

ABSTRACTS

European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment Annual Conference

May 17th–19th, 2024 , Potsdam, Germany

The abstracts follow the schedule of the conference.

FRIDAY

14.30-15.30

EFBRE Business Meeting: Potsdam Lab

15.45-16.45

Past Fire: Süring

Hubert Meisinger: Sustainability, Climate Change and the Integrity of Creation – A New Testament Approach

Tropical nights in Germany, devastating forest-fires in Sweden, Australia and the US, high temperatures north of the polar circle – climate change is all around. Highly visible for those who want to see it, who do not close their eyes. Scientists like Friederike Otto, Honorary Research Associate of the Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford, and Hans-Joachim Schellnhuber, former president of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, become important. Otto investigates the impact of climate on weather-phenomena, Schellnhuber speaks about a new “hot age” which is going to come in case we do not countersteer immediately. Renewed concepts of sustainability have to be implemented in order to meet climate change in this time of “kairos”. The counterpart of sustainability with its economical, ecological, social and cultural branches in theology can be the triad justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

In my paper I will first investigate the relation between sustainability and this triad by showing how all of the mentioned aspects of both can be related to each other respectively – e.g. integrity of creation does not only mean to look at the ecological side of sustainability but to meet all four mentioned branches of sustainability, whereas economical sustainability deals with both justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

In the second and main part of my paper, I will elaborate on three theses with respect to religion based upon myth in its development: (1) A new relationship between human and non-human life has to be created, in which wisdom and mindfulness will play an important part, (2) Altruism and the Christian Love command can give

impulses to even love creation at all, as deep as a little blade of grass (so Niels Henrik Gregersen, Systematic Theology, University of Copenhagen, in “Incarnation”), and (3) It may be the spirit of God which enables a viable future, in consonance with wisdom, altruism and love.

Finally I will reflect about possible images of hope to help to overcome the present crisis, both in paintings and poetry.

Biography:

Dr. Hubert Meisinger is Director for Environmental Affairs at the Center Social Responsibility of the Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau (Mainz, Germany).

Kate Rigby: Restor(y)ing Creation: Decolonising the Biblical Narrative

Throughout human history, one of the principal ways in which human beings have answered fundamental questions of meaning, value, purpose and identity – questions as to what it means to be human, what we are good for, and how we should relate to nonhuman others and our shared environs – have been addressed through creation myths. In this paper, I explore how one particularly influential creation narrative, namely the story of the six, or more accurately, seven days of creation, shared by Jews and Christians alike, might be re-imagined and retold in the horizon of ecological unravelling and from a decolonial perspective. Entering the Christian Bible as Gen. 1-2:1-4, this narrative has been subjected to a dizzying array of differing interpretations by biblical scholars. Casting humans as overlords, it became a key reference point for biblical justifications for colonial conquest during the period of British imperial expansion from the seventeenth century, and it continues to be called upon, explicitly or otherwise, in the name of extractive industries. Here, however, I show how Aboriginal theologian, Anne Pattel-Gray, together with other Australian First Nations elders and biblical scholar Norman Habel, re-tell this story through an Indigenous lens in the interests of collective ecological flourishing.

Biography

Professor Dr. Kate Rigby is Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Cologne, where she leads a research hub for Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities. She was the inaugural President of the Association for the Study of Literature, Environment and Culture (Australia-New Zealand), and the founding Director of the Australia-Pacific Forum on Religion and Ecology. Her research lies at the intersection of environmental literary, philosophical, historical and religious studies, and among her most recent books are *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Eco-poetics of Decolonization* (2020) and *Meditations on Creation in an Era of Extinction* (2023).

Past Air: Volmer

Noel Boulting: Is Myth, Given its Associations with the Archaic, a Fitting Genre for Today?

What is the status of the original Gaia myth and Lovelock's derivation from it? Peirce's semiotics can be employed to ground three distinct conceptions of myth. Originary myths can be interpreted as creative responses to the experience of the natural world forming the basis for the origination of human institutions. Conventional myths revise originary myths emerging via economic, technological and productive developments. Reflective myths provide meta-narratives for the formation of the other two. Vico and Lovelock begin with an originary myth. But for Lovelock the Earth can be cast as a complex interacting system where living and non-living parts maybe regarded as a single organism rather than a globe. Thereby Lovelock's Gaia myth can be compared to Vico's Ideal Eternal History (IEH): "Our Science therefore comes to describe at the same time an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every nation in its rise, development, maturity, decline and fall." (G. Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, Ithica, New York 1994, p. 104). Thereby a comparison between two distinct conceptions of a reflective myth can be articulated. Do either of these two reflective myths provide a way of understanding the human condition where both Vico's and Lovelock's reflective myths are rejected by a Cartesian conception of reality underpinning Modernism?

Biography

BA (Philosophy) Birkbeck College, M.Sc. London School of Economics, taught philosophy as a qualified teacher for Extra-Mural Dept. London University, Mid-Kent College of FE & HE and Great Falls University, Montana. Runs a philosophy club – *Noboss* 47 years old –initially promoting interest in A.N. Whitehead and C.S. Peirce philosophies. Three books published: *To Be Or Not To Be Philosophical* (2001); *On Interpretative Activity* (2006); *Philosophy for Darker Times* (2022). Many articles published e.g. 'The Mythico-Poetic & Recollective Fantasies as Routes to an IEH Grounding a New Science: G. Vico's Conception of URAM' *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* Vol. 25, No. 2 June 2002 pp. 93-126.

Masoud Shavarani: Transferring a Zoroastrian myths to Islam and its destructive function in destroying nature

Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between Iranian myths and Environmental destruction. How the ancient Iranian myths entered the minds of Muslims and became a powerful ideology. In Islamic theology, there are two influential approaches to the behavior of Muslims, which have caused the destruction of the environment in Islamic countries. The first approach is the Anthropocentric doctrine in Islamic theology. According to this view, Muslims believe that man is the supreme being on earth and God's successor on it (*Khalīfa Allāh*), and everything on earth is created for man's use. It can explain why Muslims believe that the man is the superior and most exemplary

species on the earth (in Arabic, *ashraf al-khalā'iq va al-mavjūdāt*). This had a significant corollary in terms of the notion of human ownership and dominion over nature. The second approach is the Apocalyptic attitude in Islamic theology. This view has also had an inappropriate effect on the behavior of Muslims toward the environment, because according to this approach, Muslims are waiting for the occurrence of Apocalyptic events and wars that will lead to the destruction of the earth, and consequently in the end, the environment will be completely destroyed. Both approaches originated from the myths and legends of ancient Iran and Zoroastrianism, especially the eastern part of Iran, that is the land of Sistan and Khorasan, where the main themes of the Iranian national sagas have been constituted. The myth of the Saviors and heroes who were fighting against the invading non-Iranian tribes. According to these legends these Saviors and heroes possess *Khwarenah, Farr(ah)*. It was a divine and magic force or power of luminous and fiery nature and it was often associated with the royalty and of royal fortune. For protecting the environment in Islamic countries, these two very influential attitudes toward the behavior of Muslims must be changed. Rather than embracing the apocalyptic and anthropocentric approach, Muslim theologians should emphasize an environmental perspective. In order to rectify the prevailing anthropocentric attitude of Muslims towards the environment, it is imperative to replace this mentality with a humble approach within Islamic theology. In this regard the concept of servitude (*'ubūdīyya*) is a significant religious principle in the Quran and Islamic theology, specifically in Islamic Mysticism and Sufism. By doing so, Islamic theology can align itself with efforts to collaborate on mitigating the consequences of the environmental crisis.

Biography

Masoud Shavarani is Assistant Professor at the International University of Islamic Denominations (Iran/Tehran).

Panel: Potsdam Lab

Do We Have to Shift our Focus from the Paradigm of Doing to the Realm of Being?
Helmut J. Wagner, Carolin Fraude, Jonathan Schorsch, Thorsten Ludwig

Main Topics:

- On which aspects of life do we need to focus to bring about real transformation?
- What can we learn from ancient cultures, religions or traditions for our road ahead?
- Which myths, methods and practices are helpful to lead us through this process?

Abstract:

The call of the times for the transformation into a socio-ecological sustainable society has never been more urgent than in the Age of Ecological Catastrophe. In this panel we want to discuss on which aspects of life we need to focus in order to bring about the crucial kind of transformation that is needed for the establishment of a future worth living. Is it the old focus on the outer dimension of planning and doing in the

form of scientific solutions as well as political and technical reform? Or is it a new focus on the inner dimension of being in the form of a renewed sense for religion and spirituality? Do we need both aspects? In order to explore this further, we will take a look back in history in order to discuss if there is a kind of timeless truth in the form of universal patterns and values that can serve as bridge into the unknown future. Finally, we will debate about myths, methods and practices that can help us bring about the necessary transformation in ourselves and eventually in the world.

Online Session Present Air: Gundling

Peter Jones: Making Sense of Myth, Ritual, Practice, Theory and Reality

This presentation introduces a generic conceptual framework – Hodges’ model – developed in higher education. The model’s structure can encompass the conference themes of myth, ritual, practice and theory. If truth, in-part, is defined by addressing and actioning salient concepts then Hodges’ model can help assure that ecological societies are indeed as described.

Duly illustrated, the model’s two axes will be used to demonstrate how the questions raised here can be represented. Taking the INDIVIDUAL-GROUP axis for example, this can span phenomena from the quantum, personal to biosphere. The HUMANISTIC-MECHANISTIC axis will in turn be leveraged to reveal additional polarities, oppositions and dichotomies that are simultaneously divisive yet essential to sense-making.

Ritualised practice is recognised in nursing (and many occupations); how can nursing be person-centred – moving from task-oriented? Nursing and health care recognise the need for sustainability. How can healthcare professionals become an ally of Gaia and consciously balance (finally) illness with health education, prevention, and self-care? How do we negotiate and navigate our way to planetary health? Future plans to leverage the abstractive potential of Hodges’ model for theoretical underpinnings will be shared; resources and references provided.

Biography

Peter Jones is a community mental health nurse appreciative of 46 years experience in the UK – NHS. A combined interest in care processes and informatics since the early 1980s is maintained. As a practising nurse, a psychosocial and holistic approach to person-centred care utilises Hodges’ model of care. Peter is working to justify the relevance of this model, amid the challenges of integrated care, climate change, self-care through to global and planetary health, and the need for sustainable health systems. A theoretical underpinning for the model is a goal to help integrate the determinants of health.

Morufu Omigbule: Altering the Dangerous Ecological Trend: Lessons from the Yoruba Mythic and Ritual Ecological Principles

The global catastrophe which looms on account of humans' mismanagement of climate and the environment is an emergency to which humans must respond so as to reverse the ugly trend. Since the more ecologically safe past has lots to offer as lessons for the present epoch of looming ecological disaster, the Yoruba myths and rituals as heritages of the past speak to the worrisome anthropocene epoch in ways too important to be ignored. My central thesis is that de-ritualisation and de-mythologising are metaphors for ecological catastrophe and that a reversal of the present ecological condition can be pursued by purposely reinventing the practices and beliefs of the bygone days. I recognise that Yoruba myths and rituals generally are malleable cultural forms; that given the postcolonial circumstances of their functioning as components of the Yoruba culture today, seeking through them pathways for ecological restoration must be done with discernment. Hence, the study contends that myths and rituals must be disentangled from postcolonial complications so as to break through the mythic and ritual symbolism and frame models for the normalisation of the ecological condition. Symbolic anthropology and postcolonial criticism will therefore serve as theoretical context of the study.

Biography

Morufu Omigbule teaches literature courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. His main area of research is folklore. He is an African Humanities Program Fellow, a visiting Researcher at the University of Dar es Salam, Tanzania, and Makerere University, Uganda. He is also a fellow of the Ife Institute of Advanced Studies. He belongs in many academic associations among which are oral Tradition Society, the African Literature Association, the African Studies Association of Africa, and the Lagos Studies Association, among others. He is the author of *Rituals of Ile-Ife: Narratives and Performances of Archetypes* (2021).

16.45-17.00

Break: *Schwarzschild*

17.00-18.00

Book launch and panel discussion for volume from previous EFSRE conference, *Religion, Materialism and Religion*, and Kate Rigby's *Meditations on Creation in an Era of Extinction*. Panel: Sigurd Bergmann, Peter Scott and Kate Rigby

Past Earth: *Siring*

Guelfo Carbone: Political Theory of Myth

Myth is not just a story that is told, but it is a narrative that can have the grounding function that many myths have, or had, because it expresses and transmits socially useful meaningfulness. While it is true that every narrative is meaningful, it is also true that the peculiarity of myth is that it creates the context for the meaning of what is being told. In the case of political myths, such as the modern myths of nation, people, or State, for instance, what defines them as political, is not the alleged political fact that they would tell. As George Mosse has pointed out in his studies on the rising of Nazism in Germany, stressing the function of the irrational drives in modern myths, political myth is a myth that provides meaning to the specific conditions under which a certain social group can give shape to the associated human life as such. In other words, the political myth confers meaning that creates the conditions under which a solid belonging can be realized. The paper explores the political theory of myth in an interdisciplinary fashion, bringing together history of religion, social anthropology, ethnology, and philosophy, specifically by drawing upon the works of Károly Kerényi, Victor Turner, Leo Frobenius, and Ernst Cassirer.

Biography

Guelfo Carbone holds a PhD in Philosophy and History of Philosophy and has been Postdoc researcher and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy of Religions at the University of Roma Tre (Rome, Italy). His research focuses on Phenomenology, Ethics, and the Philosophy of Technology. Guelfo is a member of the editorial board of the philosophical Journal *Pólemos*. Materials of philosophy and social criticism, and he teaches judo to children and teenagers.

Eli Ashkenazi: Bedouins' Sacred Trees in the Negev Desert, Southern Israel, prior 1948

The Negev Desert in south Israel is located on the northern margin of the Saharian desert belt, ranging from arid in the north to hyper-arid climate in the south, covering over 12,000 km². The distribution of Bedouins in the Negev desert in the 1940s presents us with different territorial preferences of the Bedouins choice of living locations, their areas of activity, and the nature of activity in each region. Thus, the further away the distance from Be'er Sheva to the arid south grew longer, the number of nomads in that area decreased. Before 1948, there were no permanent settlements in the Negev. The Bedouins in the Negev consecrated wild trees such as acacia and Mt. Atlas mastic and domesticated trees such as olive and fig. These trees received special treatment by the desert nomads because due to religious and practical reasons, unlike other trees and plants that grow naturally in the desert. In this lecture, we will describe the tree species and the reasons for the special treatment they received.

Biography

Eli Ashkenazi teaches at Oranim College, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Geography, and Beit Berl College, Faculty of Education, Department of Geography, Israel.

Future Air: Volmer

Helmut Wagner: Homo Empathicus - A model for the human-ecological reorganization of a sustainable society

The starting point of my presentation is the determination that we live in a time of multiple crises of humanity in which the old and destructive paradigm of unsustainability is to be replaced by the better paradigm of a human-ecological sustainable society. I will outline that this ambitious transformational shift towards sustainability implies three major components: a technical-economic one, a socio-cultural one and last but not least a ethical-spiritual one. The focus will be on the ethical-spiritual dimension which is based on the innate human capability for empathy as the key resource for transforming the Age of Ecological Catastrophe.

The presentation is based on my doctoral dissertation with the title „Homo Empathicus – a model for the human-ecological reorganization of a sustainable society“ at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich. In an inter-disciplinary holistic approach with an underlying dialectical method the Homo Oeconomicus - as the still prevailing model of Economics for the old paradigm of unsustainability - is compared with the Homo Empathicus - as an alternative model formulated by Jeremy Rifkin for driving sustainability transformation. My talk outlines the main results of that philosophical consideration with an explicit focus on the fundamental evidence of the transformative potential of this new model for our future pathway.

Biography

Dr. Helmut Wagner was born in Erding, Bavaria in 1979. He studied Political Sciences, Sociology and History and Culture of the Middle East at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich. In 2013 he received his Ph.D. for his philosophical research in the field of Sustainability. The title of his doctoral dissertation has been: *“The Homo Empathicus – a model for the human-ecological reorganization of a sustainable society”*. He currently works for the board of directors of the State Capital Munich and is responsible for a local political area. He has been studying and practicing the spiritual teachings of Raja Yoga since 2005.

