) call to ‘think with’ rather than about nature. Decolonial thoughts and indigenous ontologies like the wisdom of the Potawatomi language of the ancestors of indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer, in which ‘there is no ‘it’ for nature’ (Kimmerer, 2017), will anchor the investigation and highlight the colonial continuities of the epistemological and environmental exploitations that marginalize already existing more horizontal human\_earth sensations, in farming and beyond.

### **Biographical note**

Sophie v. Redecker is a Phd candidate and lecturer at the Department of Organic Agriculture at Kassel University. She holds a scholarship of the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation. Before she was professionally trained in theater acting and received her state diploma in acting in 2012 from Schule für Schauspiel Hamburg. Her research focuses on Critical Agrarian Studies with a special focus on more-than-human ontologies and queer and postcolonial perspectives. Recently she is developing a new inter-and transdisciplinary field of (art-based) research: Agrarian Posthumanities, in which she investigates the human-nature relationship from a farming perspectives. First she was taught by sheep and strawberry on the organic farm, where she grew up.

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### **Co-creation Caring Research as Way of Sensing Landscapes**

Vitalija Povilaityte-Petri & Brussels Health Gardens

Climate and ecological emergency followed by the COVID-19 pandemic revealed many limits and fragility of our modern society. The lockdown measures raised awareness of the belonging and existential crisis (Van Horn et al. 2021), forced citizens to explore their own environments and triggered questions on their identities by searching for local places, where multiple diverse healing relationships can co-exist.

Triggered by our own emotional struggles, inner conflicts and trauma, in the past years we have been exploring with Brussels Health Gardens, Common Dreams School, and International Forest Therapy Days communities various co-existence relationships. We engaged into learning and healing spaces through experimental transdisciplinary caring research, artistic and nature-based health practices (e.g. forest bathing, gardening, grieving with plants and landscapes). These practices expand our existence and model of socialisation to the nonhuman world, open ways for interbeing and lead us to becoming ecological-selves as rhizomatic caring creatures with other Earthbeings, especially plants. One important our key realisation was acknowledging our kinship with other nonhuman beings.

The presentation addresses the idea of cultivation of kincentric relationships through questioning our perceptions and identities in mutual transcontextual learning circles. Our work explores ways of connecting our damaged inner and outer landscapes and

nourishing our deep love we feel for all kinds of living creatures which often is being expressed through grief. Invitations for sensory attention, sharing experiences and creating the rituals with other Earthbeings are paths that we have been experimenting in our individual and collective work. We have been opening for sensing how does it feel to be a kin in cultivating caring reciprocal relationships with other Earthbeings, within us and our extended identities that share ancestry, roots and forms together Earth's tissue of life. We noticed that local, native and common knowledge is almost eroded or made invisible in urbanised areas like Brussels. What can kincentric ecology (Salmón 2000) mean in a densely populated metropolitan area where local common knowledge is almost lost and how it can support exploration of becoming kin for humans and nonhuman beings? What is the role of kincentric ecology in urban nature science, practice and policy? Most importantly, what can urban plants teach us about becoming with other, about health, about resilience, about care? To answer the latter one, we will refer on literature of the vegetal world (e.g. Gibson and Gagliano 2017, Kimmerer 2013).

In addition to the ecofeminist perspective (e.g. Plumwood 1993), we will adopt a collaborative autoethnography approach (Sellberg et al. 2021; Ellis et al. 2011) where we will include autobiographies of ourselves and integrate the biographies of various urban plants in Brussels. These stories will be explained in the context and discourse of stepping into magic, care, health and mothering with the urban nature context of Brussels, to highlight what should be the ways in order to highlight possible paths and inspirations to further explore for our common futures and for shapeshifting our own humanity. This collaborative autoethnographic approach is a novel way that will inform explorers interested in the social side of urban nature. By participating in co-creation caring research on existential and relational health, care, motherhood and urban nature we became more aware of our identity as rhizomes with other beings.

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## Biographical note

Brussels Health Gardens (BHG) is a collective of caring citizen researchers and their kin, with links to Brussels, interested in exploring mothering human-nature relationships. By acknowledging BHG as author, we want to stress out the importance

of acknowledging that what we learn is a collaboration with others, humans and nonhumans. The first activities of BHG were organised early 2019.

Dr. Vitalija Povilaityte-Petri is a pharmacist, transdisciplinary researcher, kin gardener and co-creator in urban communities focusing on nature-based health practices for resilience and personal exploration in possible becoming. In her work she is focusing on relational healing experiences between humans and plants.

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### **Embracing Water, Healing Pine. Trans-species Tactile Encounters**

Piritta Nätyнки, Taina Kinnunen, Marjo Kolehmainen (University Oulu, Finland)

Our paper discusses what kind of tactile relations with natural elements or beings – water(s) and tree(s) – people intentionally seek for themselves and how these encounters are affectively charged. We ask how these sensory engagements come to matter and how to make sense of those matterings as researchers? The exploration is based on a method of *touch-walking* developed by Piritta Nätyнки. It follows Sarah Pink's (2009) sensory ethnography, where participant observation is re-interpreted as paying specific attention to the multisensory, emplaced and empathetic aspects of both the co-researchers' and the researcher's experiences.

We take touch as an embodied *worlding* practice, a way to get engaged with the human and non-human world in constantly re-constituted assemblages (cf. Stewart 2002). Touch (and affect) reveals our 'witness with things' (Paterson 2007), 'our being in a vibrant, quirky, overflowing material world' (Obrador 2012, 56). Exploring touch attunes us to the witness and togetherness with other bodies, from natural bodies to non-human animals. Touch works through affects (Kinnunen & Kolehmainen 2019), being a vital mode of becoming with animate and inanimate non-human bodies. Through the empirical cases situated in Finland, our theoretical aim is to advance a view of 'relational skins' referring to post-humanistically oriented affect studies (Seyfert 2010; Venn 2010) and feminist new materialisms (Bennett 2001; Neimanis 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), and cultural touch and 'skin studies' (Howes 2018; Lafrance 2009; 2018; Obrador 2012). We therefore seek to posthumanize sociocultural sensory studies by bringing insights from these theoretical elaborations.

The documented touch-walks produced an embodied-affective data (Kinnunen & Kolehmainen 2019), where affective matterings were present in narrations, body language, and sensory perceptions. The walks evoked memories of the co-researchers and demonstrated how tactile practices carry affectively loaded registers of togetherness and care but, still, reminds us of an otherwise occurring ways of touching nature: violent, neglectful, uncaring ones. By our post-humanizing of touch we want to elaborate 'sensible ethics' (Lorimer 2012; Obrador 2012) of tactile worlding practices. We seek to enrich the feminist discussions on entangled life-words, in particular by posthumanizing the prevailing notions of intimacy and developing further the idea of companionship that does not renew human-only centered understandings of meaningful relationships (Lykke 2018).

**Biographical note**

Piritta Nätyнки, BBA, MA, Master of Culture and Arts, is a doctoral student of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oulu, Finland. She has recently started working with her doctoral thesis on the touching culture of Saami community.

Taina Kinnunen, PhD, Associate Professor, is working as a University Lecturer of Cultural Anthropology at the University Oulu, Finland. She has studied Finnish touching culture and practices of professional touch in healthcare. Together with Marjo Kolehmainen, she has examined affective repertoires of touch biographies.

Marjo Kolehmainen, DrSocSc, Adjunct Professor in Gender Studies, works as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Turku, Finland. She conducts the research project on Networked Care: Explorations of Intimacy in Digital Therapy (NetCare).