

# AMBIVALENCES OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Perspectives from the Environmental Humanities

June 24-26, 2022

University of Augsburg

Opening conference of the International Doctorate Program

## UMWELTDENKEN



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# Ambivalences Of Ecological Transformation

## *Perspectives from the Environmental Humanities*

Opening Conference of the International Doctorate Program (IDK) Um(Welt)Denken  
The Ecological Transformation of Society; WZU, University of Augsburg & Rachel Carson Center, LMU

**June 24-26, 2022, University of Augsburg**

**Friday 24.06.2022** Building T (“Hörsaalzentrum Physik”), Lecture Hall 1001

14:00 - 14:15 Matthias Schmidt (IDK Speaker) | *Opening Address*

14:15 - 15:45 **Ambivalences in Politics and Public Discourse**

Natalie Rauscher | *The Role of Ambivalent Discourses in Disaster Relief in the USA*

W. P. Malecki | *Knowing without Caring: The Ambivalences of Public Environmental Attitudes, and How to Address Them through Creative Communications*

Ollivier Bodin | *The Ambivalence of Economic Policy Discourses at the Example of The European Economic Governance*

15:45 - 16:15 Coffee/Tea Break and **Poster Session 1**, Entrance Hall

16:15 - 17:45 **Tensions around Toxicity**

Sebastian Lundsteen | *In Praise of Ambivalence: Cautious Reflections on Pollution and Remediation*

Karen Holmberg | *Toxicity, Tensions, and Creative Communication of Coastal Risks*

Simone M. Müller and Angeliki Balayannis | *Toxic Commons: Defining a New Relational Epistemology*

17:45 - 18:15 Coffee/Tea Break, Entrance Hall

18:15 **Keynote:**

**Debra Davidson** | *Getting to Zero: Interdisciplinarity, Intersectionality, and Emotions in Social Responses to Climate Change*

Evening Reception at the WZU, Ground Floor, Innocube

**Saturday 25.06.2022** Building H (“Juristische Fakultät”), Lecture Hall 1001

9:00 - 10:30 **“I beg to differ.”**

Roundtable on *Terminologies of Expressing Difference and Differentiation* with Angeliki Balayannis, Anne Rademacher, Marcus Wagner, Hubert Zapf | moderated by Simone M. Müller

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee/Tea Break and **Poster Session 2**, Entrance Hall

11:00 - 13:00 **Literature, Ambivalence, and Transformation**

Lisa Höller | *Instability, Impurity, Monstrosity – Engaging Contaminated Ways of Being*

Marina Pingler | *Alternative Climate Imaginaries: Re-Imagining Climate Futures in Speculative Fiction*

Jonathan Sarfin | *Risk, Anthropic Ambivalence, and Describing the More-Than-Human in Alexandra Kleeman’s Something New Under the Sun*

Victor Ferretti | *Transformation and Colonial Tropes*

Lunch Break

14:15 - 15:15 **Ambivalent Industries**

Jesse Ritner | *Impossible Futures. A Historical Perspective on Paralysis: The United States Ski Industry*

Rafael Hernández Westpfahl | *Mining Towards Sustainability? The Political Ecology of “Green Metals” Extraction in Mexico*

15:15 - 15:45 Coffee/Tea Break, Entrance Hall

15:45 - 17:15 **Parallel Workshops by IDK Doctoral Students**

**Workshop A:** *What Does Climate Change Look Like?* | Seminar Room 1011a

Christian Schnurr, Felix Treutner, Jasmijn Visser, Laura Fumagalli, Maximilian Pieper

**Workshop B:** *Ambivalent Mapping: Mapping Ambivalence* | Seminar Room 1012

Christopher Klapperich, Daler Kaziev, Elisabeth Schuster, Livia Cahn, Lukas Emrich, Fizza Batool

**Workshop C:** *A Multispecies RPG* | Seminar Room 1013

Floris Winckel, Katharina Karrenbauer, Lakshmi Dilipkumar, Pia Wimmer, Sven Seelinger

18:00 **Keynote:**

Frank Uekötter | *Will We Ever Come to Terms with the Green Revolution?*

**Sunday 26.06.2022** Building H (“Juristische Fakultät”), Lecture Hall 1001

9:30 - 11:00 **Transitions and Their Limits**

Rocío Hiraldo | *Integrating Labor and Environmental Goals in Just Ecological Transitions: The Southern European Case*

Nisha Paliwal | *Farming the Wind: Exploring Energy Transition in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, India*

Samuel Coren | *Only Disconnect: The Promise and Pitfalls of Green Infrastructure in a Rainy City*

11:00 - 11:30 Coffee/Tea Break and **Poster Session 3**, Entrance Hall

11:30 - 13:00 **Parallel Workshops**

***Workshop D: Second: Images of Fieldwork***

Entrance Hall

Indrawan Prabaharyaka and Teresa Staudt

***Workshop E: Engaging People to Climate Actions Through a Combined Emotions-Immersion Approach***

Seminar Room 1011a

François Dumont

13:00 - 13:15 **Concluding Remarks**



*When we first published our call for papers, we did not know what to expect; we, in fact, kept our topic deliberately open and were curious to see what the larger Environmental Humanities community associates with the “ambivalences” that inhere in ecological transformation. Submissions came from many different disciplines and countries and covered an extraordinarily wide range of topics and case studies. We were incredibly impressed by the enormous spectrum and originality of the methodologies, theoretical approaches, and practical experiments suggested in those paper proposals. The sense of concern and engagement that echoed through all of them was unusual, even in a field like the Environmental Humanities that is used to combining “the head and the heart” in its scholarly endeavors while also reflecting on how emotions figure in past and contemporary approaches to environmental themes and topics. Choosing from about forty equally engaged, inspirational, and exciting abstracts was not easy, then, but we quickly identified central thematic issues that we felt an urge to know more about.*

*We were also thrilled to see that there was a great fit between those abstracts and the two keynotes we had invited: In her lecture “Getting to Zero,” Debra Davidson (U. of Alberta) will talk about “Interdisciplinarity, Intersectionality, and Emotions in Social Responses to Climate Change,” while Frank Uekötter (U. of Birmingham) asks whether we “Will We Ever Come to Terms with the Green Revolution.” It is in conversation with these keynotes that the following panels promise to be especially inspiring: “Ambivalences in Politics and Public Discourse” addresses discourses of disaster relief, the discrepancy between knowing and caring in an age of environmental disaster, and the ambivalences that drive economic policies in Europe. “Tensions around Toxicity” dives right into the pain of living with toxicity in the Anthropocene and analyzes how societies deal with and compensate for their relationship to the polluted environments they also call their home. If we want to grasp the complexity, ambiguity, and contradictoriness that go along with environmental destruction and much called-for “green” transformation processes, those who like to read turn to literary fiction and poetry. How these cultural forms of expression describe, negotiate, and reimagine the ecological transformation of society is discussed on our panel “Literature, Ambivalence, and Transformation.” As we will see right afterwards, in the panel on “Ambivalent Industries,” reality itself sometimes seems to be caught in fictions of the real. After this glimpse into the uncanniness of contemporary industries we turn to “Transitions and their Limits” to learn about case studies that remind us that change has its limits, and that there is even the possibility of failure.*