Matthew Eaton: On the Glory of the Refinery and the Slaughterhouse: Christian Polytheism, Ecological Divinities, and the Cruciform God

Abstract: Drawing on the philosopher-theologian Giordano Bruno and filmmaker George Miller, I join with contemporary religious thinkers who envision the world as a pluralist pantheistic religious ecology as part of my broader reimagination of the Christian tradition in the Anthropocene. Yet, as Mary-Jane Rubenstein has noted, this sort of pluralist pantheism transgresses classical monist pantheism by looking and feeling more like polytheism than a naturalized monotheism. The gods, in this reimagination of religious ontology and mythology, take on all sort of forms and expressions, especially as those hyperobjects—to invoke the object-oriented ontology of Timothy Morton—who perform classical religious roles: i.e., creating through the ordering of life and death; organizing, maintaining, and providing meaning and

significance to the world; promising and providing hope and redemption; and thus soliciting sacrifice and devotion among humanity. “On the Glory of the Refinery and the Slaughterhouse” takes inspiration from George Miller’s Mad Max filmography to explore two incarnations of a god of the Anthropocene, V8: the chief deity of the Anthropocene who most potently expresses within the religious hyperobjects Oil and Meat, whose cult resides in and maintains the glory of refinery and the slaughterhouse. I end with a contemplation of Christ, who also exists as an imminent, religious hyperobject, and consider the relation between the cruciform god and these other ecological divinities.

Biography

Matthew Eaton lives in Washington DC and teaches in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. He is author of *Incarinate Earth* (Routledge, 2023), is currently editing the *Routledge Handbook of Ecotheology*, and is preparing a second monograph tentatively entitled, *Peaceable Eating: Eating Well for the Sake of Creation and Creatures*, which examines the ethics and ecological impact of global food systems within the frameworks of Christianity and Peace Studies.

Online Session Past Air: Gundling

Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh: Invoking the Divine and Ecological Protection in Africa: Socio-Cultural Criticism of Luke 4:1-13

The abode of the “divine” and ecological protection has become a critical issue in many scholarly discourses in Africa. Ecological protection guidelines and principles have been often disregarded by some African Christians in the quest for seeking the divine presence of God for the provision of existential needs and empowerment for ministry. Usually, reference is made to the experience of Jesus in Luke 4:1-13 from the perspective of ordinary readers of the Bible. Lukan scholars have variedly interpreted Luke 4:1-13 on the tangent of fasting, the temptation of Jesus, and divine encounter. Ecological motifs are yet to be given critical attention. The study seeks to engage social and cultural textures of socio-rhetorical interpretation propounded by Vernon K. Robbins to re-interpret Luke 4:1-13. Social and cultural textures reading of Luke 4:1-13 will allow for the results of the exegesis to be engaged with ecological problems in Africa. In view of the current ecological problems in Africa and the religious candor attached to many endeavors, bringing to the fore the ecological underpinnings of Luke 4:1-13 will help tackle some of the ecological problems without neglecting its religious values.

Biography

Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh holds Ph.D. in New Testament Studies. He is a senior lecturer and the Rector of Perez University College in Ghana. Aryeh is also an Adjunct Faculty at Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon Ghana. His research interest includes New Testament interpretation, church administration, Pentecostalism, and gender studies. Aryeh teaches biblical Greek, biblical hermeneutics, the gospels, Pentecostal

and Charismatic theology/movements, research methods, and critical thinking and logic.

Deborah De Koning and Frank Bosman: Ecological Mourning in the Climate Crisis: Intertextuality and the Relevance of Religion in Dutch Climate Discourse

In this paper we present the methodological framework of intertextuality that we employ to investigate the dynamics between religion and meaning making in the context of climate change. Intertextuality is the dimension of a 'text' that exists in relationship with other 'texts'. Meaning-making practices and imageries in response to the climate crisis often employ texts, rituals, and imageries from a well-known cultural-religious repertoire. In this paper we use the intertextual approach to disclose the relevance of religion in the Dutch Climate discourse by analyzing several examples of meaning-making practices in response to the climate crisis from the Dutch context. We employ the 'Remember Us' performance as a case study to illustrate intertextuality and the relevance of religion to deal with ecological grief. The theatrical farewell ceremony 'Remember us' was performed by 'Golden Hare' in 2023 in the Netherlands. It employs Christian liturgical elements to create a sense of an inclusive ecological community. Using 'Remember Us' as a case study, this article argues that intertextuality and interperformativity are relevant in the process of dealing with feelings of ecological loss. In ecological mourning rituals existing liturgical and ritual practices are reshaped to deal with the consequences of climate change.

Biography

Deborah de Koning (Tilburg University, The Netherlands – I-project 'Apocalypse and Climate Change)

Dr. Deborah de Koning works as postdoctoral researcher in the Apocalypse and Climate Change project at Tilburg University. She has a passion for Eastern Religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism and is interested in contemporary religious practices. In her post-doctoral research on religion and climate change she looks climate-rituality–meaning-making practices in response to the climate crisis – and the interrelationship of climate-rituals with existing religious traditions.

Frank Bosman (Tilburg University, The Netherlands–I-project 'Apocalypse and Climate Change)

Dr. Frank G. Bosman is a Dutch cultural theologian, specialized in the cultural persistence of the Christian narrative complex in our modern society, mainly as materialized in pop music, novels, television and streaming series, and digital (video) games. Bosman is interested in the religious and spiritual dimensions of the popular climate debate in the Netherlands and abroad, especially regarding the intertwining of spirituality, conspiracy ('conspirituality'), and ecology.

19.00

Keynote: *Potsdam Lab*

Charlotte Du Cann: *The Ceilidh and the Kiva*

'In the future, the role of the artist will be to host and gather the people.'

-Rachel Olds

What is the role of writing and art in times of unravelling and loss? How can we build a practice which enables us to compost the dark legacies of the past, and allow other possibilities to reveal themselves?

Part talk. part workshop, part exploration, Charlotte Du Cann will speak about her work as a writer and teacher of metaphysics and cultural change, and the creative collaborative work of the Dark Mountain Project.

Over the last decade, Dark Mountain has held a unique space in which art, story and myth entwine to help us face the realities of a time of ecological unravelling. The project has served as a gathering place for writers and artists seeking to 'uncivilise' themselves and their work, and to remember our original role as connectors and communicators within the sentient networks of Earth.

As the climate crisis and a mass extinction accelerates, it asks what words and images can reconnect us with the ancestral knowledge that once instructed us in how to live in beauty and harmony here: a deeper story about being human and our essential kinship with the other-than-human world.

We will look at how we might foster a cultural practice that can challenge the dominance of modernity, to strengthen the relationships between people and places and reforge an imaginative relationship with the Earth and sun at a time of reckoning.

Charlotte Du Cann is a writer, editor and co-director of the Dark Mountain Project. Her recent books about metaphysics and cultural change include *52 Flowers That Shook My World – A Radical Return to Earth* and *After Ithaca – Journeys in Deep Time*. She lives on the salty edge of East Anglia, UK.

SATURDAY

8.00-8.30

Meditation: Potsdam Lab

9.00-10.00

Present Fire: Nordic Panel: *Süring*

Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg, Michael Nausner

This panel consists of a conversation between four scholars who are part of the newly founded “Nordic Network Climate and Religion”. In the context of an evolving “Nordic Handbook on Climate, Religion, and Theology” (a handbook intended for students in theology and religious studies with methods, topics, and case studies) the panelists will address the following questions from their respective expertise in religious studies and theology: What are the specific challenges in various Nordic contexts that arise from global climate change that causes unproportionally high temperature increases in the Arctic region? How do we evaluate the increasing interest in the rights of nature and/or discourses on more-than-human agency in the Nordic from a theological perspective? How is green colonialism and green washing to be evaluated from the perspective of theology and religion in Sápmi and in the Nordic? What is in general the role or religious actors in the efforts to halt anthropogenic climate change in the Nordic countries, and in particular: how are rituals, myths, narratives and iconographies at central work in this field?

Present Earth: *Volmer*

Tom Tomren: An Ecocritical Analysis of Decisions and Statements of the Sami Church Council in Norway

Since the 1990s, indigenous spirituality and cosmology have been argued to offer valuable insights and perspectives to theologians and churches striving to develop new, adequate theology and ethics in ecotheology, one of the fields of study of the Anthropocene.

The idea that indigenous spirituality is an important asset to Christian ecotheology can be traced back to the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Seoul in 1990. In its final statement, the assembly expressed that member churches should commit themselves to “developing new theological perspectives concerning creation and the place of humanity within it, through opening [themselves] to learn from the insights of indigenous people.” (World Council of Churches, Message). This message prompted theologians and church leaders to explore how indigenous spirituality could renew churches’ ecotheology, and in the Nordic context, this gradually led to increased interest in Sámi spirituality and cosmology.

Roald Kristiansen was one of the first Nordic theologians to explore the relationship between Sámi cosmology and ecotheology. In an article titled “Samisk Religion i en økologisk sammenheng” [Sámi Religion in an Ecological Context], Kristiansen claims that the Sámi religion, or more precisely its holistic cosmology, offers modern man an inherited wisdom on how everything that exists – nature and culture, livestock and wild animals, rivers, fjords, mountains and ecosystems – is linked. Kristiansen further

claims that the old Sámi religion can remind us that humans need to express their holistic worldviews through practical actions and rites to develop an ecological cosmology. According to Kristiansen, the old Sámi cosmology and nature practices could contribute to developing an ecological lifestyle and practise rooted in religion. Two years after Kristiansen's article, in 1996, the Church of Norway (CoN) made its first official statement supporting the idea that indigenous peoples' worldviews, myths and spirituality offer insights that are useful to Christian theologians in developing ecotheology. The synod of the CoN claimed that indigenous peoples' perceptions of reality are "a resource that must be used to give us a deeper understanding of the theology of creation, and an ethical justification for stewardship." (Kirkemøte, *Protokoll kirkemøtet 1996*, 9). Furthermore, the synod stated that the "Sami Church Council [in the CoN] needs to increase its commitment to communicating the spirituality of indigenous peoples and their demand for justice." Since 1996, individual theologians and scientists, as well as the Sámi Church Council (SCC), have accepted this challenge. Several Sámi theologians, such as Tore Johnson, Bierna Bientie, Jorunn Jernsletten and Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg, have published texts on Sámi cosmology and ecotheology. Moreover, other theologians, including Sigurd Bergman, Mika Vähäkangas, and myself, have published texts in which we analyse and discuss the potential of Sámi spirituality for modern ecotheology. The majority of us point out that the Sámi religious cosmology as shown in its mythology and practice, invite to a greater focus on the interconnectedness of everything alive and the value of non-human beings than traditional Western theology.

In my recent analysis on the ecotheology of the Sámi priests Bientie and Johnson, I concluded that "Sámi ecotheology challenges the CoN to place greater emphasis on non-human nature and make a greater commitment to biodiversity and landscape than it has hitherto done." (Bredal-Tomren, 245). Here I stated the following:

It must be emphasized that the examination of the theology of these two Sámi priests provides too weak a basis to be able to generalize and say anything certain about Sámi ecotheology as a whole. In order to gain a more complete picture, further studies of both other contemporary Sámi theologians, such as the previously mentioned Jernsletten and Sjöberg, and of the theology in statements made by the Sámi church council are needed.

This paper follows the same tradition as my previous article. I now examine the ecotheological potential of Sámi spirituality and cosmology as a source of inspiration for the theology of the majority churches in the Nordics, based on text from the Sámi Church Council in the CoN. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. Which themes, practices, myths, theological arguments, and ethical justifications have been expressed in the Sámi Church Council's environmental ethical statements since 2000, and how can these be evaluated against the CoN's approach?
2. What do the statements from the Sámi Church Council reveal about Sámi spirituality?

Jessica Gansonkeng: Governance of Sacred Forests in Cameroon: Prospects for a Sustainable Management in the Western Region

Sacred forests exist around the world. In West Africa these serve as ritual and sacred sites and also to protect biodiversity. In the West region of Cameroon, land use change has been rapidly increasing, although humans have long left their mark on the once high biodiversity montane ecosystems, remnants of which are classed as biodiversity hotspots. This region also is known for a strong attachment to its cultural heritage of forest areas. However these forests are increasingly degraded and encroached. Colonially introduced Christianity and Islam considered rites in sacred forests as satanic practices, contributing to a rejection of traditions and places where these traditions are practiced, disregard of rules and uncontrolled exploitation. While these forests do not have any assigned legal protection status, their management was strongly governed through customary rights in the past. Entry used to be strictly limited and reserved for ritual practices, however traditional customs are less enforced and no longer sufficient to prevent fragmentation, diminution and degradation due to agriculture, increased urbanization and infrastructure. This study aims to contribute to improving the governance and management/conservation of sacred forests in the West Cameroon by assessing their current socio-cultural and political status in the interplay of formal politics and informal rules, and options for the implementation of sustainable governance and management strategies. Using cartographic mapping, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires, a stock taking of the sacred forests in West Cameroon will be conducted to evaluate with local and national stakeholders how they are currently governed and managed, and to propose strategies for their sustainable management and governance. Theoretical lenses on sacred forests, governance and conceptual framework based on critical institutionalism and governance principles will guide the analysis of a sample of 20 sacred forests (7%). ArcGIS will be used to analyze land cover changes and spatial extent, and SPSS and R version 4.0.3 will be used to code and analyze the social science data. This study will contribute to integrate sacred forests into the larger debate of forest conservation and management in Cameroon.

Biography

Jessica Cyntia Zambou Gansonkeng is PhD student in ERAIFT (the Post University Center for Management and Integrated Management of Forests and Tropical Territories) in DRC and Wageningen University and Research in Netherland
Chair group: ERAIF/Forest and Nature Conservation Policy (FNP).

Present Earth: Potsdam Lab (1)

Cecil Konijnendijk: Connecting People and Place through the Spiritual Values of Urban Forests

With our societies in a constant state of flux, ongoing urbanisation, and our urban areas becoming more culturally diverse, we need to find ways of (re)connecting people to the local landscape. This is especially relevant as many cities are undertaking greening

and climate adaptation efforts in the face of ecological and health crises. This contribution looks at the role spiritual values and rituals in a wider sense have played and can play in creating meaningful urban natural places, and urban forests in particular, by connecting people and urban landscapes. Ways need to be found to enhance connections between urban dwellers and their changing landscape, as well as the other beings we share these landscapes with, as represented through concepts such as biophilia and biophilic urbanism (Totaforti, 2020). The spiritual values of, and rituals connected with trees and forests can be an important aspect of this. Trees and forests can help with strengthening sense of place, sense of self, and sense of community amongst an increasingly diverse urban populace. Examples from both past and present of how spiritual values and rituals have been connected with urban trees and forests, from creating memorial and contemplative places and sacred groves to tree planting ceremonies, will be presented and analysed (Konijnendijk, 2018, 2020). Learning from these examples can foster the integration of spiritual values and rituals in the planning, design, and management of urban forest landscapes, for example through the concepts of doorstep trees, streetwoods, and urban groves (Konijnendijk, 2024). This can also be part of a 're-spiritualisation' of forests at large as part of building more meaningful relations with nature (Roux et al., 2022).

Biography

Cecil has over 25 years of experience studying, teaching, and advising on aspects of urban forestry and nature-based solutions. He is widely considered as one of the world's leading urban forestry experts, and his work has been featured by leading media outlets such as CNBC and in international documentary films. A Dutch national, he has lived and worked in Europe, Asia, and North America. He is an honorary professor of urban forestry at the University of British Columbia. Cecil helped found the leading academic journal *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, and edited seminal textbooks such as *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Forestry*. He is currently Editor-in-chief of *Arboriculture and Urban Forestry*, the scientific journal of the International Society of Arboriculture. He has published widely. Cecil is passionate about using trees and nature to develop better cities, and always stresses the importance of building meaningful relationships between people and places. He has advised international organisations such as the United Nations (FAO and UNECE), as well as national and local governments in more than 30 countries, and was an invited panellist at the 8th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in April 2021. In autumn 2023 his new book 'Rethinking Urban Green Spaces' will be published by Edward Elgar Publishing. Cecil currently lives in the Dutch city of Zeist with his spouse Andrea.

Andrea Hiott: Soul Meets Body: Walking as Joint Presence
Soul Meets Body: Walking as Joint Presence

Walking engenders connectivity through increasing awareness of one's encounter. It takes on ecological meaning when those doing it change their phenomenological experience through action, and that action then changes their environment. Towards understanding how coordinated actions and shared spatiotemporal awareness with others can lead to a change in patterns of phenomenology and environment, this paper introduces the idea of *joint presence*. Building on the ideas of *joint action* and *joint speech* in cognitive science, it suggests that an extended understanding of presence as continuous over time and space might help us gain perspective on some of the current challenges we face. The act of walking is given as one example of how this happens in practice, and of the potential we have to create patterns of shared ecological awareness. Walking, and other such acts, when done in a state of awareness and as ritual and pattern, allow us to become aware of the dynamism and nested nature of inner and outer sensuality, of self and experience, of embodied change and change at the planetary level. In so doing, we can learn how to better engage in joint action towards addressing today's urgent challenges.

Biography

Andrea Hiott is an author and researcher with degrees in philosophy and neuroscience. In my PhD at Heidelberg Universität, I'm developing the philosophy and practice of way-making. I also work in areas of culture and transportation towards an ecological orientation to motoring and movement. I also host the [Love & Philosophy](#) series, Beyond Dichotomy, in [podcast and video](#), the [Desirable Unknown](#), and I am part of the [Ecological Motoring Initiative](#).

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Past Air: Panel Discussion: Potsdam Lab (2)

Religion, Disenchantment, and our Place(s) in the World: German Thinkers Confront Modernity

What happens when the world, and even religion itself lose their metaphysical sheen, while the world becomes more urban, faster paced, and uprooted? This panel discusses the development of German religious thought from Enlightenment theological developments in the eighteenth century, through nineteenth-century Romanticism and into German modernism of the 1920s. We explore how issues of disenchantment are dealt with both through ideas of individual experience with the ineffable in nature, as well as through social thought and ideas of moral universalism, and through a nationalism in which place and nature are connected with the national and biological social body.

To what extent does German religious thought fracture in the modern era, as reflected not only in theology, but in literature and political thought, and what possibilities are there for a reunification of the spiritual, the natural, the social, and the local in German thought that can produce a positive role in the global fight for a sustainable, cosmopolitan identity?

Sophie Duvernoy has a PhD in German from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Yale University and is the translator of Gabriele Tergit's *Käsebirer Takes Berlin*, which was published by New York Review Books.

Michael Lesley is a ThD Candidate at Harvard Divinity School and works at intersection of Modern Protestant and Jewish thought.

Online Session – Present Air: Gundling

Manisha Sheth: Punaravartan: The Reestablishment of Circularity through a Change in Ritual Form in the Festival of Ganesh Chaturthi

The Ganesh Chaturthi festival in India is widely celebrated by the Hindu community in India. This festival originated in the worship of the soil by agrarian communities using completely natural materials. The conclusion of this festival is by the immersion

of the Ganesh idols into natural waterbodies. However in recent times, the festival involves use of Ganesh idols made of Plaster of Paris and chemical paints that are eventually immersed into natural water bodies causing serious water pollution.

For more than a decade, environment groups have been campaigning to encourage the replacement of chemical substances in the festival with natural and biodegradable materials as well as to replace the immersion into natural water bodies with other symbolic forms of immersion. In 2020, after several years of advocacy and education, the Government of India banned the use of toxic materials in the festival.

In the city of Pune, with support from religious leaders, campaigners have successfully convinced worshippers to reconsider the original significance of the immersion ritual and turn to more eco friendly ways of immersion. The success of the campaign illustrates that when an appeal is made to the religious sentiment of the public, with reference to the natural origins of the tradition, a shift of behaviour is possible, towards conservation. This paper explores whether such a change in the form of the ritual, may also result in a loss of ritual significance even though it is beneficial to the environment. Is it possible to reassign the idea of sanctity to Nature by shifting the focus of the ritual?

Manisha Sheth is an architect by training who also has a degree in Ecological Studies. She has been working in the field of Sustainability for the past 22 years starting with 6 years with the Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group. She is familiar with many aspects of environmental and conservation work and has successfully led several environment campaigns that involved introducing best green practices and changing consumer mind sets. She is the founder of eCoexist - which involves the social enterprise eCoexist Enterprises and the NGO eCoexist Foundation. She has had the opportunity to live and study for six years in a Gurukula - a Hindu monastery in her twenties. It was here that she developed a keen interest in the links between belief systems and environmental choices. Manisha has spoken at the United Nations in 2009 about Business and Biodiversity. She is a practising Hindu and continues her studies in Hindu philosophy and the wisdom of its traditions. You can reach her at ecoexist@gmail.com or <https://www.linkedin.com/in/manishagutman/>

Thaddée Chantry-Gellens: The Zhuangzi, Myth, and Our Relationship with Nature

This paper analyses the way the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 uses myth, and links it to the resources the text offers us in our efforts to rethink our relationship with the rest of nature. Although it is not much concerned with environmental ethics, the anthology practices myth-making in a way that can be fruitfully repurposed for ecological matters. In defying the Confucian reverence for sage kings, the text 18haratanat that being fixated on a specific set of valuations (e.g., utilitarian and economic), of *shifei* 是非 distinctions, does not go along with the self-so-ness (*ziran* 自然) of the 'ten-thousand things' (*wanwu* 萬物). The passing mention of the mythical Moye 鑊鋸 sword gives us an insight into

the *Zhuangzi*'s critique of fixity: it is linked to the idea that the operation of the *wanwu* is that of constant transformation (hua 化). By conceiving of the *wanwu* as a general ecosystem, a form of ecological holism can be developed thanks to the *Zhuangzi*. One that however avoids the criticisms of 'eco-fascism' that are sometimes levelled at holistic approaches to the environment. In effect, the *Zhuangzi* is equipped with further conceptual resources (e.g., *liangxing* 兩行 'walking both ways') which enable it to focus on the 'whole' while remaining conscious of the importance of individual entities.

Biography

Thaddée Chantry-Gellens is a PhD candidate at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He currently focuses on the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 anthology, attempting to discover whether an environmental ethics could be built upon the foundations the text offers us. This hope is grounded in a comparative approach, but also in the questioning of this method. Currently, his work focuses on the sort of attitude that is exhibited by the "masters" shown as exemplars by the text, but also on the way the *Zhuangzi* ironically uses the reference to these exemplary people as a critique of Confucian and Mohist argumentation methods.

10.00-10.15 *Schwarzschild*

Break

10.15-11.15

Present Earth: *Süring*

Andrew Blosser: Property-Rights, Ecology, and Sabbath: John Locke Meets Abraham Joshua Heschel in the Anthropocene

This project explores the question of what it means to "own" things during Sabbath observance, and the implications of this question for integral ecology. In John Locke's classical and perennially influential justification of property ownership, private property is established by productive work. Locke argues that the human agent "mixes" labor with material, extending the worker's right to bodily ownership to the material. This defense of private property subtly defines human beings as working agents in space, whose humanity is thus grounded in material productivity. Because of the implicit *homo faber* anthropology behind Locke's account, his framework runs into limitations when juxtaposed with Abraham Joshua Heschel's understanding of Sabbath. Heschel argues that the essence of Sabbath within Jewish tradition is the antithesis of material encapsulation of the human, or a move from "covetousness of space" to "covetousness of time." For Heschel, Sabbath is a time when the blending of human labor with material reality is impossible. Sabbath practice thereby requires observers to adapt a different epistemic stance toward property ownership—one in which property is established as a given rather than earned reality. Such Sabbatical

property-rights do not eliminate Lockean property rights, but temper them by orienting them toward broader temporal rights, or rights for shared time. This Sabbatical framework may be fruitful for integral ecology, insofar as the current ecological crisis requires humans to view the world through a shared lens that does not divide the planet into discrete owned portions. Selected practical implications of this framework, specifically sustainable housing and water use, are derived.

Biography

Andrew Blosser serves as teaching assistant professor in the department of theology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI. His research addresses the role of religious ethics in work and economics, and the implications this intersection holds for ecological issues. He is the author of the recent book *The Ethics of Doing Nothing: Rest, Rituals and the Modern World* (Orbis Books, 2023).

Bas Verschuuren: Faith and Conservation 2.0: Exploring Pathways of Measurable Action for Conservation Outcomes.

Religious beliefs are increasingly acknowledged as important drivers of conservation action. The involvement of religious groups in conservation has also grown over the past decades. These developments have received scant attention in terms of structural research, and this has hampered attempts at bringing faith-based conservation to the forefront of the conservation movement and its policy agenda. In virtue of the lessons already learnt and a more favorable policy context, we argue that the conditions are ripe for advancing the cooperation between faiths and the conservation movement to a next phase, "Faith and Conservation 2.0". We outline three defining elements: (1) a more effective and inclusive approach to establishing conservation partnerships and coalition-building with faith groups; (2) a more defined role for science, entailing systematic research and assessment of the conservation outcomes of faith and conservation initiatives; and (3) leveraging current policy opportunities for advancing the involvement of faith groups in conservation. While we acknowledge that partnering with faiths can pose challenges, we conclude that these partnerships, when accompanied with novel science and making use of the current policy context can assist with turning conservation into a real mass movement.

Larger affiliation (pls edit as required)

Bas Verschuuren (PhD) is an assistant professor at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. He has over 30 years of applied international research experience in the field of conservation. He currently researches the politics of multiple values, beliefs and worldviews in conservation governance and practice. Bas chairs the IUCN's specialist group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas and directs the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative. Bas published over 70 book chapters, scientific articles and five books with a focus on the cultural, spiritual and sacred dimensions of nature.

Present Air: Volmer

Ömer F. Gürlesin: Unraveling Biocentric Themes in Anatolian Sufism: Implications for Environmental Education in the Age of the Anthropocene

In the Anthropocene era, addressing ecological challenges requires a renewed examination of philosophical and religious traditions that explore human-nature interactions. Anatolian Sufism emerges as a rich spiritual tradition that encompasses both biocentric viewpoints, emphasizing harmony with nature and the interconnectedness of all beings, and theocentric perspectives that prioritize the divine or anthropocentric narratives placing humans at the center. This research embarks on a thorough exploration of translated works and commentaries from key Sufi figures like Rumi, Ibn Arabi, and Yunus Emre. Utilizing a hermeneutic approach to textual analysis, the study seeks to unravel and contrast the biocentric themes against the more anthropocentric or theocentric undertones. While preliminary insights do hint at Sufi teachings that resonate with modern biocentric principles, the study recognizes the diversity and complexity of Sufi environmental thought. The research will also contemplate the potential integration of these ecological themes into current environmental education frameworks. By navigating the intricate landscape of Sufi ecological perspectives, this study aspires to offer a nuanced and critical viewpoint to the ongoing interdisciplinary environmental discourse.

Biography

Dr. Ömer F. Gürlesin: Postdoctoral Researcher, I Project Apocalypse and Climate Change, Tilburg University, School of Catholic Theology, The Netherlands.

Dr. Gürlesin specializes in the sociology of religion, emphasizing Islamic perspectives on contemporary global challenges. With a robust interdisciplinary grounding in Islamic philosophy and theology, he engages in detailed analysis of various subjects. In his analytical endeavors, Gürlesin adeptly utilizes critical discourse analysis combined with quantitative methodologies to decipher climate change narratives in the Netherlands. His seminal research has touched upon Islamic environmentalism and the dynamics of identity within interfaith contexts. As part of an expansive project, Gürlesin investigates the integration of religious vocabularies in climate change discourses, highlighting the intricate convergence of religious narratives and environmental imperatives.

Samuel Shearn: The Consolation of Dark Ecology. Theological Motifs in the Writings of Timothy Morton

The ecological writings of Timothy Morton (including *Dark Ecology* 2018, *Being Ecological* 2019) address the psychology and philosophical assumptions surrounding contemporary ecological discourse with creativity and dazzling prose. Drawing on a post-Heideggerian Object-Oriented Ontology, his conjuring of a new mythology of humanity as constituted by a plethora of relations instead of facing an imagined 'nature' has attracted considerable interest. Furthermore, his notion of 'dark ecology' offers respite and new motivation for those jaded by panic-stricken ecological writing.

On the surface, the link between Morton and theology seems tenuous; in his story, God and the gods feature chiefly as villainous objectifications of the incessant agrilogistics we call the anthropocene. However, there are deep theological undercurrents in his works up to 2019 which are now emerging more explicitly as we await the publication of his newest book *"Hell. In search of a Christian Ecology"* (forthcoming 2024). In this paper I will read Morton's works (including the proofs of *Hell*) as critical theological consolation literature for contemporary ecological consciousness. For Morton aims to help us reframe and come to terms with ecological angst.

Biography

Dr. Samuel Shearn is a British-German theologian at the University of Mainz, Germany. He is the author of book about theologian Paul Tillich's early development and his theological interpretation of doubt (Pastor Tillich, OUP 2022). He is currently writing an overambitious academic book about consolation for his habilitation project.

Future Earth: Panel Discussion: Potsdam Lab

Ash, Bone, Oak and Stone: Rewilding Cinderella Ritual

Joanna Gilar, Sophie Gibson, Gauri Raje, Fleur Shorthouse Hemmings

In a globalized world fairy tales are stories we hold in common; yet simultaneously stories whose commonality we have forgotten. The Storytelling Choir takes traditional tales and reforges them to explore their multiple history and forgotten ecological complexity, co-creating with a diverse group of storytellers and artists radical rituals of rewoven stories, performed with land and celebrating more-than-human kinships. In a panel that weaves together critical and creative perspectives, four members of the Storytelling Choir will discuss our work with Rewilding Cinderella. Project founder Joanna Gilar will introduce the panel and explore how communal storytelling, by inviting attention to the complexities of kinship networks, can inspire ecological ritual. Deepening consideration on ritual and resilience, Gauri Raje will present her work with "Mah Pishooni", a tale from Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan still actively used in women's rituals. Sophie Gibson will discuss ash child stories in the context of radical wellness and social justice rites, and philosophy teacher Fleur Shorthouse Hemmings will explore the pedagogical relevance of collective, ecological storytelling.

As a panel, we will consider the following questions:

- How can we work with ritual fragments preserved in traditional tales to reforge contemporary ritual practice which responds directly to ecological catastrophe?
- Can the practice of collective storytelling interrogate racist and anthropocentric patterns of fairy tale imagining?
- Can collective storytelling be offered in an educational setting to create "liberatory rituals" of shared conversation and resilient creativity?

Panel Participants:

Joanna Gilar is creative director of StoryCommons CIC, an educational and arts collective dedicated to building resilience via story. A storyteller with a doctorate in fairy tales and ecocriticism, she is passionate about inspiring the young – and old – to

discover the infinite wonder of the ordinary world. She currently works as a Visiting Lecturer in Children's Literature at the University of Roehampton.

Sophie Gibson is a writer, story teller and Qi gong teacher. Her career spans theatre making for empowerment, transforming violence and leading trauma responsive services. An experienced charity leader, she centres heart based, sustainable practice. She is passionate about the power of stories to help us remember that other worlds are possible.

Gauri Raje is a storyteller and anthropologist based in Scotland and India. She works with different genres: folk tales, fairy tales, epics and myths, mainly from non-European regions, and autobiographical storytelling. She is fascinated by myths and their power to hold community memories, and has been increasingly working with the ways in which stories allow migrants to create a relationship with the land they settle in.

Fleur Shorthouse Hemmings has been teaching philosophy and working with story for 30yrs. She completed her MA in Applied Storytelling, under the tutelage of tradition bearer Shonaleigh Cumbers. She is a student of Lithuanian Pirtis sauna tradition with Bath Master, Birutė Masiliauskienė. Fleur has brought sauna master practice and traditional oral storytelling together to create the unique art form of sauna storytelling. She is artist-in-residence at Wowo Wild Spa, Sussex.