*Ecological transformation is a many-layered and multi-faceted endeavor, laced with ambiguities and contradictions. If we want to find sustainable solutions we must first come to terms with this complexity by discussing what it means for transformation processes to be “ambivalent,” “contradictory,” “tension-ridden.” A roundtable with scholars from various disciplines will discuss the implications of these terms and thereby frame the “ambivalences of ecological transformation” that serve as the leitmotif of this conference.*

*Humans will hardly come to terms with the overwhelming reality of climate change, biodiversity loss, aridification, and the toxic pandemic without taking recourse to creativity. Our conference program therefore includes five workshops that may seem rather unusual in an academic environment. The parallel workshops on “What Does Climate Change Look Like?”, “Ambivalent Mapping,” and “A Multispecies RPG” were invented and organized by the IDK group of PhD scholars; they ask us to move beyond our established academic skills and routines and use our senses, our love of play, our communicative talent. This more open-ended, experimental approach also concludes the conference: two parallel workshops engage their respective audience in projecting possible futures and motivating them to embrace necessary transformation measures as a positive source of individual and collective renewal.*

**Friday 24.06.2022** | Building T (Hörsaalzentrum Physik), Lecture Hall 1001

## **Ambivalences in Politics and Public Discourse | 14:15 - 15:45**

**Natalie Rauscher** | Heidelberg University

### *The Role of Ambivalent Discourses in Disaster Relief in the USA*

The last few decades have seen an enormous rise in costs and damages from natural catastrophes around the globe. In the United States, natural catastrophes are frequent and often more damaging compared to other developed regions, e.g. Western Europe. There are several reasons why this is the case. One element in this equation is climate change. But two other factors are crucial to explain the rise in damages across many areas in the United States. First, economic growth has led to a growing population in vulnerable regions along the coasts of the South and the Gulf Region, and in the West. Secondly, government policy has largely failed to either alter this development or offer ways to mitigate disaster risk and make certain regions and communities more resilient. (cf. Rauscher, Werner 2022)

The role of discourses in this equation is an interesting one. Although many regions prone to disasters have often inadequately prepared for disasters and extreme weather (also because politically there is little incentive to do so), there is often a blame shift towards the federal government once a disaster event strikes. The focus is put on the government's role to provide relief and rebuilding capacities – sometimes in the same places that are hit again and again – without questioning the cycle of damage and rebuilding nor population development and failed government policy (e.g. through agencies like FEMA) in disaster preparedness and resilience.

The ambivalence in discourses expresses itself by focusing on immediate disaster events, sensationalism and the need for relief in response to human suffering on the one hand, without reflecting this repeating cycle in a more nuanced fashion on the other hand. In this way, ambivalent discourses might contribute to the 'broken cycle' of failed government policy towards disaster events in the USA instead of providing explanations and a way forward for disaster resilience and preparedness. A case study focusing on national news coverage of disasters (e.g. in The New York Times or on Social Media) might help to illuminate the ambivalence in discourses around disaster relief in the USA as well as shine a light on language used in these discourses. By using both quantitative measures derived from corpus linguistics, as well as qualitative close reading, discourses and narratives around this issue can be studied and might provide inspiration for other disciplines interested in studying discourse and language.



*Natalie Rauscher is a research associate in the field of political science at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), Heidelberg University. Her research interests include discourses on the future of work as well as the rise of the platform economy in the United States. She is also working on other topics like social movements, social media, American philanthropy, and think tanks, and the impact of natural catastrophes in the United States. **Contact:** [nrauscher@hca.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:nrauscher@hca.uni-heidelberg.de)*

**W. P. Małecki** | University of Wrocław

*Knowing without Caring: The Ambivalences of Public Environmental Attitudes, and How to Address Them through Creative Communications*

Whether they concern climate change, non-human animals, or extinction, public environmental attitudes are characterized by striking ambivalences. Studies show, for instance, that the majority of those who are concerned or alarmed about climate change do not engage in political activism aimed at tackling the problem nor have plans to increase their political activity in any way (Maibach, Roser-Renouf, and Leiserowitz 2009; Goldberg et al. 2021; Leiserowitz et al. 2021). Or, as pointed out by numerous animal studies scholars, while practically everybody declares kindness to non-human animals, most people accept such clearly unkind practices as factory farming (Herzog 2010). Indeed, it seems that if there is anything consistent about public environmental attitudes, it is their apparent inconsistency. And as this inconsistency is often one between the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of environmental attitudes, such that one may know about certain environmental issues but not care about them, or care about them but not be willing to act, it may be a significant obstacle to a meaningful social change. This paper discusses the potential factors behind such ambivalences, including various cognitive biases (Heberlein 2012; Marshall 2014). It argues that one potential way of addressing them is through creative environmental communications (Boykoff 2019) in all kinds of media, including video games, film, radio, literature, and others. Studies show, for instance, that journalistic extinction stories may make people more concerned about endangered species and more willing to actively support conservation efforts (Malecki et al. 2021), that climate fiction may make people believe climate change should be a greater priority for the authorities (Schneider-Mayerson et al. 2020), and that animal novels can make one feel more responsible for helping animals in need (Malecki et al. 2019). In making its point, the paper will draw on the environmental humanities and social sciences – ecocriticism, animal studies, and environmental communication – synthesizing these perspectives within the interdisciplinary framework of empirical ecocriticism (Schneider-Mayerson, Weik von Mossner, and Malecki 2020).