For more information about the Storytelling Choir:
<https://www.wildstorycommons.org>

Online Session Future Air: Gundling

Masoud Hassany, Shina Sad Berenji, and Salma Talebi Amiri: The Study and Compilation of the Processes of Rebalancing and Reviving Environmental Resources in Accordance with and Observance of Ethical-Religious Teachings and Guidance

Monotheistic religions (Abrahamic religions) mostly adapt, internalize, and enact ethical teachings and characteristics in human societies. They also have vital and necessary rules and recommendations about exploiting and benefiting from environmental resources, especially when dealing with the more damaged and endangered ones. The extraction, compilation, and regulation of such rules which are adaptable to the behavior of the society and current technological processes can facilitate their implementation to stop the current damaging processes and restore our environmental resources. These processes can even be revived and sustained in a balanced and proportional manner. This paper tries to define a sufficient limit in the exploitation of resources for societies. In this way, sustainable development and in some cases, the growth and revival of damaged or nearly destroyed environmental resources could be facilitated. During this economic, cultural, and spiritual process, each geomorphological feature must first and foremost be considered as a dynamic environmental foundation having its own rules. Wherever they are located in the

world, these features show signs of five stages in their consisting of natural, and natural-artificial landforms, namely adolescence, youth, maturity, old age, and revival, which can all be studied and categorized meticulously. The paper will proceed to implement a systemic and multi-disciplinary approach; thus, the dominant processes in each of these five stages can be adapted to ethical teachings, religious faiths, and sustained beliefs in various cultures. Moreover, theoretical-practical guidelines could be compiled for the benefiting and exploiting parties. In this light, this paper will emphasize concepts such as sanctity, observance, equity, bountifulness, sufficiency limit, avoiding contamination, safeguarding immaculateness, sanctuary, worth, boundary, etc. which are mentioned as rules or concepts in most divine scriptures. These concepts are mainly adaptable to the rules governing geomorphological features and have environmental applications.

Herein attached, a number of these ethical and religious concepts are listed and defined as terms in the most comprehensible framework and as terms defined related to the subject matter of this paper. The paper will also address one example of such a pledge to adapt with these principles in the Iranian peninsula; the creative way of providing water for desert and arid features via Qanat strings. These principles were directly and indirectly implemented in distant years to create and safeguard Qanats and Karizs (drains) in semi-arid and even arid features in landforms during their maturity and old age stages. Obviously, from this viewpoint, the benefiting and exploiting process can also be enacted for neighboring societies in the long run. Examples of this phenomenon will be addressed in the paper under the concepts of special and public endowment.

On the whole, implementing processes derived from ethical-religious concepts along with changing exploitation patterns and benefiting from cutting-edge technology can result in the revival of natural environments and remedying their destruction. Furthermore, this paper emphasizes teaching and modifying the collective approach towards exploiting various environmental resources and will introduce several adaptive multifaceted practical, ethical, and religious methods which can be implemented to remedy natural environments, rectify the current destructive trend, and lead to revival.

Biography

Masoud Hassany, Emeritus Professor, Departments of Geology and Architecture, Shahid Beheshti University, is the founder of the Landscape Architecture Program in Iran.

Shina Sad Berenji has a Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture from Tarbiat Modares University (MA in Landscape Architecture from Shahid Beheshti University, and BA in Architecture from Tehran University). Lecturer in some Iranian universities.

Research interests: Sustainability in landscape architecture, Nature based solution for climate change adaptation in cities, Ideological socio-cultural bases of space planning and design and its psychological implications, Water in urban landscape, Qanats.

Salma Talebi Amiri is an Independent Scholar and holds an M.A. in Translation Studies from Kharazmi University

Aura Elena Schussler: A Posthumanist Approach Towards a Symbiotic Recomposition of Mytho-ecologies in the Current Ecological Crisis

Broadly speaking, the impact and actions of humans on the environment are the main elements that define the Anthropocene Era. They are also associated with the many ecological catastrophes which both highlight the shortcomings of European humanism as well as its reliance on the boundaries of science. In this paradigm, advanced capitalism plays an important role. It caused European man to distance himself from nature, and for indigenous traditions to be lost within the capitalist system, aspects that have led to the acceleration of ecological disasters. Thus, not only are the conditions of our embodied existence changing due to the approaching Sixth Extinction, but so too is our perception of ourselves as embodied and embedded agents in this shared environment or, as Rosi Braidotti emphasizes, “We-Are-(All)-In-This-Together-But-We-Are-Not-One-And-The-Same”. In this study, I will explore a posthumanist approach to ecological crises, introducing an immanent mytho-ecological perspective—that is, a symbiotic and practical alternative provided by the resuscitation, merging, and re-composition of Gaya mythology with African spirituality, humanity, ecology, and Ubuntu philosophy. The main goal is to show that, now more than ever, mankind needs to come together to create a relational framework in order to support the re-composition of the human-nature link, and slow down the effects of the Anthropocene. This involves establishing inclusive, creative, and open relationships and interconnections between various systems, including political, cultural, spiritual, religious, mythical, and ethical ones.

Biography

Dr. Aura Elena Schussler is a University Lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy of the Babes-Bolyai University, Romania.

11.30-11.45 *Schwarzschild*

Break

11.45-12.45

Book Panel: *Süring*

Todd LeVasseur: Panel discussion about his book, “Climate Change, Religion, and Our Bodily Future”

Future Earth: Thinking about Pedagogy: Volmer

Jeane Peracullo: Reimagining Participatory Action Research as Engaged Pedagogy for the Precarious Times

The proposal addresses promoting creative thinking about praxis in the age of ecological catastrophe through collaborative and interdisciplinary pedagogical tools. The proposal forwards a reimagined participatory action research (PAR). As educators and global community members, we must respond urgently to the ecological crisis. We must create pedagogies that center around the Earth and have the ability to make a transformative impact. This requires an understanding of the diagnosis, prognosis, and remedy of the crisis. According to Mary Elizabeth Moore (2022), if we respond to a weeping planet, a second path is to draw upon the legacies of people, waters, and lands to guide environmental action. The proposal draws from my experience designing and implementing a participatory action research program for my graduate and undergraduate classes in Environmental Philosophy in 2022-23.

Ayers (2020) and De Souza (2009) stress the importance of universities becoming 'communities of care.' This concept extends to include the development of curricula and programs responsive to the contemporary milieu's shifts in consciousness. It entails grounding education in the totality of human experience (De Souza 2009, 3), recognizing our common vulnerabilities in a world experiencing unprecedented loss and suffering, and developing a 'Pedagogy for Precarious Times' (Ayers, 2020). By embracing these tasks, educators and school administrators can create a holistic educational environment that supports students' emotional, social, and spiritual development, providing them with the tools they need to navigate an increasingly complex world.

A reimagined participatory action research for the precarious times re-orientes the students toward knowledge creation that is inclusive, participatory, emancipatory, and transformative. Community members see their participation in the research process as necessary to resolve their social concerns. It continues recognizing community knowledge's irreplaceability, value, legitimacy, and inclusion in identifying, researching, and resolving issues and social problems.

A reimagined participatory action research for precarious times operates on the following principles: the *flourishing of all*, *right relations*, and *praxis*. The *flourishing of all* indicates the end or purpose of why we use engaged pedagogy in teaching and research. The notion of flourishing refers to the superabundance of life that does not have to be confined to human life. To work for human flourishing is not enough; we must contribute to addressing environmental destruction that results in unimaginable loss of life and biodiversity. Leopold (1949) underscores the importance of knowing and understanding flourishing as members of the biotic community that live and thrive within it. In the context of learning, the ecosystem includes the academic community members.

Right relations refers to the values that will result in the flourishing of all. In determining the level of institutional engagement with communities or organizations, researchers must constantly observe ethical conduct. This means respecting the existing cultures and traditions of partner communities or organizations. We must also

demonstrate empathy and compassion towards our partners, students, and fellow researchers.

Praxis signifies actions manifesting both tenets of the *flourishing of all* and *right relations* by demonstrating our skills and competence as teachers and researchers. Freire (1970) uses *praxis* to offer a pedagogy based on reflection and action about the world to transform it for the better. To be skillful, we must communicate the vision of engaged pedagogy to our students so that they, in turn, would manifest the skills to engage the community for the better. Cipollone and Zygmunt (2018) describe a culturally sensitive teacher whose praxis includes careful preparation of materials during pre-teaching, a respectful attitude towards the members of the community whose insights into the community are valuable, a competent mentoring of students' research from beginning to end, and the capacity to empower students to communicate the research results to the community for feedback, validation, and adoption.

A reimagined participatory action research for the precarious times foregrounds an eco-spirituality marked by reverence toward the non-humankind that shares the world with us. The realization that we can now think about the human-nature relationship in an educational setting is what Caroline Smith called a 'moment of grace' (2009, 654), following Thomas Berry's words that we are now in an era of significant transformation due to the shift in paradigm toward a more ecologically-informed future (2020).

Biography

Dr. Jeane Peracullo is a Full Professor and the Chair of the Department of Philosophy at De La Salle University. She has presented at numerous conferences and published several articles on a range of topics that include environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, feminist philosophy and theology, gender triangulation, religion and postcoloniality, international relations (with a particular focus on human identities and spaces), and the relationship between youth, religion, and culture. Dr. Peracullo is also a board member of the Women's and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP). Jeane is a co-editor of the forthcoming book on Global Religion and the Climate Crisis Perspectives from Practical Theology and Religious Studies in International Discourse, to be published by de Gruyter Press.

Victor Manuel Morales: Ecological Metanarratives and Green Pedagogy

Abstract:

The so-called Age of Humans stores hidden possibilities of development as well as almost unsurmountable challenges. In this day and age fantasy and reality merge with each other making it difficult to ever separate them so sharply as in the past. The technical dominion of our world is criss-crossed with mythical cues which are ready to be unleashed as a kind of Pandora box: The effects of our technical development are almost impossible to predict and tame. As an effect of the unfolding drama of the actual version of a kind of Promethean Unbound, humanity has been left without

foundation and destination. In this puzzling world which becomes stranger by the day, new world-explanations are on offer. These meta-narratives proffered a point of departure and perhaps of arrival for our human existence in search of meaning. These uncharted waters require the ability to navigate through troubled waters. The need of developing new navigation skills and a profile is fundamentally a pedagogical task. In my paper I shall develop the content and goals of such a green pedagogy.

Basically, a green pedagogy will concentrate on two aspects, first the competence of ontological discernment in the face of a cascade of stories which mould our existence as well as our preferences and actions. Second, a green pedagogy links any ethical extrapolation from the various current meta-narratives to the question about character. In other words, the kind of person we want to be and actually are, will determine the kind of world we will inhabit.

Biography:

Dr. Víctor Manuel Morales was born in 1970 in Monterrey, Mexico. He did his BA in Spanish at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, in Monterrey, Mexico. He also got his Certificado de Estudios Cristianos at Seminario del Rey (theological studies), in Monterrey, Mexico. Afterwards, he did his BA Honours and MA in Philosophy at the Orange Free State University in Bloemfontein, South Africa. He also did his predoctoral study in Theology and Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada. He completed his PhD at the University of Liverpool, in Chester, UK. Currently he is doing his postdoc in the area of Systematic Theology on the topic of Sustainable Development. He has very recently completed his Referendariat (teacher training) at Gymnasium Am Waldhof in Bielefeld, Germany and now he has become a fully-fledged high-school teacher.

Future Water: Potsdam Lab (1)

Manuel May Castillo: Indigenous Water Rituals

This paper aims to examine the philosophical set of ideas that nourish the morality of water care in Maya communities. Toward this end, this paper will examine ritual discourses in postclassic Maya codices and contemporary water rituals. Through a holistic interdisciplinary approach, I will scrutinize moral values bound to consuetudinary norms for water care that may prove to be relevant for present-day environmental debates.

While sharing my research findings I will bring the following questions to the table: a) how to communicate this to general society, b) how to make it available for decision makers, teachers and students envisioning a horizon beyond 28haratanatya.

Biography

Manuel May is a Maya Indigenous scholar from Mexico, holds a Phd in architectural heritage and serves as a postdoctoral researcher in the (ERC) project RIVERS. Manuel's work intersects heritage studies, Indigenous rights, archaeology and socio-cultural anthropology. His work at the global level includes lectures and talks at various

universities and museums in Europe and the Americas, and ongoing participation in UN I on Indigenous Peoples issues.

Anastasia Badder: Negotiating 'Value': Water, Waste, and Collaborative Futures in a Research-Practice Partnership

This paper reflects on the early stages of a research project instigated by local water companies and involving university researchers and religious communities in Cambridge (UK). Driven by predicted droughts and rising economic costs, water companies are searching for 'water wasters' and have identified (particular) religious communities as possible culprits (though the process of identification remains opaque). With more information about the use and value of water in local religious lives, companies hope to find a 'hook' to convince communities of the importance of and draw them into sustainable practices. Underlying this plan are myriad assumptions about how water can be valued in the first place, what water is for, what it does and in what relations it is enmeshed, who or what is wasteful, and what is lost through wastage. Initial conversations with religious actors are already troubling those assumptions; some communities have created their own ecological myths and practices, many are keen to start thinking for ecological futures, and most are skeptical of what, exactly, water companies want and whether a solution can be reached together. As the project's lead researcher, drawing on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, in this paper I investigate the ways water, its value, and futures are articulated, contested, and made multiple through encounters between company 'stakeholders', researchers, and religious communities and their myths and practices, with an eye towards the shifting assemblages of water and power coming in and out of focus in the process

Biography

Anastasia Badder is a Research Associate in the Faculty of Divinity and Cambridge Interfaith Programme at the University of Cambridge. She holds a PhD in Educational Sciences from the University of Luxembourg, and an MA in Anthropology from the University of Auckland. Though grounded in anthropology, her work is often interdisciplinary, especially reaching across sociolinguistics and education. Some of her recent research explores the materiality of interreligious encounter, as well as articulations of language and the material in Jewish lives in Europe.

Present Water: *Potsdam Lab (2)*

Seoyoung Kim: Water and Baptism, an Ecofeminist Approach

My paper explores an account of water in the sacrament of baptism, which is a significant part of the Christian tradition. This study applies ecofeminist theological perspectives which enable us to see the continuity and connectedness of shared theological beliefs such as creation and salvation, the integrity of creation, and the emphasis on visible baptismal water in contrast to how they have been integrated into

and expounded within traditional Christian theology. I am concerned with the fact that water is not only a very important substance on earth but is also more than a substance. In order to demonstrate this fact, in this paper, I consider the significant Christian (sacramental) tradition of baptism since it is necessary to reinterpret the sacrament of baptism in ecofeminist theological perspectives. In particular, I associate physical water with creation. This detailed argument is explored in three dimensions: 1) the close relationship between caring for creation and the liberation of 30haratanatya living beings; 2) the conversion from power-oppression to mutual respect; and 3) the relationship between different images of God and between creation and salvation. These ecofeminist theological points contribute to a re-visiting of the meanings of baptism.

Biography

Seoyoung Kim passed her PhD viva in October 2023, supervised by Professor Peter Scott. The thesis was titled: "Towards a Christian Ecofeminist Theology of Water". Seoyoung is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, and currently a Central Committee member of the World Council of Churches. She completed her Master of Theological Studies (MTS) at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, USA; Master of Divinity (M.Div) and Bachelor in theology at Hanshin University in South Korea. She also worked as an intern at Christian Conference of Asia which is a regional ecumenical 30haratanatya in Asia.

Brooke Grasberger: Ship, Sea, Work: The Faith of Sailors

At sea, held by wooden hull and propelled by wind: sailors reading the world-revealing sky, its lights and clouds and rings; sailors carving curves of whalebone; sailors called to a rest of a Sunday, but only if the weather allowed them. Sailors singing: of the sea, and of the shore, rhythms that propelled them in the heavy work of hauling, or accompanied the relief of the dogwatch, strands of longing and desire. Sailors calling story from the stars and the sea and ships and the others.

Spending long weeks at sea, embedded in and above an entity that could not support them without the mediating structure of the ship, sailors drew on a fluid spiritual tradition in their navigation across oceans. This welled up from a variety of sources: from a range of Christian contexts, as well as less visible others, and from the daily structures and strictures of the ship and the work required to move it from port to port alongside the wind, from the creatures and features of the seas themselves, from the accumulation of centuries of seafaring: a spiritualized relationship to their surroundings, marked by the particularities of human labor (and therefore life) at sea. In the course of working in shifts day in and day out, sailors enacted an environmental-ritual practice, in the between-spaces allowed to and created by them aboard nineteenth-century transoceanic merchant and whaling vessels. Between the demands on them made by the intertwining forces of human command, weather, and ship, ordinary sailors engaged a relationship of practice and myth with the oceanic

environment, which I have often named as faith. This paper will focus on this historical element.

In addition, will then include a discussion of the different levels of efficacy in such recognitions of oceanic space, and speculative considerations of their potential in the possibility of a new age of sail. It will also present a short consideration or comparison of the emergence of steam-powered vessels, considering how the interventions of technology reframe—but do not entirely rewrite—the relationships of seafarers to their vessels and surrounding seas, and its implications.

Biography

Brooke Grasberger is a historian of faith at/and the sea, with a PhD in History and an MA in Religious Studies from Brown University. She is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Boston College, where she is teaching courses on whaling, luck and superstition, and Atlantic world history. She's also at work on revising her dissertation manuscript with an eye toward publication, as well as beginning preliminary research on a second project.

Book Panel: *Gundling*

Religion and Nature Conservation: Global Case Studies

Radhika Borde, Jonathan Schorsch, Bas Verschuuren

12.45-14.00 *Schwarzschild*

Lunch (provided)

14.00-15.00

Future Fire: *Süring*

Mina Yi: Engaging with the World of Material: through Phyllida Barlow's Eleven Columns

The aim of this paper is to explore how we can rethink the status of material, traditionally considered passive, inert, and intimate, only responsive to external force or agent. Drawing on the work of Karen Barad, I will analyze Phyllida Barlow's installation work and discuss how matter possesses its inherent force and agency, as well as how it invites both artist and viewers to participate in human-matter assemblage. For Barad, agency is not property of persons or things, but rather, an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. Rereading agency as the possibilities and accountability allows humans to participate in responsible actions to intervene in the world's becoming, its ongoing transformation. This attempt challenges the notion that human agency and activity have historically been viewed as the dominant forces in shaping the world, especially in the context of the Anthropocene era. To counter this exclusive human-centered perspective, the idea

of engagement with matter and the dynamic configurations suggests how humans and nonhuman entities co-constitute the world, creating new relationships and practices.

Biography

Mina Yi is currently in the second year of a PhD program at the Graduate Theological Union, focusing on how to rethink experiences with artwork in terms of a non-human-centered perspective. This is important because human agency and activity have historically been viewed as the dominant forces in shaping the world, often resulting in hierarchical discrimination and exclusion in various shapes. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's theory and New Materialist perspectives and reading visual artworks, Mina Yi is exploring the entangled world of humans and materials. Mina Yi believes that this is a crucial issue as both art and religion have the potential to envision and actualize new relationships within the world in our time.

Graduate Theological Union: 9/2022 to present PhD in Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion

Chicago Theological Seminary: 9/2020 to 5/2022 Master of Arts in Religious Studies

Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (South Korea): 3/2022 to 8/2013 Master of Theology in Christianity and Culture

Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (South Korea): 3/2007 to 2/2011 Master of Divinity

Giridhar Raghunathan: Sacred and the Sewage – the Many Facets of the Ganges as Depicted in the Classical Indian Dance Ballet Namamey Gange

The river Ganges is one of the five most important rivers in Hinduism. According to Narada Purana (9th or 10th century CE), legend has that the river was brought to the earth by the penance of King Bhagiratha. Hindus from across South Asia immerse the ashes of the dead kin in the Ganga (Ganges) owing to its utmost religious status. Many Hindus also perform cremation of the dead in the banks of the holy river. Over the past few decades Ganges has been excessively polluted by untreated sewage, industrial wastes, carcasses and unburnt remains of funeral pyre. From being a sacred river, these pollutants have transformed the waterbody into an ecological disaster. In June 2014, the government of India approved the conservation of Ganges and promoted the projects as a flagship programme. However, the level of pollution has not decreased substantially since the project was introduced. The current paper analyses how the classical Indian dance production *Namamey Gange* conceived and choreographed by Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan against this backdrop. Can a performative artwork create change in people? Using gender as a theoretical framework, this paper analyses the various textual and choreographic constructions of the Ganges' personification as the damsel in distress, the mother and tangible extension of the supreme power. It examines the impact of the performance through selected newspaper excerpts and reviews, illustrating how art bridges myth and ecological conservation.

Biography

Giridhar Raghunathan is a professional dancer, teacher, researcher, author and public speaker. He holds a master's degree with distinction, in Bharatanatyam from Bharathidasan University, India and a Master of Technology in Medical Nanotechnology from SASTRA University, India. He has compiled a book titled "Bharta Nrta Bhaashyam", a primer for the students of Bharatanatyam. He is PhD candidate in Dance Studies at the University of Roehampton in the UK. Giridhar's research interweaves classical Indian dance, Hinduism, gender and sexuality. He has taught BA and MA modules, has delivered invited lectures and presented papers in several universities in Europe and India. Giridhar is the co-organiser of the biennial international conference on Emerging Trends in Classical Indian Dance Research. He performs Bharatanatyam and conducts workshops and masterclasses regularly in India, Europe and North America.

Future Air: Volmer

Timothy Stacey: Unlikely Allies: Unleashing Gaian Repertoires in the Centres of Western Science and Policy

70 years of scientists sharing facts about climate change have proved insufficient to inspire the action required. Enlightenment ideas of freedom and rationality, and the exploitative practices with which they emerged, appear to be near-entrenched. It is now widely acknowledged that what I call "religious repertoires" (magic, myths, rituals, and traditions) will play a crucial role in inspiring the socio-ecological changes we need.

Words with a rich history in the study of religion such as imaginaries are enjoying increasing use in environmental studies. But along the way, both the depth of meaning and the appreciation of performativity have been diluted. Thus although I have been critical of using religiously connotative language in the past, working as I now do between the fields of religious studies, environmental studies, and environmental policymaking, I keep the prefix "religious" in religious repertoires both as a "hook" for broader audiences, and to emphasise the focus on cosmology, ontology, existential feelings, and moral ideals. Following others' groundbreaking work on lived religion and everyday ethics, I use the word repertoires to move the focus away from propositional beliefs and arguments and towards performances. Finally, I use the word repertoires with deliberate reference to repertory theatre, so as to keep in mind the way that performances spread and evolve with time.

In contrast to those that characterise secular settings as lacking in or free from religious repertoires, I stress that such settings are replete with repertoires that lock in certain ways of thinking and acting, and lock out others.

In search of repertoires that can make the crucial difference, it has become commonplace for researchers to vilify, variously, Western, colonial, and scientific repertoires, while focusing their empirical gaze on groups that have been marginalized in the course of Western modernity: witches, indigenous groups, activists, and artists. While this work is important in indicating the direction and scale of transformation

required, an unfortunate consequence is to homogenize and alienate the very individuals and institutions that must be targeted for transformative change.

In this paper, I thus stress that alongside this work, careful attention needs to be paid to the seeds of Gaian repertoires that can already be found in the centres of Western science and policy. I reflect on time spent with unlikely allies, that is, scientists and policymakers whose personal values are challenged by their public responsibilities. I draw their repertoires to the surface, detail how they are policed out of their professional spheres, and how, by forming alliances with artists and activists, they might be unleashed.

Biography

Timothy Stacey is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Urban Futures Studio, Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development. He is the author of two books on the role of religion-like categories in shaping apparently secular individuals and institutions. He engages with policymakers in the Dutch government to critically assess their religious repertoires, and collaborates with activists and artists to develop alternatives.

Norah Zuniga Shaw: Climate Gathering: Transmedia Performance Rituals for Livable Futures

In this short performative lecture and photo essay, I will facilitate a ritual Climate Gathering. Drawing on resources from the Livable Futures project and our transmedia performance rituals *Climate Gathering* (2019) and *Climate Banshee* (2022), this talk offers an evocative opportunity to arrive into the moment, turn toward and soften into the magnitude of the issues at hand, and locate our own capacities, resources, and intentions, both individually and as a collective.

A social practice artwork, *Livable Futures* cultivates creative responses to unpredictability and crisis on a planet in need. Livability instead of sustainability emphasizes social justice and an ecological ethics recentering who survives and who gets to thrive in our communities—human, biological, and artificial. Resisting dominant narratives of apocalypse, the projects of *Livable Futures* foster intention and support participants finding ways into action and intention. The tactics we offer come directly from the intrinsic practices of artists and make the leap of assuming that art matters and that creativity is a serious and meaningful response to crisis.

Biography

Norah Zuniga Shaw is an artist and director for performance and technology projects that integrate body, ecology, collaboration, and liberation. Called “wildly creative” by the *New York Times*, her work is exhibited worldwide and has won numerous awards and features. Major projects include *Synchronous Objects* with William Forsythe and *TWO* with Bebe Miller, *Dancing Life* for Oxford University Press, *Climate Gathering*, a transmedia performance ritual, and the *Livable Futures* public practice project,

newsletter, and podcast. She publishes, presents, and consults frequently on interdisciplinary research and teaching, ecological justice and humane technology activism, and artistic practices for transformative facilitation and community building.

She is based in Ohio, USA and Essen, Germany.

Future Earth: Potsdam Lab

Annette Homann: The Poetic A-Priori of Space: Sanctuaries in the Face of Collapse

Fifty years ago, in 1972, literate and prolific architecture historian, Joseph Rykwert used the title "On Adams House in Paradise"¹ to daydream himself into the garden of Eden, that Adam and Eve were supposed to care for and preserve.

As visions of such first and therefore "correct" house obsessed builders and architecture theoreticians over centuries he considered it important to understand how the crisis impaired.

1753, as one of the visions or myths of the enlightenment Marc-Antoine Laugier as a first "modern" argued for a "primitive hut", with columns liberated from walls, pedestals and other "faults", stripped from Baroque or – unfortunately soon - all ornamentation.

Rykwert, following his deep interest in cultural history and anthropology describes scholarly countless rationales and rituals for the creation of space that informed and transformed the collective memory. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, once a student of Rykwert and today professor emeritus himself wrote the influential book "Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science" (1983):

"Before the seventeenth century, the primacy of perception as the ultimate evidence of knowledge was never questioned. Mathesis explicitly maintained its symbolic connotations, and the hierarchical structure of the cosmos established by Aristotle remains valid. It was a world of predominantly mythical character, qualitatively different from our present universe of precision."² Mythical?

Marco Frascari, in "Monsters of Architecture" states, that "The word and the notion have a wide currency in the theoretical writings of architects who reject the metaphysics that nurtured the modern theory on myth"³, and quotes Gianni Vattimo the Italian philosopher, who "sees three different tendencies or points of view in the current thinking on myth, which he terms (1) archaism, (2) cultural relativism, and (3) limited rationality."⁴

More than half a century, prominent scholars in architecture history and theory taught that in architecture logos and myth are not to be separated. Whenever space making excludes the spiritual and creative mind in the human body with its ludic-erotic, cosmogonic, transcending urge and pretends to rely on rational reductionism we lose an essential bridge into the world and to us. This linkage is of intrinsic importance for any ecological perspective in architecture because we think our bodies through the bodies of the buildings that (vice-versa) do their body-building with us. We need the metaphorical realm in between the ideal and the real. If "green" buildings are identified only through technological performance, this important link is not

understood. Alberto Pérez-Gómez coined the term “poetic-a-priori” and he refers to ontologically significant architecture, such as the Jewish Museum by Daniel Libeskind, La Tourette by Le Corbusier or The Masks by John Hejduk.

“How shall we teach?” being “good elders”? I like to share some concepts and results of the graduate design-studios that I taught for the Azrieli School of Architecture in 2009/10/11 in Berlin. First of all what did John Hejduk intend when he coined the term “Architectural Masks”?

1 Joseph Rykwert: Adams Haus im Paradies, aus dem Englischen von Jonas Beyer, Gebrüder Mann Verlag Berlin, Englische Erstausgabe 1972.

2 Alberto Perez-Gomez: Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science, 1983 MIT Press, Introduction, S.9

3 Marco Frascari: Monsters of Architecture, Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory, 1991 Rowman and Littlefield, S. 8

4 Gianni Vattimo: Myth and the Fate of Secularization, 1985 Res 9 Spring, S. 29-35

Biography

Dr. Annette Homann is an architect for 25 years (Dipl. Ing./ M.A.). She lived and worked more than 10 years abroad: in Switzerland, France, USA and Canada.

2006 -2011 she was Lecturer and Adjunct Research Professor for the Azrieli School of Architecture.

2017 -2020 she worked in the building department of the consistory of the states Berlin and Brandenburg (EKBO) supervising construction sites in churches; until 2021 also historical cemeteries in Berlin-Mitte.

Today she works as architect and project manager on the Island Amrum for a rehab clinic.

Grace Johnson: Could Post-Humanist Theory in Architecture Exist to Transform the Age of Ecological Catastrophe?

Currently, in an anthropocentric, post-natural existence the client-architect relationship is cosmopolitan and discriminatory to non-humans. Architects abide by an archaic function, human for human, indebted to order, place and contract. Increasingly we find there is a mystic and nuanced fold in the ritual of architecture for something *more than human*. To lay bare the entanglements we ignore and set free a cosmo-political age of design that satiates the nonhuman and human world.

This project is guided by the works of Yaneva, Latour, Stenger’s and Harraway, delving into the religious nature of architecture that yearns for something new. Seeking the dawn of this novel design ethos begins with examining the existing state of the connection between architect and client. This paper will explore the ritualist ontology of architects through their work to show the current landscape of their beliefs. Seeing if the presence of the posthumanist theory exists between the rituals and beliefs of architects. A necessary transformation that could re-establish the architectural hierarchy of non-human species. The non-human client has a vital yet inevitable future, post-humanist theory in architecture is pivotal achieving a state of transformation.

Biography

Grace Johnson is currently a PhD Student in her second year at south east technological university (SETU). She has a bachelor's degree in architecture and experience working as an architectural assistant in Ireland. Her research at SETU is titled: Earth as our client – rethinking the client of architecture. The project has a focus on architecture, posthumanism, new materialism with a feminist ontology.

Online Session: Present Earth: Gundling

Ritu Dhingra: Hindu Ethics and Environmental Conservation

Indian subcontinent has a 5000-year-old civilization devouring one of the most environment friendly practices, rituals, traditions and which have a complete reverence with nature. Starting from the pre-Vedic era (3000-2600 BC) to 272 BC and even now the inhabitants of this land have observed a deep respect of nature and environment. Various ethics and norms were followed by the people of these eras for nature conservation. Hindu scriptures, deities, symbols and iconography in ancient Indian temples, ceremonies, rituals, customs, sacred ecology lead to a natural way for conserving the environment. The knowledge embedded in these scriptures, beliefs and rituals can be utilised for solving contemporary environmental problems.

Biography

Dr. Ritu Dhingra: Regional Vice Chair, South and East Asia IUCN CEESP, Environmental Law and Policy Analyst at Law Linkers and Company, Delhi.

Hanna Ylikangas: The Possibilities of Ecofeminist Christian Theology to an Anthropocene in Crisis

Ecofeminist theology addresses environmental concerns by attaching the environmental questions into a larger analysis of oppressions within religion. In ecofeminist theological analysis the main argument is that the oppression of women and the destruction of nature are interconnected, and that all oppressions are linked together as a web. This web of oppressions, including the destruction of non-human nature and oppression based on for example gender, class and race, support one another and the other oppressions advance the destruction of nature. My research is focused on the changes in the paradigms of ecofeminist theological analysis during the 21st century, as climate change has continued to accelerate in the 21st century. I will study how the Judeo-Christian heritage of human control over non-human nature has contributed to the destruction of nature, and on the other hand, what theological factors have worked as motives to protect the creation.

Gaialogical mythology is central to ecofeminist theological language. Gaia and God are seen as embracing and contributing to one another. Ecofeminist theology has since the 1970's emphasized the importance of practice alongside theological analysis, and

this practice-centered approach is still seen as crucial to ecofeminist theological analysis.