*Wojciech Małecki is an associate professor of literary theory at the University of Wrocław, Poland. His research is situated at the intersections of the humanities and social sciences exploring the impact of literature and the media on society, in particular on public attitudes toward the environment. It has been published in journals such as Poetics, PLOS One, Frontiers in Psychology, and Oxford Literary Review, featured in the media, including in Newsweek, The New York Times, and Psychology Today, as well as translated into Chinese, Swedish, and other languages. His most recent books include “Human Minds and Animal Stories: How Narratives Make Us Care About Other Species” (Routledge 2019) and “What Can We Hope For?” (Princeton University Press, 2022). He is currently a visiting researcher at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry at Utrecht University, where he is working*

*on projects concerning narrative resilience and the social influence of climate fiction. **Contact:** [wojciech.malecki@umwr.edu.pl](mailto:wojciech.malecki@umwr.edu.pl)*

**Ollivier Bodin** | Heidelberg University

*The Ambivalence of Economic Policy Discourses at the Example of the European Economic Governance*

This presentation comes from the point of view of an author active in an NGO aiming at influencing the reform of the European economic governance. A substantial contribution of fiscal policy is required to trigger and orient the transformation needed to avoid disruptive events affecting the biosphere. The paper analyzes how representations, analytical frames and institutions still reinforce each other to incentivize and help dominant actors to veto a meaningful reform of the European economic governance (Stability and Growth Pact). The starting point is a double observation. First, the guiding principle of economic policies under the European Green Deal continues to be the promotion - for sure with the mention “green” - of economic growth, allegedly a precondition for improving wellbeing. Second, the process of economic growth as such is ambivalent and can be expected to turn into its own negation. The scientific consensus is that economic growth - as it is for the time being reproduced year after year - will sooner or later destroy or at least substantially and irreversibly damage the basis of economic activities and of a decent life for hundreds of millions human beings. This second point belonged until very recently to the “unknown known”, better said “disregarded known”, of dominant economic experts, advisers, and policymakers. This paper shows that and attempts to explain why the economic policy discourses have only recently started to include resource and environmental constraints while at the same time ambivalent policies continue to be advocated and implemented. It also discusses the role that transnational civil society coalitions are playing, highlights the diverging views within those coalitions, and shows how CSO actors need to mitigate their discourse to be accepted in the decision-making process. The result is an ambiguous language. The ambiguity is expected to be constructive but leaves open the door for different scenarios with uncertain outcomes. Does the dominant “green growth” paradigm create opportunities to be seized for a (relatively) soft landing?



*Ollivier Bodin, a French citizen, studied economics in Heidelberg during the seventies. He was recruited in the early 1980s by the European Commission. He worked in various services on economic and financial issues: economic and monetary affairs of the Member states, general international economic affairs, EU financial support to the Western Balkan countries after the breakdown of Yugoslavia, international aid coordination to the same jointly with the World Bank and, finally, development policies. Retired in 2014, he is one of the founders of the NGO Greentervention, advocating for a coordination of economic, social and fiscal policies of EU member states effectively supporting a transition to a just and environmentally sustainable economy. **Contact:** [bodinol85@gmail.com](mailto:bodinol85@gmail.com)*



## Tensions around Toxicity | 16:15 - 17:45

**Sebastian Lundsteen** | University of Stavanger

*The Case for Ambivalence: Cautious Reflections on Pollution and Remediation*

This paper contends that ambivalence is a crucial yet understudied aspect of individual experience in ecological transformations. Ambivalence signifies neither undivided optimism nor pessimism towards a given process, but rather is a fluctuating relationship between the two positions; it can express a reluctance towards certainty and facts while still acknowledging them. Moreover, ambivalence is rarely unfounded, as it can help articulate difficult experiences and potentially unravel hidden power structures. Through a Danish case study of a submerged chemical waste depository in immediate peril of unleashing chemical exposure, the paper investigates how scientific knowledge is perceived and negotiated by the local environmentalists. By challenging dominant epistemic regimes, the environmentalists articulate other ways of knowing through an ambivalence towards promises of remediation.

Through the debate between the scientific community and the environmentalists, this presentation challenges the idea of ambivalence as indifference or a problem to be overcome; instead, it argues that ambivalence is an important aspect of social worlds and serves as a vital counterbalance in recognizing the promises and pitfalls of societal and ecological transformations. Furthermore, ambivalence potentially resists dichotomies of either/or scenarios but opens paths as an “in-between” that questions transformations by inquiring into other aspects of transitions as for whom and into what. In this way, ambivalence can help us nuance our understandings of environmental conflicts and help us pay attention to power relations and structures perpetuating injustices, where modes of ambiguity are open for imagining and conceptualizing other futures.



*Sebastian Lundsteen is a historian and anthropologist doing a Ph.D. in Environmental Humanities at the University of Stavanger, where he is a part of The Greenhouse – An Environmental Humanities Researcher Group. In his project, he investigates one of the most severe and extensive environmental contamination cases in Danish history, whose consequences are still unfolding today. He is particularly interested in taking concepts such as Environmental Justice to new contexts, such as Scandinavia, to understand the complex and intertwined relationship between temporal and spatial dimensions in Late Industrialism, where the pervasiveness of chemicals is shared but still an uneven condition.*

**Contact: [sebastian.lundsteen@uis.no](mailto:sebastian.lundsteen@uis.no)**

**Karen Holmberg** | New York University

*Toxicity, Tensions, and Creative Communication of Coastal Risk*

Our newly emerging 21st-century relationship to Nature is messy, complex, and discomfiting and our ways of communicating environmental risks are still works-in-progress. In this exploration, I query two contemporary cases. One is a suburb of Naples, Italy. The other is in remote Patagonian Chile. Both contexts are coastal and are complex sites of water pollution and toxicity. Both are also actively volcanic and “naturally” risky. They are also active sites of creative attempts to better convey scientific understandings of the environmental risks of living on these dynamic coastlines.

The commune of Pozzuoli, Italy lies upon a portion of the Gulf of Naples that was deeply polluted by steel and tanning industries in the 20th century. Remediation discussions, though, become complex when addressing the fact that the naturally occurring contaminants from volcanic activity were already highly toxic. Concomitantly, the volcanic system under the exceptionally large Campi Flegrei caldera complex is shifting and changing. How does one convey this risk to the nearly 300,000 people within the danger zone about the low frequency but high magnitude events that could be possible, particularly in a context in which they already distrust scientific and political authority from prior experiences?

The Patagonian town of Chaiten, Chile lies along a coastline that is, like much of Chile’s, filled with aquaculture for salmon fisheries that bring revenue yet also use high levels of antibiotics and inflict environmental damage to surrounding wild fisheries. The Chaiten volcano erupted unexpectedly and catastrophically in 2008, destroying the town with a mudflow that redirected the river and built a massive delta. The new town was rebuilt in the same location, which is prone to the same flows. How do you rebuild for the present with an awareness of past events and future risks?

In both the Pozzuoli and Chaiten contexts, the search for a shared vocabulary is one between the scientific community and the residents living in risky environments. These risks come from both anthropogenic and naturally occurring environmental contexts. Communicating in a way that is not just top-down but allows a flow of narratives and understanding is key. In Pozzuoli, our newly forming, collaborative project is seeking to engage concepts of Forum Theatre and the Theatre of Urgency. In Chaiten, to convey the future risk and commemorate the past event, a new museum seeks to convey scientific interpretations and live-streaming data as well as host art-science residencies.