Biography

Hanna Ylikangas is a doctoral researcher in Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki. She began her doctoral research in 2021 and has since then also advanced her research at KU Leuven. She has demonstrated expertise in feminist Christian theology and she is conducting her doctoral research in ecofeminist theology and the transformations in its paradigmatic structures in the 21st century in the times of accelerating climate change. Her research questions include how do the paradigmatic structures of ecofeminist theology differ from feminist theology and from liberation theology, and how are the perspectives of the climate catastrophe visible in modern ecofeminist theology.

Irene Wolfstone: Critical Ecopedagogy and Radical Literacy for Designing Local Climate Change Adaptations in the Pluriverse

Indigenous cultures have the greatest longevity of all cultures, and thus have knowledges of adapting to past climate change events. I study Indigenous cultures to learn about the conditions for cultural continuity that enable their longevity and recommend that the design of climate change adaptations integrate Indigenous conditions for cultural continuity. My presentation focuses on only four Indigenous conditions for cultural continuity:

- living the cosmology of the Land,
- relationality with Land and kin,
- regenerating, and
- remembering ancestral memories.

These conditions are relevant to the conference themes of myth, ritual, and practice. Critical Ecopedagogy, as a method for facilitating radical (meaning rooted in earth) climate literacy for designing local climate change adaptations, is aligned with the values of Indigenous Knowledges, ecofeminist philosophy and other pluriversal knowledges. The principles of critical ecopedagogy nurtures ecocentric and nondual relationality with Earth and Climate. The goal of Critical Ecopedagogy is ecojustice – the liberation of Earth and Climate from domination by Modern humans.

Designers of climate change adaptations need knowledge of past climate events as well as the adaptive strategies of ancient cultures that survived past climate change events and the maladaptations that caused cultures to collapse in past climate change events. This knowledge is retained in ancestral memories.

The cosmological transition currently underway is adaptive. Cosmological shifts also occurred in past climate change events when old cosmologies lost their effectiveness for cultural survival. The current cosmological transition is marked by a shift from institutionalized religion to spiritual-but-not-religious (SBNR) to secular Earth-centred

practices that reject anthropocentrism and patriarchy where it is embedded institutionalized religion.

Bio: Irene Friesen Wolfstone, PhD, is an educator residing in Whiteshell Forest in the Canadian Shield. Living in a round house helps her to think outside the box. Motivated by deep concern for her grandchildren's future, she researches climate change adaptations. In her master's thesis, Irene explored how adults make the transition anthropocentrism to becoming ecocentric. Her doctoral dissertation focused on climate literacy for designing climate change adaptations based on Indigenous condition for cultural continuity.

15.00-15.15 *Schwarzschild*

Break

15.15-16.15

Future Fire: *Süring*

Russell C. Powell: Back to the Future: Climate Change, Apocalypticism, and Hope

A good example of activist groups turning to ecological modes of mythic and ritual practice is that of the Red Rebels, a global artistic collective associated with the environmentalist network Extinction Rebellion. In blood-red robes, faces painted white, the Red Rebels hold public vigils commemorating widespread inaction on climate change and the apocalyptic consequences that inaction will eventually cause. While such displays are important expressions of climate-related grief, this paper will explore what has been lost in activists' fixation on apocalypse in their production of ecological myths and ritual practice: that is, *the future* as a site of creativity, and so of hope.

By engaging primarily with the work of the critical theorist William Connolly, who, in recent works like *Facing the Planetary*, examines the turn to myth today as a "turn toward an insurrection of voices straining to be heard beneath the clamor of dominant stories," I will seek to interrogate the role the future has among environmentalist organizations engaged in their own projects to develop myths and rituals suitable for our age of climate crisis. Cognizant that the future, conceptually speaking, has historically been allied with the less-than-ecologically-sympathetic myths associated with Christian salvation, the priority of this paper will be to answer what the future *means* when so much of the apocalyptic imagination eschews our consideration of it.

Biography

Russell C. Powell's research is on the religious, ethical, and political resonances of contemporary environmental issues, particularly the religious dimension of American environmental thought. Prior to joining the Center for the Study of World Religions at

Harvard University as a postdoctoral research fellow, he taught at Boston College as a Core Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Theology and Ethics. He is currently completing a book manuscript focused on John Muir, the famed nineteenth-century conservationist and founder of the Sierra Club, and Muir's influence (for good and ill) on conceptions of the sacred in modern American environmental thought. Recently he served as editor of a two-volume special issue of the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* that reappraised various cornerstone American environmental thinkers in light of contemporary justice concerns over race, gender, and class.

Joshua Bergamin: Around One Fire: Building Community through Seasonal Ritual

For over 30 years, Edinburgh's Beltane Fire Festival has brought together artists, activists, and volunteers from all walks of life to re-imagine a Celtic seasonal ritual. The festival – performed each year by some 200+ co-creators – regularly attracts audiences in excess of 10,000, who climb a hill in the city centre to witness the May Queen kill and resurrect her consort, the Green Man, before welcoming the summer with a bright bonfire and a night of revelry.

Although the festival itself lasts but a single night, its intensity reflects an intensive two-month volunteer preparation period. While drawing heavily on local mythology and folk practices, the society does not pretend to recreate the past, but rather builds a connection to community and place by shared focus on the changing season, mediated by pedagogical theatre practices and immersion in (semi-)wild spaces.

In my talk, I reflect on my personal experience as a central festival 40haratana, offering an encapsulated case study of how story-telling and ritual practice can effect a reinterpretation of our relationship to place. Focusing on the phenomenology of immersive praxis, I describe how a body of – mostly oral – tradition and lore has developed into a living, local (micro-)culture that facilitates a profound change in participants' relationships with the natural world. I suggest that such practices form our identity to a deeper degree than – and in some cases, in spite of – the content of our rational beliefs, and argue that seasonal, community rituals offer an accessible and inclusive way to build healthier relationships with our social, natural and non-human worlds.

Biography

Joshua Bergamin is a philosopher at the University of Vienna and co-PI of the (Musical) Improvisation & Ethics artistic research project. After his Bas in Adelaide, Australia, he received an MA in Philosophy and Religious Studies from the University of Queensland, before a PhD in Philosophy from Durham University in the UK. Between (and alongside) his academic studies, he has travelled extensively, working with music, performance art, and community theatre.

Panel Discussion: *Volmer*

Earthly Things: Immanence, New Materialism and Planetary Thinking

Whitney Bauman, Christopher Key Chapple, Kevin Minister

Developing ecologically sound and socially just societies require going beyond nationalisms and localisms. and thinking with the planetary communities. This stimulates new modes of thought and creativity. We need stories, myths, and rituals that help make living within a planetary context meaningful. This panel will explore the relationships among immanence, new materialisms, religions and the emerging insights from planetary thinking. There are many forms of immanent, earth-affirming traditions in extant religions and philosophies. We will connect some of these with new forms of animism, materialism, pantheism, and romanticisms.

The book *Earthly Things: Immanence, New Materialism and Planetary Thinking*, Eds. Karen Bray, Whitney Bauman, Heather Eaton (Fordham: 2023), is the result of a 4-year seminar at the American Academy of Religion that brought together over 30 scholars to think about religions, immanence, new materialisms, and planetary thinking. This panel, composed of authors, will focus on how this new volume informs the need for planetary stories, myths, and rituals. It is increasingly obvious that we must challenge the “business as usual” motto of neoliberal globalization, the growing and dangerous calls for nationalisms, the weakening of democracies, and the volatile global alignments and conflicts.

Biography

Kevin Minister is Associate Professor of Religion at Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA. ministe@su.edu

Christopher Key Chapple is Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology and Director of the Master of Arts in Yoga Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. cchapple@lmu.edu

Whitney Bauman: Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, FL. wbauman@fiu.edu

Future Earth: Panel Discussion: Potsdam Lab (1)

Layered Places: Three Creative Approaches to Reimagine Storied Landscape in the Age of the Anthropocene

Tracy Fahey, Ciara Healy, Stefano Odorico

This panel offers a trio of responses to the theme of *Myth, Ritual, and Practice for the Age of Ecological Catastrophe* at The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture (ISSRNC) Potsdam Conference: from the research group *Layered Places*:

Real, Imagined, Reimagined, based at Limerick School of Art and Design, Technological University of the Shannon, Ireland.

The *Layered Places* research group centres around ideas of shared place and associated activities such as mapping, walking practices, and creating dialogues around space and place – site, location, and environment. It operates in the intersection of art and the wider communities it engages with, both rural and urban. It considers the shared meaning of place and how this is constituted through memory, customs, and folklore, but also how this identity shifts and changes to embrace migrant culture and the plurality of that experience. The group looks at how art practices can add to the experiences of those who inhabit specific spaces, and how it can usefully engage with ecological issues in the age of the Anthropocene. It adopts a range of methods of engagement from social engagement to environmental approaches.

In the proposal for the panel, three members of this group, Dr Ciara Healy, Dr Stefano Odorico, and Dr. Tracy Fahey, consider how adopting different creative approaches in curating, creative writing, digital storytelling and polyphony documentary, can offer ways for a complex, storied landscape to be reappraised, reinterpreted, and reimagined for the age of the Anthropocene.

Future Earth: Gundling

Aksel Johan Lund: That We Can Have Hope and a Future on Earth: An Ecocritical Reading of “Green” Collects from the Church of Norway

The basic supposition for liturgical theology is that what and how we pray, matters fundamentally for theology; even that prayer *is* theology. For this reason, the study of prayer is an essential theological endeavour. As awareness of the severity of climate change and other environmental crises is increasing within the Christian church, more and more churches now seek to incorporate care for the environment in their worship. Despite an increase in such novel liturgical practices, academic explorations of these practices remain scarce. This paper addresses this gap by conducting an ecotheological analysis of some of the liturgical prayers generally known as “collects”. The focus will be on selected collects specifically crafted for services emphasizing care for creation.

Drawing on hermeneutical, linguistic, and structural analyses, I examine three selected collects crafted for use in the Church of Norway. These concise yet theologically dense prayers – usually read at the start of the service – set the tone and encapsulate the service's theme. Through this analysis, I uncover distinct theological nuances in the divine invocation, the treatment of human-creation relationship, the emphasis of divine immanence and transcendence, and the purpose of liturgical prayer. The paper highlights the significant variations among these collects, offering valuable insights for both liturgical and ecotheological discourse.

Biography

Aksel Johan Lund is a theologian currently pursuing a PhD at VID Specialized University in Stavanger, Norway. He obtained his theological training at the same institution, with a thesis that investigated how worship practices emigrated into digital

spaces during the coronavirus pandemic. His research focuses on the intersection of Christian worship, preaching, and ecology, highlighting how religious practices can encourage ecologically sustainable lifestyles. He is an ordained minister in the Church of Norway and an outspoken vegan and advocate for animal rights.

Annika Benz: Between Scripture and (Anti-)Capitalism: Spiritualizing a German Climate Movement

The idea for the global social movement Extinction Rebellion (XR) was thought of as one of a series of social experiments by a British political collective in 2016 to influence existing climate action contexts and to co-negotiate the end of humanity as we know it. A key part of XR's idea of societies to come is a form of engaged spirituality, (re)connecting people to nature, to themselves, and to each other to combat white, Western "crises of disconnection". In my paper, I trace how spirituality has received a renewed sense of importance amidst internal crises within the German branch of the movement. I discuss the influences, discursive meanings and practices of things deemed "spiritual" by XR activists and how these resonate within a wider German climate movement space. The content of this paper is co-created with two female spiritual practitioners from XR, Lila and Cat, who grapple with often capitalistic, appropriating, and mainstream ideas of spirituality and aim to implement through their own practice a "truly" political spirituality that envisions a new way of being in the world that is inherently anti-capitalist, and able to influence a wide range of social movement actors.

Biography

Annika Benz is an activist and ethnographer, researching and teaching at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne, Germany. Within her academic and activist work set within the German climate movement, Annika focuses on the topics of gender and spirituality set amidst global influences and local circumstances, as well as recent and historical developments in German politics. She works mostly through methods of collaborative and public scholarship.

16.00–18.00

Break

19.00 Biosphäre Potsdam: Art Exhibition and Evening Programming

Echoes of the Future Artistic Interventions at Biosphäre Potsdam

The group exhibition „Echoes of the Future“ brings together the Potsdam and Berlin artists Cécile Wesolowski, Jenny Alten, Käthe Wenzel, Patricia Detmering, Swaantje Güntzel and Udo Koloska at the Biosphäre Potsdam. Curated by Tuçe Erel in collaboration with artifact e.V., they developed artistic interventions for the spectacular architecture. The exhibition opens parallel to the conference „Myth, Ritual, and Practice for the Age of Ecological Catastrophe.“ (17 – 19 May 2024) at the University of Potsdam). „Echoes of the Future“ focuses on narratives from the environmental crisis, on aesthetic practices that question and update the myths and rituals of past and present culture. Who narrates and which politics of the sayable determine the present? How is information passed on to future generations? What tools and methods are there to keep rituals alive? And what do rituals and culture mean in the midst of a progressive environmental crisis caused by human activity?

The artists combine ritual practices with innovative technology and create personal narratives that they want to pass on to their own generation and future generations. Photo prints, video works, augmented reality, sculptures and expansive installations will be installed in the midst of „planned nature“ in the green spaces of the biosphere. Scientists, art professionals and visitors to the Biosphäre are invited to enter into a joint and interdisciplinary discourse on the climate crisis. „Echoes of the Future“ aims to enable sensory-cultural experiences and raise visitors' awareness of their own scope for action.

Echoes of the Future is kindly supported by Pro Potsdam and LHP.

The Biosphäre Potsdam is a tropical garden and an important landmark in Potsdam. It is home to around 20,000 tropical plants and around 140 animal species on an area of around 5000 square metres. The former military site was reorganised for the 2001 Federal Garden Show. Today's biosphere differs significantly from traditional botanical gardens in its concept as a natural experience world and event location with changing nature-related programmes. Soil, water and air are used as design elements on several levels.

For information on the exhibition and press material, please contact Carola Uehlken: carolauehlken@gmail.com

Indian Classical Dance

Giridhar Raghunathan

Giridhar Raghunathan is a professionally trained Indian classical dancer. At the ESFRE conference 2024, Giridhar will be presenting 3 short dance pieces in bharatanatyam

(one of the eight classical Indian dances) style. He will begin his performance with a Natesha Kauthvam, an invocatory piece in praise of the Hindu god Siva. A Kavuthvam is a hymn in which the verses are recited in the form of a poem, followed by singing the verses in a musical tune. Hand gestures and rhythmic dance sequences accompany the recited poetry and the musical singing. The second piece is a Keerthanam, also in praise of Siva. Keerthanam means praise. This piece is choreographed in such a way that Siva's supreme celestial dancing is lauded by the devotee who witnesses the performance. The concluding piece is a padam which is Giridhar's original choreography. Padam refers to a love song. Giridhar has choreographed this piece as a celebration of love between two men. This is a novel choreography adhering to the traditional bharatanatyam format with an exception that male-male love is dealt in this choreography instead of the heterosexual love theme which is found predominantly in padam-s.

Vinotok: Performing Activism Event ~Bringing our Germanic and European Heritage Stories and Celebrations Back to Our Homeland.

Vinotok ceremonial, performing response to eco-catastrophe 19:30 at the Orangery of the Biosphere. Accompanied by full place-based regalia, archetypal Earth Personhood Embodiment Figures Vinotok Celebrants offer a joyous, provocative condensed version of a procession to the indictment and trial of the Great Grump. This concludes with the ritual Banishing of an effigy filled with audience participants' collective woes, and Beckoning a devoted, ongoing future, fighting for Mother Earth.

This Harvest celebration of Crested Butte, a small mountain community 2 miles (@3,219 km) high, is based on the 1,500 full-time residents' eco-culture of collaboration and commitment to each other to be able to survive there. Despite constantly opposing political ideologies that continue to threaten communities across America, this rural town's artists, activists, spiritual leaders, and elders used "Myth, Ritual and Practice" to create a celebration that has fought for over 47 years to stop a major extractive-mining conglomerate from destroying the town and the National Forest resources, and curated one week of the year where everyone agrees on what they all share: the stewardship of Place and Planet.

Founders, Marcie Telander, MA, LPC, REAT, Expressive Arts Ecotherapist, award-winning writer and author of *Acting Up!*, and Mark Schwiesow, award-winning screenwriter and arts documentarian, are two of the first originators in the U.S. of Cultural Animation and Earth-honoring communal healing through celebration arts. With the Vinotok Festivarian Arts Activists, we have drawn upon matrixial ritual, cathartic celebration, horizontal governance and matrifocal wisdom to create and bring you our 40-year Annual Passion Play. The Vinotok Festival features artist-made altars at the "Wastelands," theatre arts, drumming and dancing in the streets, Marriage to the Land and full embodiment of myth, to put Place Spirit first.

We invite you to join us for our sharing of this rousing "Passion Play" based on the Germanic community founders' personal stories, collected by Telander and Schwiesow in the 1970s, and Old Country healing myths and seasonal celebrations

drawn from ethnographic sharing of Northern European mining cultures and folk revolution, reclaimed for the present and future.

We will also offer a vibrant Grump Banishing ceremony at the end of the play, which may draw us all out into the Orangery Outdoor courtyard, depending on the weather.

SUNDAY

8.00-8.30

Meditation: Potsdam Lab

9.00-10.15

Keynote Address 2: Potsdam Lab

Alastair McIntosh: Calling Back the Flow of Life to the Community

What is the point of our teaching and research, unless it serves that which gives life? Ecology is the study of the home. More specifically, it is the study of plant and animal communities. But what is community for human beings in such disembedded times as these? Times that, to echo Moses, “Would that all God’s people be prophets.” From what deep resources might we reclaim ontological vision and agency, given our stage of biological, cultural and spiritual evolution? What patterns and examples might lead to openings of the way? Drawing on from his own work as well as, perhaps, from other themes of the conference, Alastair will offer some reflections in a manner befits a Scottish Sabbath morning’s sermon.

Alastair McIntosh is the author of books including *Soil and Soul* on land reform, *Poacher’s Pilgrimage* on spirituality, and *Riders on the Storm* on climate change. He is an honorary professor in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. His website is www.AlastairMcIntosh.com and Twitter @alastairmci.

10.15-10.30

Break: Schwarzschild

10.30-11.30

Present Earth: *Süiring*

David Krantz: The Legacy of the Myth of the Unnatural Jew: Anti-Semitism in and Exclusion from the American Environmental Movement

Over the past 40 years, much academic and grey literature has been developed to show how the laws, customs and history of Jews promote environmentalism, painting a

picture of Judaism as, at minimum, a faith tradition that holds many pro-environmental values, or, perhaps more accurately, a deep-green religion in which environmentalism is central to its proper practice. The often-unstated assumption has been that lack of Jewish-environmental education is a barrier to Jews practicing environmentalism — that the reason that more Jews do not partake in pro-environmental behavior is a lack of understanding of how Judaism actually is quite green, and that if only EcoJudaism were explicated for the Jewish public then Jews would proceed with greater pro-environmental behavior. However, significant barriers to Jewish environmentalism — including, perhaps most importantly, the history of the American environmental movement's anti-Semitism — have been overlooked by previous scholarship. I find that the European myth of the unnatural Jew — the myth of the alternatively subhuman and/or nonhuman Jew who does not belong in nature, such as the Jew as the devil, the Jew as the witch, the Jew as the vampire, the Jew as the goblin, and the Jew as the dwarf and the gnome — feeds into the myth held and promoted by the founding fathers of American environmentalism, that Jews are an unnatural, devolved species who do not belong in nature. The result of this myth has been both direct and indirect exclusion of Jews from the American environmental movement — an exclusion whose effect has reverberated through generations.

Biography

David Krantz is a U.S. National Science Foundation IGERT doctoral candidate at the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University, where he researches the intersection of environmental issues and culture, often through the lens of religion. He has published on environmental media, faith-based environmentalism and environmental activism. He is also a member of the board of directors of Interfaith Moral Action on Climate; a cofounder of Interfaith Oceans; and the president and cofounder of Aytzim: Ecological Judaism, an all-volunteer Jewish-environmental nonprofit.

Diana Lunkwitz: Queering Imperialist Nature Myths in Christian Mission History

What happens if we combine queer theory with myths about nature in colonial times? What can be created if we reread missionary's reports with an approach on queerness? Many Christian missionaries died early on the mission field. Because of climatic changes, diseases, and dangers in the environmental surroundings they often survived only the first days or months. However, later missionaries became hunters and speakers for the animal others. The paper examines texts and visuals by Basel missionaries who worked in West African ecosystems. Their attempts to silence, 'cultivate' and dominate ecological elements present a heterosexual performance of gender.

Local religions and humans were classified as uncultivated wilderness, but the queer agency of the animated environment also irritated and scared those foreigners to death. Rethinking mission history on the cross-species continuum along with DONNA

HARAWAY, MEL CHEN, CATRIONA SANDILANDS, and JOAN ROUGHGARDEN shows the interconnectivity of sexual, social, political, and environmental thought. It deconstructs the dichotomy of culture/nature and of man/woman as well. Moreover, it decenters the *conditio humana* based on acting as a geological force (Chakrabarty 2021) – to initiate a queer-ecological turn in humanocentric religious history and the history of commercial globalisation (Mbembe 2017).

Biography

Diana Lunkwitz is a Research Associate in Religious Studies and Global Christianity at the University of Hamburg. She holds a diploma in Protestant theology and defended her doctoral thesis on the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1893 at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. Here she lectured on religion(s) and ecology for three years. Her research interests include religious history in a planetary age, African Christianity and Islam, esotericism, religions in the ecological crisis as well as queer ecology and theology.

Future Earth: *Volmer*

Paul Spencer Sochaczewski: Eco-Sisyphus: Getting Out of Our Heads and into Our Hearts. Can Better Communications Improve Our Optimism Factor?

Are you optimistic about our relationship with nature?

By many measures (treaties, laws, environmental ministries, green business, overall awareness, concerned and committed individuals, school curriculums, technological advances) we should be winning. But, as a glance at any day's headlines in any newspaper in the world will tell us, like Sisyphus, it seems we are taking one step forward, and two back in our fight to save nature.

This well-illustrated, challenging presentation looks at how conservationists, at all levels, might use eco-myths, rituals, and beliefs to promote respect for nature. Using real-life examples from different corners of the world, participants will be offered suggestions on how we might better communicate environmental themes to a general audience. What roles can myth and rituals play in mobilizing a conservation social movement? What makes an effective public awareness campaign? How can a scientist or academic write popular articles without sacrificing accuracy? How does our innate "need" for nature relate to the modern world. Can the "soft" arguments of cultural and spiritual relationships with nature complement the "hard" arguments of sustainability, economics, and development? Put more bluntly, can the "soft" arguments successfully combat widespread greed, ego, and arrogance?

Biography

Paul Sochaczewski has written some 600 articles, most with environmental themes, for publications including *The New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Geographical*. His 20 books include *An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles*, "Look Here, Sir, What a Curious Bird," and *Soul of the Tiger* (with Jeff McNeely). His latest, *A Conservation Notebook*, is a memoir of the 50+ years he has spent working in nature

conservation, including many years with WWF-International — as head of international campaigns and later head of the Global Faith and Environment Program. His writing handbook *Share Your Journey* and related writing workshops help academics learn how to tell their personal stories in an interesting way without sacrificing accuracy. He is based in Switzerland.

Ana Honnacker and Asmus Trautsch: Against indifference: How to cultivate rebellious eco-emotions

In the growing awareness of multiple and severe ecological catastrophes, emotional responses such as eco-anxiety or solastalgia have become more widespread and intense. These eco-emotions have been discussed as a medium for reflection and as motivational resource (or hindrance) for social and political action. However, from empirical research it seems at least obvious that emotions have become globally widespread whose cognitive, evaluative and volitional dimensions are directed to the environment and its ongoing destruction in the Anthropocene.

A pressing political and ethical question is, whether emotions that have proven to work as motivational source for action such as anger could be sustained or revitalised without creating pathological disorders such as depression or ethical indifference. For the change of behaviours and attitudes cannot be motivated by short term affects alone if it shall serve as enabler of social-ecological transformation.

In our talk, we want to investigate the conditions of cultivating eco-emotions as motivational source as well as their social regulation through rituals. We intend to explore the role of certain practices for cultivating and sustaining non-pathological eco-emotions by repeatedly generating and structuring them in social and ecological spaces. We'll discuss how variable ritualistic and aesthetic practices inspired by mourning and gratitude rituals from monotheistic and indigenous traditions may cultivate eco-grief and what we would like to call eco-gratitude.

Biography

Dr. Ana Honnacker is Romano-Guardini Guest Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the LMU Munich and works as Post-Doc at the Hochschule für Philosophie. Beforehand, she held positions at the Hannover Institute for Philosophical Research (2014-2020) and the Technical University of Darmstadt (2009-2013). Honnacker teaches regularly at the University of Hildesheim and is member of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Religionsphilosophie (German Society for Philosophy of Religion) and co-founder of the German Pragmatism Network. Her research interests cover philosophy of religion (religion and modernity), political philosophy (democracy as a form of life), as well as environmental philosophy (climate change and cultural transformation).

Dr. Asmus Trautsch is a Berlin-based independent researcher in philosophy, lecturer at the University of Leipzig (2024/2025), poet and curator. He completed his PhD in philosophy at Humboldt University Berlin and was visiting scholar at Columbia University, before he taught at Technical University Dresden, Allegheny College,

Greifswald University, and University of Leipzig. He curates interdisciplinary formats such as festivals, debates and exhibitions linking philosophy, sciences and humanities with the arts and activism. His research focuses on aesthetics (tragedy, philosophy of music, philosophy of literature), ethics and environmental philosophy (Anthropocene discourse).

Future Earth: Potsdam Lab

Erik Assadourian: Following the Gaian Way: On the Development of an Ecospiritual Path to Navigate the Polycrisis

Is it possible to create an Earth-centric “Gaian” religion? Not magical but scientifically-grounded? Not deifying Gaia but recognizing that Gaia is sacred: the spiritual and physical ground of being for all beings? This is what the Gaian Way has been working towards for the past five years. This organization, religion, and community has been cultivating a sacred way to live on/in Earth and in right relationship with Gaia, which all humans are part of and are utterly dependent on.

Over the years, we have developed a unique path, with rituals that make life feel more sacred (rather than atheistic environmentalism, which often has foregone these, to great loss). We punctuate the day with nature-based meditation, the week with weekly nature services, the month with fasting on the new and full moon, and the year with marking the wheel of the year (equinoxes, solstices, and cross-quarter days). These come in addition to, not instead of, active efforts to heal Gaia and our relationship with Gaia.

This effort reveals one possible future: a synthesis between the Indigenous ways and the missionary religions that dominate today’s spiritual world. Gaianism, too, is missionary, as it must be to spread, but it is based in an Indigenous understanding of Earth-dependence along with scientific understandings of the limits to growth, sustainability, and Gaia Theory. And, being this-worldly, it has the potential to create meaning while also shifting humans from a detrimental to a healing influence on the Gaian system.

This presentation will introduce the audience to this new path, providing an overview of the Gaian philosophy, practices, rituals, and unique efforts (such as adding non-human board members to our board), that can inspire deeper engagement with the living Earth for other organizations and religious groups.

Biography

Erik Assadourian is the director of the Gaian Way, an eco-religious philosophy, organization, and community founded in 2019. He has been a sustainability researcher, writer, and communicator since he started his career in 2001 as a researcher with the Worldwatch Institute. He worked with Worldwatch until it wound down in 2017. There he directed or co-directed seven books, focusing on consumerism, eco-education, global security, economic degrowth, and ecological philosophy. He writes a weekly Gaian Reflection at Gaianway.org, directs the organization, and helps

coordinates the Gaian community, hosting online events and a local Gaian guild in Connecticut.

Arthur Obst: Gaia, Place, and the Peril of the Planetary

Anticipating the Gaia hypothesis in a lesser-known article of writing, Aldo Leopold (1979) offered one of the most radical epistemic and ontological departures possible from conventional thinking: “[One might] regard the earth’s parts— soil, mountains, river, atmosphere, etc. — as organs or parts of organs, of a coordinated whole, each part with a definite function.” In Leopold’s most influential work, *A Sand County Almanac*, he sketched a land ethic that lowered the human species to a “plain member and citizen” of the natural community, not unlike a species before a God before Gaia herself.

Yet, the ecologist James Lovelock who would pronounce the “Gaia Hypothesis” in a best-selling 1972 book did not think that the possibility of a self-regulating, organic whole called *Gaia* need check humanity’s hubris. Instead, he believed, humanity’s very *uniqueness* as a species might bestow us the unique roll of a planetary *nervous system*. Rather than reverence, and the humility integral to such an attitude, this planetary picture of Gaia *elevates* humanity to “planetary managers,” “Gaia-engineers,” or even a “God-species” (Marris, 2011; Pearce, 2019; Lynas, 2011). This outlook threatens to encourage technocratic planetary tinkering and reflect an attitude paradoxically in line with dominant, and profoundly disenchanting, political imaginaries of unfettered economic growth (e.g., Asafu-Adjaye, et al., 2015).

In this paper, I explicate and disentangle these two polarized visions of Gaia and argue that the latter — that which embraces humanity as Gaia engineers — is politically operative at present. This entails that environmentalists who may yet be drawn to a humble and reverent interpretation of the “Gaia Hypothesis” should nonetheless be deeply skeptical of it. Moreover, I suggest that the integral role *place* plays in myth and ritual may be especially undermined by dominant visions of Gaia.

Arthur is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Princeton with joint appointments in the University Center for Human Values and the High Meadows Environmental Institute. His research lies at the intersection of traditional environmental thought and the ongoing climate crisis. In the past, he has defended the moral responsibility of individuals to reduce their contributions to climate change, critiqued the Futurist valence of specific strands of contemporary environmentalism, and co-authored the introductory text *Dialogues on Climate Justice* (Routledge, 2023). In future work, he seeks to demonstrate the enduring relevance of American wilderness philosophy to present politics and to apply this analysis to emerging environmental practices including rewilding and solar geoengineering,

Future Earth Online: Gundling

Mel Cowans: Solarpunk: Imagining an Emancipatory Future

Emerging from Brazil in the early 2000s, “Solarpunk” imagines an emancipatory future of ecological harmony and social justice, often drawing inspiration from mythology and alternative histories. This paper examines the role of religion, myth, and speculative thought in shaping Solarpunk futurisms, and how “science-as-myth” can play an important role in its rejection of dystopian pessimism and of the desacrilisation of modernity.

Mary-Jane Rubenstein’s concept of “pantheologies” offers a model for reconciling the technology, mythology, and social & ecological activism emphasised in Solarpunk. Her work critiques the tendency of modernity to oppose materiality and science with religion and myth, arguing for new “pantheological” frameworks that embrace both mystical and scientific ways of knowing. Applying Rubenstein’s insights, this paper explores how Solarpunk synthesizes ecologically-oriented mythologies, “science-as-myth”, indigenous ways of knowing, speculative futures, systems theory, and cutting-edge science to articulate a powerful alternative sociotechnical imaginary.

Beyond analyzing Solarpunk’s fusion of mythology, science and ecology, this paper considers how Solarpunk itself functions as a contemporary mythmaking project. As an imaginative response to existential threats of climate change and inequality, Solarpunk’s visions of technologically-enhanced harmony between nature and society can be understood as modern myths of renewal, etching out spaces of hope and possibility in our present “poly-crisis” world.

Biography

Mel is a Visiting Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, University of Cambridge. Their research looks at global catastrophic risk, futures, emerging technologies, and their interactions with contemporary religion.

They are interested in secular-spiritual mythologies of the future, such as the ‘apocalypse/utopia’ binary, digital-biological enhancement and space expansion as processes of transcendence, and technological fatalism. They also co-run a reading group covering different perspectives on the long-term future.

Mel holds a BA in History, specialising in religion and politics, as well as an MPhil in Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion from the University of Cambridge.