*Karen Holmberg is an archaeologist and volcanologist at New York University. She is interested in how the past can aid understanding of the environmental challenges and crises of the 21st century. She is the recipient of awards including a Creating Earth Futures award from the Geohumanities Centre of Royal Holloway University and the Leverhulme Trust, Make Our Planet Great Again award to collaborate with the Laboratoire de Géographie Physique at the Panthéon-Sorbonne, and the This is Not a Drill award through the NYU-Tisch Future Imagination Fund that utilizes public pedagogy to address the climate emergency through technology and the arts. She is the Scientific Director of the NYU-Gallatin WetLab, an experimental initiative for public-facing teaching and a living art-science laboratory.*

**Contact:** [karenholmberg@nyu.edu](mailto:karenholmberg@nyu.edu)

## Collaborators on this project include:

*Ellada Evangelou is an independent scholar, dramaturge, and cultural worker in the field of theatre and cultural studies, based in Nicosia, Cyprus. She is the Artistic and Cultural Director of the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival 20121, and Global Fellow in Residence at the Gallatin School for Individualized Study, NYU (Fall 2021).*

*Kristin Horton is a director and educator who works primarily on new plays and community-engaged practices. She is an Associate Professor of Practice in Theater & Directing at New York University's Gallatin School and serves as the Chair of the Interdisciplinary Arts Program.*

*Christopher Kilburn is a Professor of Volcanology and Director of the UCL Hazard Centre in the Department of Earth Sciences at University College London.*

**Simone M. Müller** | LMU Munich and

**Angeliki Balayannis** | University of Exeter

### *Toxic Commons: Defining a New Relational Epistemology*

The toxic legacies of industrialization have irrevocably altered life on earth. Indeed, the earth has reached a tipping point; the climate crisis, the sixth great extinction, and the burdens of industrial chemistry all mark an era of unprecedented turbulence. At the heart of this accelerating planetary change lie the modes of extraction, production, consumption, and disposal necessary to support perpetual economic growth. Over the twentieth century in particular, the residues of resource extraction, chemical production, industrial agriculture, and warfare have seeped into the soil, air, and water, exerting a slow, uncertain, and often unspectacular violence - which although uneven, affects all forms of life. The arts and humanities have developed a range of critical approaches to address toxic ubiquity and its implications for life. Yet each of them face a particular challenge which we see grounded in a binary analytical framework. Cultural studies and histories of pollution, artistic activism and environmental justice work study the uneven burdens of toxicity in the Anthropocene or critical examinations of remediation from a binary understanding of pollutants and the polluter, purity and danger or political demarcations of Global North and Global South.

To move beyond the binaries of externalization, frameworks of toxic violence, and patterns of remediation, my co-author Angeliki Balayannis and I propose a new relational epistemology, Toxic Commons, for an irrevocably altered planet. Conceptually, Toxic Commons is located at the intersections of environmental humanities and feminist technoscience, bringing together the expertise of a historian and a human geographer. Cultivating uneasy “chemical kinships” with hazardous materials, the book goes beyond binary notions of externalization and the remediation paradigm. Toxic Commons is an attunement to the enabling and constraining capacities of toxic entanglements; refusing to reduce chemicals to their violence.



Currently, Simone Müller is primarily focusing on three research projects. First of all, she is revising her Habilitation “Hazardous Travels. A Ship’s Tale of U.S. Waste and the Global Environment” as a book manuscript for publication (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books at Washington UP) as part of a larger research project on the global waste economy since the 1970s. She is also active in a collaborative platform “Toxic Commons” in which researchers and artists try to make sense of living on a permanently polluted yet highly unequal planet. Part of this is a joint book-project with Human Geographer and Anthropologist Angeliki Balayannis (Exeter) on Toxic Commons as a research concept. Last not least she is exploring a new research global environmental history topic on “Urban Skin. Road Corridors and an

Environmental History from Above and Below”, proposing a vertical turn in how we look at environments in their intersection of parts above and below ground. **Contact: [simone.mueller@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:simone.mueller@rcc.lmu.de)**

Angeliki Balayannis is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Exeter. She also participates in the roundtable on Saturday morning. Biographical information can be found in that section.



## Keynote Presentation | 18:15

**Debra Davidson** | University of Alberta

*Getting to Zero:*

*Interdisciplinarity, Intersectionality, and Emotions in Social Responses to Climate Change*

Low-carbon transition pathways must traverse the multiple layers of our current socio-ecological systems, which are replete with ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions. Arguably the most pertinent, and yet the murkiest, layer of them all features human behavior. Each of us acts in response to cognitive processes, but our actions are guided to an even greater extent by emotional processes that reflect our unique experiences, values, predispositions, and positionality. The complexity of human behavior is vividly expressed in our vastly divergent responses to climate change, including apathy, denial, withdrawal, and action. The ability of the environmental studies community to make meaningful contributions to low-carbon transition pathways requires that we approach human behavior, and the socio-ecological systems in which it is embedded, with interdisciplinarity and intersectionality.



*Debra J. Davidson is Professor of Environmental Sociology in the Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology at the University of Alberta. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1998. Her key areas of teaching and research include impacts of and adaptation to climate change, mitigation and adaptation, Environmental equity and justice, and crises and transitions in food and energy systems. She is also interested in questions of governance and natural resource politics, and in how institutions contribute to, and can help solve, current environmental crises. Debra Davidson is a lead author in Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change's 5th Assessment Report. Her work is featured in several journals, including Science, Global Environmental Change, British Journal of Sociology, Society and Natural Resources, International*

*Sociology, and Sociological Inquiry, among others. She is co-author of "Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity" (2011) and edited, together with Kierstin C. Hatt, "Consuming Sustainability" (2005), a book that addresses questions regarding structure, human agency, activism and the potential for sustainability in Canada and the world.*

*Debra Davidson's current research project (2020-2023) is concerned with "Advancing Impact Assessment for Canada's Socio-Ecological Systems;" she works on this together with Ian Steward from the University of King's College, Halifax. The project focuses on how to address many of the most challenging issues facing impact assessment processes in Canada, including gender-based analysis, addressing Indigenous sovereignty, integrating multiple forms of knowledge, and emerging climate impacts. The project is financed by a Social Sciences and Humanities Partnership Development Grant and co-funded by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. This interdisciplinary and collaborative research initiative includes participation of researchers, partner organizations, and communities across Canada. **Contact: [ddavidso@ualberta.ca](mailto:ddavidso@ualberta.ca)***

**Roundtable | 09:00 - 10:30**

*I beg to differ. Terminologies of Expressing Difference and Differentiation*

Disciplines from within the Environmental Humanities have found myriad terms for discussing the same phenomenon, namely that late 20th and 21st centuries environmental governance and policy has maneuvered itself into an apparent dilemma. They use ambivalences, ambiguities, tensions, paradoxes, or pitfalls, among others, to study how conflicting reactions, beliefs, or feelings towards the same object, are integral to the painfully slow political and social negotiation and transformation processes, a paralysis almost, to save planet Earth at a time when many scientists and activists assert that the house is already on fire.

This roundtable with participants from Eco-Criticism, Feminist STS, Anthropology, and Economics focuses on these differences in linguistics and concepts to discuss interdisciplinary opportunities and pitfalls in Environmental Humanities as well as the processes of interdisciplinary language-making that should serve as the backdrop of all forms of collaboration nourishing ecological transformations of society.



*Angeliki Balayannis is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter, and a Visiting Fellow in the Center for Advanced Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich. She specializes in the material politics of pollution and waste, drawing on feminist STS and discard studies to interrogate how hazardous materials are governed, sensed, and managed. She undertakes interdisciplinary collaborations with a range of publics, including regulators, activists, waste workers, and environmental scientists.*

**Contact: [a.a.balayannis@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.a.balayannis@exeter.ac.uk)**



*Anne Rademacher is an urban ecologist and ethnographer. Through ethnographic analyses of urban environmental change, Anne studies struggles over the form, content, and quality of urban environments. Anne's early research focused on the cultural politics of river restoration in Nepal's capital city, published as "Reigning the River: Urban Ecologies and Political Transformation in Kathmandu" (Duke University Press 2011). Together with K. Sivaramakrishnan, she is co-editor of "Ecologies of Urbanism in India: Metropolitan Civility and Sustainability" (Hong Kong University and Columbia University Press 2013); "Places of Nature in Ecologies of Urbanism" (Hong Kong University and Columbia University Press 2017); "Death and Life of Nature in Asian Cities" (Hong Kong University Press 2021). Anne's*

*most recent work focuses on the social and material practices of urban ecology through the lens of environmental architecture: Building Green: Environmental Architects and the Struggle for Sustainability in Mumbai (University of California Press 2017). Contact: [anne.rademacher@nyu.edu](mailto:anne.rademacher@nyu.edu)*



Hubert Zapf is currently co-authoring a chapter with Timo Müller (Konstanz) on 'Ecology in American Literature' for the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Environmental Science, in extension of his recent work on literature, cultural ecology, and sustainability. In this research survey, the authors are examining the ways in which American literature has been shaped by an ecological deep structure long before the emergence of modern ecocriticism. Due to their aesthetic mode of embodied representation and imaginative transformation of historically changing culture-nature relations, literary texts exhibit an intrinsic potential of ecocultural knowledge. This applies not only to explicitly environmental texts such as American nature writing or the rich contemporary eco-literature of the Anthropocene, but also to classical examples like Melville's *Moby-Dick* or to key African American narratives such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which provide complex self-reflexive models of human-environment relations in post-traumatic sociohistorical conditions.

**Contact:** [hubert.zapf@philhist.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:hubert.zapf@philhist.uni-augsburg.de)



Marcus Wagner is an (ecological) economics and management scholar and associate member of the Bureau d'Economie Théorique et Appliquée in Strasbourg, whose research focuses on innovation, global sustainability and strategic management, with current projects being e.g. 'Comparative Green HRM' funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). He uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Further research interests result from being a board member of the Environmental Science Center at the University of Augsburg, and a founding member of the university's Center for Climate Resilience. He is also involved in guiding research as deputy editor at *Organization and Environment*, a leading journal at the intersection of management and sustainability that has strong interfaces with the Environmental Humanities. For a recent example of his research, see also the special issue there on 'Tinkering With the Plumbing of Sustainable Enterprises'.

**Contact:** [marcus.wagner@wiwi.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:marcus.wagner@wiwi.uni-augsburg.de)

## Literature, Ambivalence, and Transformation | 11:00 - 13:00

**Lisa Höller** | University of Oregon

*Instability, Impurity, Monstrosity – Engaging Contaminated Ways of Being*

In her 2016 book *Against Purity*, Alexis Shotwell asserts, “We are in and of the world, contaminated and affected.” (p. 10) We are only in, with, and through our surroundings. While the word Anthropocene may on the surface posit “the human” at the center, it also, maybe more so, highlights the need to question, challenge, trouble “the human” as a category as well as its attachments. One such human attachment is stability, another is purity; neither of them are achievable nor, I would suggest, desirable. It is my contention that in order for us (humans) to relate in a better, more sustainable, more hopeful way to our bodies, to the beings we encounter, to the world around us, we need to first confront our (nostalgic) desire for a stable and pure nature. It is, at this point in time, an impossible feat to protect our bodies against every source of contamination and disease, to purify every body of water that has been polluted, to clean up the forest, the fields, the cities, in short: to (re)create a state of purity and stability. As long as we view contamination as a dangerous outside with potential only for deformation and destruction, we will only recognize its threatening monstrosity, fear it, exile it, but we will be unable to engage with it and take responsibility for it. To explore the question how we might productively and fruitfully engage contaminated ways of being, I turn to literature, to fictional texts about unstable human bodies and impure environments that provide us with creative ways of challenging the assumed stabilities that are and of exposing the dangers of the purities that we might wish to be. Instead of overcoming the monstrosity of contaminated being, these texts offer clues how to embrace the monstrous as acceptance of unstable livelihood and as potential for positive change.



*Lisa Höller received a BA in German Philology and English and American Studies from the University of Salzburg. In 2012/13, she was a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. After finishing her MA in German Philology with a focus on German Linguistics at the University of Salzburg in 2016, she taught German as a foreign language in Nepal. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Oregon. Her research interests include German and Austrian literature since 1900, feminist theory, studies in the Environmental Humanities and the Blue Humanities, and translation studies. **Contact: lhoeller@uoregon.edu***



**Marina Pingler** | University of Tübingen

*Alternative Climate Imaginaries: Re-Imagining Climate Futures in Speculative Fiction*

Climate imaginaries are subject to the politics of who gets to create visions of the future and have a profound impact on climate governance debates. “They can fix that which is fluid and unsettle that which is long conceived as immobile” (Davoudi and Brooks). While some climate imaginaries have attained a hegemonic status, others remain marginalized in climate change discourse. Dominant climate imaginaries produced by institutions such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in the form of scenario-based models, invoke apolitical visions of science, reducing “climate to measurable, quantifiable observations about environmental systems” (O’Lear). Moreover, they come with an ontological armature based on a stark distinction between nature and culture, ignoring alternative ontologies and diverse agencies. As Davoudi and Machen show, certain mediums, such as computerized scenario models, have become privileged as access points for knowing and acting on climate change with tangible effects on the imaginaries (8).