Inna Häkkinen: Narrating Pagan Spiritual Practices as an Act of Resilience within the Tierratrauma Experienced Community: Spiritual Radioactivity, Permaculture Ethics and Slow Hope

Appeal to pagan spiritual practices, stemmed from the sacredness of nature and the spiritual meanings of natural cycles of birth, growth, and death, is regarded both as among conditions of survival in the post-traumatic/post-apocalyptic society and as a power regulation over the societal needs and values in the radiation contaminated area (that the Chernobyl Exclusion zone is/was). Amalgamated with Orthodox Christianity beliefs in hope for protection and healing and the Soviet atheistic policies, the paganism with its spiritual practices and beliefs of being manifest within nature appears to be a tool of understanding of the post-Chernobyl world via reflecting

perpetual fears and hopes regarding radiation risks (Romashko 2019). The focus is made on studying the literary imaginaries of implementing paganism and its beliefs of permaculture practices (Chapman 2015) for physical/spiritual survival in the radiation contaminated area. Such approach to studying the narrative tools of situating paganism practices under permaculture's perspective not only contributes to envisioning resilience in narrating nuclear 'tierratrauma' (Albrecht 2017) -experienced communities, but also facilitates the debates on the spiritualization of science (via 'spiritual radioactivity' discussions). The special focus is made on situating agricultural activities within paganism beliefs from the 'slow hope' (Mauch, 2017) for narrating the transformations of the value paradigm of the tierratraumatic community. The presentation appeals to the literary imaginaries of pagan rituals as resilience within permaculture ethics in Chernobyl nuclear fictional writings such as Pavlo Arie's *At the beginning and at the end of times* (in origin: Павло Ар'є «На початку і наприкінці часів», 2015, Ukraine) and Andrea White's *Radiant Girl* (2008, US) with references to their visual presentation in nuclear graphic novels, such as Johanna Aulen's *Chernobyl Dogs* (in origin: Tšernobylin koirat, 2022, Finland), Kateryna Mikhaylitsyna's *The Flowers near the Fourth* (in origin: Катерина Міхаліцина «Квіти біля четвертого», 2022, Ukraine), and Helen Bate's *The Lost Child of Chernobyl* (2021, UK), where envisioning the literary imaginaries of pagan practices in fictional writings with intermedial ecocriticism's perspective (Bruhn, 2020) as well as environmental hermeneutics (van Buren 1995; Drenthen 2017) contributes to shifting from 'survival' narrative to 'resilience' for setting the well-being environment of nuclear 'tierratrauma' experienced communities.

Biography

Inna Häkkinen, PhD, is a researcher of Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub, the University of Helsinki. Her current project is focused on researching the literary dimensions of nuclear energy within energy literary narrative studies. She (co-)teaches 'Nuclear Narratives' and 'Chernobyl Studies' courses at the University of Helsinki (Aleksanteri Institute). After defending her PhD in Literary Studies (Dnipro, Ukraine), she has been a research fellow of Erasmus Mundus mobility programs (Bologna, 2008; Turku, 2011-2012), Cambridge Colleges Hospitality Scheme (2013), SUSI (Ohio, 2016), Open Society Foundation/Artes Liberales Foundation (Warsaw, 2016-2017), JYU Visiting Fellowship Program (Jyväskylä, 2021), PIASt Fellowship Program (Warsaw, 2021), iASK Fellowship Program (Köszeg, 2023). Her general research interests lie within environmental humanities, energy humanities, ecocriticism, nuclear criticism, literary energy narrative studies, world energy literature, nuclear fiction, Chernobyl fiction, energy ethics.

11.45-12.45

Future Earth: *Süring*

Anders Melin: The Ethics of Urban Biodiversity Management Contributions from Posthumanism and Ecospirituality

There is currently an increasing interest in protecting biodiversity in urban settings. Traditionally, biodiversity conservation has been focused on wilderness areas and it has often been assumed that heavy human presence is incompatible with biodiversity protection. However, contemporary approaches to biodiversity protection are instead based on the insight that greenspaces can have an ecological value even if they are partly created by humans.

This paper discusses how urban biodiversity management can be understood as an ethical and spiritual practice. The theoretical point of departure is the literature on Christian ecotheology and environmental ethics, such as Hart (2006) and Scheid (2016) who both have developed an ecological interpretation of the common good tradition. Mark I. Wallace's (2019) proposal for a Christian animism will also be considered. The focus on urban biodiversity contributes to the theological and philosophical debate, because most of what has been written so far on the ethics of biodiversity protection concerns "wild" biodiversity.

Biography

Anders Melin has a Master in Theology and a PhD from the interdisciplinary Department of Water and Environmental Studies at Linköping University, Sweden. He completed his PhD on the relationship between environmental politics and ethics in 2001 and has thereafter worked with different projects on environmental ethics. Since 2011 he is employed at the Dep. of Global Political Studies at Malmö University as lecturer in Social Philosophy and Ethics, and from 2013 he is Associate Professor (Docent) in Ethics at Malmö University. Melin is currently the PI of a project on energy scenarios and justice and another project on value conflicts in urban biodiversity management.

Ceit Langhorne and Linde De Vroey: Uncovering the Otherworld: Rewilding, Enchantment and Cultural Revitalisation in the Scottish Highlands

This paper explores how rewilding enchants and connects people with place, nature and wildlife through reference to a non-dualist, relational view of "wild(erness)" encountered in the Gaelic language and culture of the Scottish Highlands. Rewilding gained momentum as a new conservation approach and philosophy, but is also criticized as "re-enchantment", romanticizing wilderness/the past and prioritizing sentiment over science. We provide a different perspective on rewilding as an enchanting practice that *resists* the modern disenchanting view of nature by combining philosophy, history and ethnography. Starting with an assessment of the *critical* value of enchantment in a disenchanting world, we subsequently stress the crucial role of cultural revitalization and biocultural heritage in rewilding. Focussing on the recent establishment of *Trees for Life's* Rewilding Centre (Glenmoriston) and efforts to present local Gaelic cultural heritage equally to natural heritage, we show how place-names, stories, poems and songs invite humans into a different world. Here, wild elements of

the landscape re-emerge as part of the human life-world and the “Otherworld” (*An Saoghal Eile*), the enchanted realm of folklore and wildlife. We compare this Gaelic view of wild to the modern idea of wild(erness), stressing relational and non-dualist aspects of the former. Integrating place-based, enchanted views of nature within scientific ecological restoration, we argue, can be a crucial step in establishing rewilding’s transformative potential.

Biography

Linde De Vroey (she/her) is a PhD researcher in environmental philosophy at the University of Antwerp, funded by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). Her research focusses on the cultural and counter-cultural aspects of rewilding, acknowledging the relevance of history, memory, tradition and place-based culture in ecological restoration. Taking a field-based approach to philosophy, she combines global frameworks with research in local rewilding and restoration projects, mainly in Scotland. Linde also co-founded the Flemish creative audio-collective *Wilderhistories*, where she creates theatrical-historical tours in nature and the philosophical podcast *Wildernissen*.

Kate (Ceit) Langhorne is a 2nd year PhD student, based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (Scotland’s Gaelic College), University of the Highlands and Islands. Her research centres around the Gaelic heroic tradition; shared with Ireland and the Isle of Man. Her focus is the transmission of oral and textual narratives, as well as the conditions and motivations behind situating these in localities across the Highlands; through place names, and localized ballads and stories. Kate also works in a freelance capacity as Creative Practitioner in Gaelic Cultural Heritage; using a variety of creative media to revitalize traditions and communicate a certain Gaelic perception of the natural world.

Panel: *Volmer*

Karen Blincoe, Sonja Ohlsson: Faithful Pathways – Empowering People for the Future

Faith and spirituality play a central role in addressing the climate crises, enabling people to look at the problems from a different as well as a holistic perspective. Whether dealing with adaptation, mitigation, or finance including loss and damage issues fair and ethical decisions must be made to achieve appropriate and long-lasting results.

There are recent examples of initiatives where technology-based solutions have addressed environmental problems without regard for the people they affect. These attempts tell us that lasting solutions must encompass all aspects of the human condition not least the spiritual aspects which have been key to human well-being and survival through all of history.

The holistic approach empowers people to look at the state of the planet and future generations with compassion, love, and care and ensures that appropriate solutions are implemented. It moves actors to advocate for just decisions and motivates people to embrace sustainable lifestyles, promote responsible stewardship of the environment, and foster harmonious relationship with nature.

In the face of ecological catastrophe, the victims of climate and environmental crises need tools to access their inner resources and strength for survival. They must find ways to actively take responsibility for themselves, their families, and communities. This encourages faith actors to take a more active role in supporting people with regard to their inner practices and address aspects such as living and working sustainably, protecting the environment and biodiversity.

The presentation will include abstracts from case-based research showing how the above can be addressed - the main case being the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative.

Biography

Dr. Karen Blincoe is an advisor and lecturer in sustainability and related fields. Her context in addressing sustainability is based both on her academic research as well as from 30 years' experience in the field. Karen is former visiting Professor at the University of Brighton and Director of Schumacher College, UK as well as Founder of the ICIS Center and Co-founder/Director of Chora 2030, DK. Karen got her PhD in sustainability from Kingston University 2020 and turned the thesis into a book 'Achieving Sustainability: The Ultimate Human Challenge' published by Springer Nature 2022.

Sonja Ohlsson is the national coordinator of Brahma Kumaris in Denmark, and is a meditation teacher with the Prison Service in Copenhagen. In 2009, Sonja was instrumental in developing the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative in order to add the inner dimension to discussions at the UN climate change and biodiversity conferences. She has been actively participating in the annual COP climate conferences since 2009, and the biannual biodiversity COP since 2012. Sonja conducts green retreats for the BK community around the world, and has also travelled with the lecture series on Healthy Mind, Healthy Planet.

Vinotok Panel Discussion: Potsdam Lab

Vinotok: A Case Study: The Power of Art, Myth & Resistance: A "Performing Activism" Response to Eco Catastrophy *Marcie Telander, Mark Schwiesow, Eric Dimarco, Chad Reich, Heather Clark, Lisa Rueth, Jo Corbin*

The founders gather to discuss the case-study of community activism forged with art, the natural world, cathartic ritual, sacred activism, co-creation, and myth. Panelists will share how we use this as an antidote to impacts of a post colonization culture of extractivism and anthropocentrism which underpins our eco-catastrophes. Audience members will hear firsthand how a 46-year, multi-generational movement had the

power to shape the mythos and ethos of a community through animation and spiritual containers that invite people to *unlearn, remember, rewild and reclaim* a time before patriarchal domination.

The celebration of Crested Butte, a small mountain community at the end of the road in the Colorado Rockies is held in a true village – where the people rely on Nature and each other to be able to survive there. Despite constantly opposing political ideologies that continue to threaten communities across America, this rural town’s artists, activists, spiritual leaders, and elders used “*Myth, Ritual and Practice*” to create a celebration that has fought for over 47 years to stop a major extractive-mining conglomerate from destroying the town and the National Forest resources, and curated one week of the year where everyone agrees on what they all share: *the stewardship of Place & Planet*.

We will present a short video version of Telander’s TEDXTalk, *Transforming Community: Celebrating Our Stories and Spirit of Place* based on ritual as activism, focusing specifically on how we protect our landscape and watershed, simultaneously cultivating community through deep ceremonial practice. This will be followed by a short overview of other eco-society projects Telander and Schwiesow have helped establish in widely varying locations and demographics in both rural communities and cities across the United States with similar results.

The focus of the panel discussion will be the case study of Vinotok and how community activism forged with art, the natural world, cathartic ritual, sacred activism and healing myth can serve as an antidote to the impacts of the culture of extractive consumerism which underpins our eco-catastrophes.

Biographies

Founders, Marcie Telander, MA, LPC, REAT, Expressive Arts Ecotherapist and Mark Schwiesow, award-winning screenwriter and arts documentarian, are two of the first originators in the US of Cultural Animation and Earth-honoring communal healing through celebration arts. Drawing upon matrixial ritual, celebration, horizontal governance and matrifocal wisdom, the Vinotok Festival uses artist-made altars at the “Wastelands”, theater arts, drumming & dancing in the streets, Marriage to the Land and full embodiment of myth to put Place Spirit first

Marcie Telander: Founder, Godmother, Eco-Arts Activist, Myth holder, Matriarch

Mark Schwiesow: Co-Founder, Godfather, Filmmaker, Community Organizer

Isabel Russell: Isabel Popke Russell: University of Colorado Boulder BS, American Society of Civil Engineers, Vinotok Lady of Light

Katie Joy Folz: Katie is a trained educator, performance artist, counselor, ordained secular minister, and seasoned celebration artist & officiant. She is a passionate student of life who is most interested in the understanding of human behavior and consciousness. Her life’s work is dedicated to creating opportunities for people to find deeper connections to themselves, to each other, and to the world around them.

As a guidance counselor specializing in Satir's Family Systems Therapy, Katie works with individuals and families to support transformational change and growth, internally and systemically. In her ministry practice, she weaves together a tapestry of faith, ancient Earth-centered spiritual rituals, and religious teachings, enabling her to connect with people from all backgrounds and traditions. Katie works closely with clients and groups to create sacred ceremonies celebrating all life transitions from birth through death, as well as large community celebrations centered around seasonal holy-days and creative arts expressions. She is a visionary artist, an empathic intuitive, and a channel for energy to move through as needed.

Heather Clark

Eric DiMarco

Chad Reich

Online Session Future Air: Gundling

Hannah Fitchett: Culture change or climate change: the tension between urgency and radical change in Extinction Rebellion

Along with theatrical direct-action, the Extinction Rebellion movement's efforts to 'to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse' (XRUK, 2023) are also characterised by efforts to build 'regenerative cultures'. Extinction Rebellion (also known as XR) has brought the concept of building regenerative cultures into the climate movement zeitgeist, yet the descriptions XR offers of such cultures and how they are built are largely abstract. Through 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork with XR in London between November 2021 and August 2022 I explored how activists on the ground understood the concept of regenerative cultures and engaged with it in practice. This paper examines a tension I encountered during this fieldwork between efforts to build regenerative cultures, and the urgency of climate action. Through ethnographic examples, I illustrate how this tension resulted from the coexistence of two distinct narratives about the climate crisis within XR. I argue that while urgency often conflicted with efforts to build regenerative cultures, the coexistence of these two narratives also strengthened the impact of efforts to prefigure alternative forms of relationality and helped sustain activism: both of which were central to building regenerative cultures.

Biography

Hannah Fitchett is a ESRC funded PhD student in social anthropology at the University of St Andrews. Her research explores efforts to create ethical and ontological change in response to environmental breakdown, within the Extinction Rebellion (XR) movement. Through ethnographic fieldwork with XR in London and Madrid, she explores what XR's efforts to build 'regenerative cultures' (intentionally

loosely defines as cultures based on 'care' for oneself, others, and the Earth) mean to activist, and what praxes they are perceived to involve. Hannah practices engaged anthropology, engaging as an activist as well as an anthropologist during her fieldwork, and her writing.

Joana Martins: Reconnecting and Regenerating for the Future: The Engagement of Ecologically-oriented Contemporary Pagans with Ecological Myths, Rituals and Practices in Portugal and the United Kingdom

Contemporary Paganism is a religious and spiritual movement that includes heterogeneous paths and currents, most based on pre-Christian traditions, that hold nature as sacred. At the same time, they influence and are influenced by environmental movements, following, in some cases ecologically-oriented practices. At the same time, they mobilise several approaches from Gaian to Ecofeminist, combining those with ritual and magical practices, in order to make sense of the world facing social and environmental crisis.

This paper, based on the ethnographic work conducted with Ecologically-oriented Contemporary Pagans in Portugal and the United Kingdom, from 2018 to 2021, will discuss how in their everyday lives they engage in ecological issues. It will explore how they create rituals and practices implicit and explicitly environmental, all the while mobilising Gaian, Dark Green and Ecofeminist approaches, participating in widespread calls for transforming, reconnecting, and regenerating relationships with all forms of life and to sustain the future.

Biography

Joana Martins (She/Her) is a Portuguese Anthropologist at CRIA, Centre for Research in Anthropology, with a Ph.D. in Anthropology (2023) from Iscte-Lisbon University Institute. She graduated (2015) and postgraduated (2017) also in Anthropology. She has been researching Contemporary Paganism in Portugal since 2016 and approached British Contemporary Paganism to an extent during her PhD research. Her research interests focus on the lived religion and spirituality of contemporary pagans, gender, care, environmental and ecological questions, power, politics, and ritual creativity. Her approaches are inspired by feminist anthropological theory and methodology.

12.45 Closing words: *Schwarzschild*