New ways of thinking about the future are central to the question of how transformation processes can be successfully initiated. It is particularly through cultural and literary productions that alternative climate imaginaries take shape, challenging the dominant ones and pointing to new ways forward. Drawing on Rita Indiana’s *Tentacle* (2018) and Cherie Dimaline’s *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), I argue that the novels can be read as articulations of what I propose to call the Colonial Anthropocene Imaginary. While the Anthropocene, as conceptualized by Earth system science, conceives of the future as “radical novelty” (Simon), the Colonial Anthropocene Imaginary frames what is perceived in certain discourses as “radical novelty” as a product of colonial/postcolonial exploitation and embeds it in a continuous developmental process. Through their temporal structure the novels connect the future climate crisis with colonial legacies. I claim that the novels should be read in the context of the #NoDAPL movement and, more broadly, the Indigenous Futurisms movement, participating in an emancipatory project by decolonizing our future imaginaries.



*Marina Pingler is a PhD candidate and assistant professor at the American Studies Department. During her studies at the University of Tübingen and State University of New York at Stony Brook, she majored in English and History. She completed her state examination in September 2020, followed by a Master of Arts degree in April 2021. Previously, she worked as Grant Manager and Project Administrator of the EU COST Action “Comparative Analysis of Conspiracy Theories (COMPACT)”. Her dissertation project focuses on collectively held visions of future climate change in American literature and culture —so-called “climate imaginaries”— that emerged between 2009 and 2020 but remain marginalized in climate change discourse. More specifically, she investigates how medial and generic particularities of specific modes of*

*representation influence these alternative scenarios of future climate change and how these scenarios engage with the culturally dominant ones. Contact: [marina.pingler@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:marina.pingler@uni-tuebingen.de)*

**Jonathan Sarfin** | University of Bern

*Risk, Anthropocentric Ambivalence, and Describing the More-Than-Human in  
Alexandra Kleeman's Something New Under the Sun*

Meaning-making is an inherently ambiguous, open-ended activity. Greg Garrard writes that “climate fiction *reflects on changes as they are in the process of occurring*” (301-302; original emphasis). These changes will bring about “a new form of *being-in-the-world*,” according to Eva Horn (159; original emphasis). Though unsettling, this cannot be solely bad, since, as Alan Macfarlane notes, “almost every change has negative as well as positive effects [...] the contradictory consequences are numerous” (387-388). The Environmental Humanities often conceptualizes these human-driven changes in terms of risk, inspired by the work of sociologist Ulrich Beck (1999). Risk, Ursula Heise writes, has become “an extremely important resource for the cultural study of contemporary societies’ relation to the natural environment [...] highlighting the ways perceptions of ecological and technological risk scenarios are shaped by and filtered through narrative” (122). Ambiguity is central to the notion of risk because we cannot know the precise consequences of climate change; there is always uncertainty. This paper draws on Karen Thornber’s ‘ecoambiguity,’ which tries to account for “the complex, contradictory interaction between people and environments with a significant nonhuman presence” (2). It analyzes Alexandra Kleeman’s *Something New Under the Sun* (2021) and argues that the novel utilizes an aesthetics of ecoambiguity to de-center the Anthropocentric gaze, teasing the possibility of a world that adequately values the more-than-human. The principal setting is a near-future California, where Patrick Hamlin travels to oversee a movie adaptation of his novel, only to find out that, in response to endemic drought, the public water utility has been replaced by a private firm selling a mysterious, synthetic WAT-R. This West Coast plot is juxtaposed against an East Coast narrative arc: Alison, Patrick’s wife, has gone to an eco-commune in New York state to mourn the loss of Earth’s biodiversity. In both arcs, the narrator and characters are markedly ambivalent about, on the one hand, this technocultural management of climate change risk and, on the other, an affective response to climate change. Finally, over and above ambivalence on the level of plot, the novel ends with a scene where background becomes figure. Description overwhelms anthropocentric narrative: the agentic potential of the non-human setting comes to the fore and the novel concludes with an eerie and peaceful depiction of a world without humans. *Something New Under the Sun* tracks both human ambivalence to climate change risk and how moving beyond the Anthropocene might itself engender ambivalence.



*Jonathan Sarfin* studied English Literature at the University of Kentucky (BA 2016) and the University of Bern (MA 2021). He is a PhD candidate at the University of Bern, in the SNSF Sinergia project *Mediating the Ecological Imperative*, in the sub-project *Ecological Imaginaries: Eco-Ekphrasis in Twentieth- and Twenty-first Century North American Fiction*. His dissertation explores descriptions of the more-than-human in contemporary American climate fiction.

**Contact:** [jonathan.sarfin@unibe.ch](mailto:jonathan.sarfin@unibe.ch)

**Victor Ferretti** | University of Augsburg

*Transformation and 'Colonial Tropes'*

There is an epistemological trace of “ambiguitas” that stems from classical rhetoric (Quint. inst.) and contains a critical dimension, still relevant these days. Based on Latin American rubber exploitation reflections of the 20th Century and in relation to present-day extraction conflicts in the so-called South American Lithium Triangle, my proposal is to discuss certain (neo)colonial ambivalence and transformational ambiguity accompanying material modernization and ‘clean tech’ narratives as well as ‘white gold’ tropes in the context of environmental inequality, justice, and resilience.



*One of Victor Ferretti's central research areas are the transatlantic 'Cultures of Resilience', concentrating on Iberian and Latin-American dynamics of artistic and socio-ecological creativity in times of crisis. Besides, he is dedicated to the study of the poesis and narratives of urban planning and the implied importance fiction and imaginaries play in our conceptualization of urban space (and its possibilities). A third research interest focuses on the millennial actuality of bucolic discursivity to better understand the cultural-historical relationality of 'natural' and urban-rural in(ter)ferences.*

**Contact:** [victor.ferretti@philhist.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:victor.ferretti@philhist.uni-augsburg.de)

## Ambivalent Industries | 14:15 - 15:30

**Jesse Ritner** | The University of Texas at Austin

*Impossible Futures: A Historical Perspective on Paralysis United States Ski Industry*

The United States (U.S.) ski industry is stuck in what I call a “climate adaption paradox.” The ski year begins in November, guaranteeing 100-130 days straight of skiing every year. Yet, without snowmaking technology, there are only a handful of places in North America that receive sufficiently reliable snowfall. Snowmaking, invented in the 1950s, is intriguing because it is both a climate-adaptive and a climate-dependent technology. Like real snow, it still depends on cold and relatively dry conditions – meaning, it is not immune to climate change. Therefore, as temperatures have warmed, the industry has invested more and more into what is undoubtedly a failing technology. As a result, skiing offers a case study of a people, space, and economy where the web of interrelated social, ecological, political, and economic results of adaptation are already in place, rather than part of an imagined future or prayed-for present. The past, present, and future of skiing is also an interwoven web of ambivalence in which almost everyone involved values some aspects while despising others. What makes this even more difficult is that recent reports suggest that few ski areas in the United States will continue to be viable even if emissions were to flatten today. In short, while everyone from the ultra-wealthy, ski executives, the working poor, those “paid in powder,” and migrant labor have different stakes and different levels of risk, they are all faced with the fact that their money, desires, and communities will not continue in the manner they have even with an immediate flattening of global emissions. The result is that not only are people in these communities

struggling to envision a way forward, many are beginning to question whether a way forward is worthwhile at all. Presuming climate models are correct, the ski industry and the economies around it have no foreseeable future. For them, it is less about adapting and more about riding out the storm

while they still can. As a result, the history of the ski industry raises a vital question about how industries that were quite good at adapting found themselves paralyzed in the face of an existential threat. In a growing discourse within the environmental humanities regarding hope, we must acknowledge that some possibilities are already gone. Discourses surrounding those whose futures are impossible require concepts that are both specific and difficult to formulate, capable of building regional, or national, or species think among a group of people already left behind.



*Jesse Ritner is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas, Austin. His dissertation, “Making Snow: Weather, Climate, and the Rise of the North American Ski Industry” uses skiing as a case study to explore the historical relationship between climate-adaptive technology, capitalism, environment, and justice. Contact: [jesse.ritner@gmail.com](mailto:jesse.ritner@gmail.com)*



**Rafael Hernández Westpfahl** | Heidelberg University

*Mining towards sustainability?*

*The political ecology of “green energy” resource extraction projects in Mexico*

Silver is considered one of the essential metals necessary for technologies required for a so-called green transformation. Photovoltaic solar panels, electric vehicle-batteries as well as their charging infrastructure, all need silver. (CRU International 2018).

The ongoing debates inside the political ecology literature on extractivism indicate the problematic implications of mining projects, not only on the environmental side but also on the social dimension, often accused of provoking land-use conflicts and land- or green grabbing (Miller et al. 2013; Svampa 2018; Chagnon et al. 2022; Fairhead et al. 2012; Borrás Jr. et al. 2020). Nonetheless, conflict dynamics on silver mining, understood as such a “green energy” resource, (Dunlap und Marin 2022) as well as on other metals like copper or zinc, that in plenty of cases are extracted in the same mines, or lithium has so far been under-researched (Dunlap und Marin 2022).

Mexico stands out as the country where the largest amount of silver is mined (The Silver Institute 2021). However, different interactive mapping projects about megaprojects and extractivism indicate the striking socio-environmental conflicts surrounding such projects, where again Mexico holds the leading position in the Latin American comparison (EJAtlas 2022; Universidad Iberoamericana CDMX 2021). In my PhD project, I aim at conducting a study about the social dimensions of silver mining projects in Mexico through a political ecology perspective, as the latter is traditionally used to investigate problematic human-nature relations focusing on power dynamics (Bryant 2015). I understand silver mining as *field of conflict*, an approach that pays attention to the conflict dynamics along different scales based on a radical contextualization (Dietz & Engels 2018). Moreover, different dimensions such as the policy processes and actors involved in the implementation of those projects alongside contested discourses within the field of conflict are of importance. Thus, my research is complemented by the *historical materialist policy analysis* and elements of discourse analysis based on the *articulation-theory* by Stuart Hall (Brand et al. 2021; Drobot 2019).



*Rafael Hernández Westpfahl has joined the HCLAS (Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies) with the above outlined project as doctoral candidate in November 2021 for the then established interdisciplinary structured doctoral program Communication and Society in Ibero-America. Departing from the field of human geography within his PhD-project, he provides in-depth knowledge of different humanities disciplines thanks to my studies during my master's degree in political science at the Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg and my bachelor's degree in Sociology and Anthropology at Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main. During his master's thesis he implemented a framing analysis on different civil society association reports committed to the topic of migration. Outside the academic world he has been doing human rights field work at different occasions in indigenous communities in southern Mexico, and accompanying local human rights defenders dedicated in the fields of forced displacement and disappearances and against resource extractivism with Peace Brigades International. Contact: rafacente@riseup.net*

## Parallel Workshops IDK Doctoral Students | 16:00 - 17:30

### Workshop A: *What does Climate Change look like?*

They say a picture says more than a thousand words, and in the context of climate change, this certainly seems to be the case. On (social) media images and short sentiments circulate at a rapid pace, imprinting an image of the ecological disaster in our minds. In academia, however, we are more often trying to uncover those thousand words, while neglecting climate change's visual vocabulary.

So what does climate change look like? How to integrate text and image? In this workshop, we explore how to build an image that represents climate change with its invisibilities, ambivalences, ambiguities, and simultaneity. The workshop will be using a mixed media approach, no previous artistic qualifications are required.

### Christian Schnurr | University of Augsburg



*Coming from a background in chemistry, my path towards the environmental humanities was inspired by the impression that many environmental problems do not (only) lack a technical solution but rather stem from the absence of effective scientific communication, public engagement, and legal or economic regulations. After studying environmental studies, literary theory, and philosophy, I am now eager to contribute to the societal understanding of technology skepticism with a special focus on the public's perception of chemicals. I hope to contribute to a society that is informed about as well as reflective towards the material and technological basis it stands on.*

**Contact:** [christian.schnurr@uni-a.de](mailto:christian.schnurr@uni-a.de)

### Felix Treutner | LMU Munich



*I hold a bachelor's degree in Management of Social Innovations from the University of Applied Sciences in Munich and recently completed the master's programs for both Environment Ethics and Social and Political Conflicts at the University of Augsburg. The Bavarian landscape is my secret love and my inspiration to engage in environmental protection. I am happy to be able to continue my exciting journey in this international environment. Personally, I would describe myself as a person who is always curious and sometimes contradictory – which is reflected in my interdisciplinary profile. Choosing a conflicting topic thus seemed logical.*

**Contact:** [f.treutner@campus.lmu.de](mailto:f.treutner@campus.lmu.de)

**Jasmijn Visser | LMU Munich**



*Complexity is always at the core of my practice. Within cases of geopolitical conflict, I explore order, aesthetics, and narrative patterns and propose new forms of framing complexity. I seek a way to explain complexity through the logic of complexity. In one of my artworks, Conflict Atlas, I shift the center of the earth to the Falkland Islands to view the global conflict from the archipelago's perspective. Just as I question narratives of conflict, I also question what an artist is and what the artwork can be. I often concede autonomy by working in multiple collaborative constructions. My artworks often are accessible online or made by using existing structures of the internet. Website: [jasmijnvisser.com](http://jasmijnvisser.com)*

**Contact:** [jasmijn.visser@lmu.de](mailto:jasmijn.visser@lmu.de)

**Laura Fumagalli | University of Augsburg**



*I am a doctoral candidate in Philosophy, specializing in Aesthetics. I work on the concept of contemporary landscapes as a theoretical means to understand the aesthetic experience of nature in an age of environmental crises and defend the autonomy of the aesthetic value of nature. My work has connections to environmental ethics and the philosophy of art. Before joining the IDK program, I worked as an assistant in a contemporary art gallery in London and a literary museum in Italy. Previously, I completed a M.A. (2020) in Philosophy and Aesthetics and a B.A. (2017) in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Milan, and a M.Sc. in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh (2018).*

**Contact:** [laura.fumagalli@uni-a.de](mailto:laura.fumagalli@uni-a.de)

**Maximilian Pieper | LMU Munich**



*After studying industrial engineering at the University of Augsburg and the University Politehnica of Bucharest in my Bachelor, I shifted focus to the socio-political aspects of technology during my Master in Politics and Technology at the TUM. Besides my academic education, I also worked as a research assistant for the research group "Markets for Mankind", on the ecological impact of agriculture. In my master thesis, I explored how the dominant ontology of technology hinders political actors from solving global crises of inequality and ecological breakdown. Out of this research, my Ph.D. project emerged; with it, I will continue trying to understand society through technology.*

**Contact:** [maximilian.pieper@wiwi.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:maximilian.pieper@wiwi.uni-augsburg.de)



## ***Workshop B: Ambivalent Mapping: Mapping Ambivalence***

Why (not) map? Maps tell stories. Each map tells a very different story. The histories and ethics of mapping lead to countless entanglements that can be traced back to this simple question: why do people map? But also: for whom and for what are maps created? In times of urgent need for ecological transformation, these simple questions gain relevance. The ambivalences around the instrumentalization of maps have been widely discussed. The same can be said about the possibilities of implementing various forms of cartography as analytical tools to visualize alternative or marginalized perceptions of space. But what about things and beings that do not or choose not to map in ways humans do? This workshop will stop short of trying to define mapping. Instead,

participants will experiment with the possibilities and risks of employing radically different perspectives and styles of cartography. What could multi-species emancipatory mapping processes, for instance, contribute (or not) to processes of ecological transformation? The context of the university campus of this conference will be the site from which we hope to arrive at a less final understanding of what maps are and a more differentiated way to consider simultaneously stories of both inclusion and displacement to grapple with ambivalences in actual processes of ecological transformation.

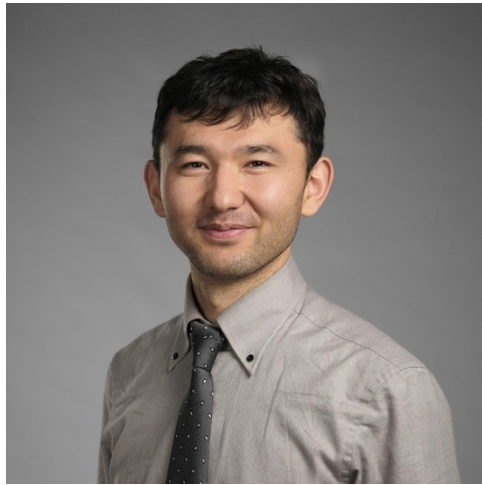
### **Christopher Klapperich | LMU Munich**



*My research interest in environmental issues started during my master's in anthropology at JGU Mainz, during which I conducted fieldwork in the Philippines. Collaborating with an environmental NGO, I walked through the dense tropical forests trying to understand why confiscating chainsaws is a kind of environmental activism that balances social and ecological challenges. I specifically focused on the personal motivation of environmentalists who dealt with illegal loggers, death threats, and family obligations. Motivated by ongoing forest loss and its socio-ecological impact, I hope to face this environmental crisis in a forward-looking, constructive way through my project.*

**Contact:** [christopher.klapperich@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:christopher.klapperich@rcc.lmu.de)

## Daler Kaziev | University of Augsburg



*My current research project aims to re-envision social-ecological challenges in mountain environments by further extending the notion of capacity-building efforts. I received a Master of Science from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Cornell University. As part of the Gaudete Research Assistantship, I helped co-create a phenological calendar for the agro-pastoral communities in the Alai Valley in Kyrgyzstan. It enables them to anticipate climate variations at a local scale and contributes to their food system. I have also co-produced an ethnographic documentary film named “Murghab” ([www.murghabfilm.com](http://www.murghabfilm.com)), Tajikistan.*

**Contact:** [daler.kaziev@uni-a.de](mailto:daler.kaziev@uni-a.de)

## Elisabeth Schuster | University of Augsburg



*Born in Augsburg, I had teacher training with a focus on primary schools at Augsburg University. I studied Geography in my major and Didactics of Mathematics, German Studies, Art History, and Catholic Religion in my minor. Afterward, I enrolled in a master's program in Interdisciplinary Educational Research at Augsburg University. In my master thesis, I investigated how future primary teachers perceive the aims and didactical approaches of geographical education. For this purpose, I used different quantitative research methods. Being interested in education for sustainable development, I completed the certificate “Environmental Education and Sustainability” at Augsburg University in 2021.*

**Contact:** [elisabeth.schuster@geo.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:elisabeth.schuster@geo.uni-augsburg.de)

## Fizza Batool | University of Augsburg



*I am a scholar with an interest in almost everything related to capitalism and modernity. My educational background merges natural and social sciences. I hold an M.A. in development studies from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, with a major in Agrarian, Food, and Environmental Studies (AFES). I like to ask critical questions about the dynamics in the global economic system and the core assumptions of the development discourse. The subjects of environmental studies, transdisciplinary research, and ecological transformation are central to my understanding and help me locate the environmental crisis.*

**Contact:** [fizza.batool@geo.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:fizza.batool@geo.uni-augsburg.de)



**Livia Cahn | LMU Munich**



*I am trained in anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and at the EHESS in Paris. I have explored the possibilities of ethnographic methods to address various nature-cultures by working through collaborative contexts, across disciplines and practices on urban ecologies, interspecies relations and lively soils, as a researcher, activist, and gardener. I have co-curated exhibitions and workshops, and co-authored “Terres des Villes, Enquêtes potagères de Bruxelles aux premières saisons du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle” (Éditions de l’Éclat, 2017) and a growing series of picture essays on soils, among others.*

**Contact:** [livia.cahn@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:livia.cahn@rcc.lmu.de)

**Lukas Emrich | LMU Munich**



*To start with a confession: I have never been exceedingly rigorous at separating the scholar from my remaining personality. Come to think of it, I find it difficult to name a vacation trip without puzzles over spatial patterns or transformational practices. Personal experiences and notions of what just transformations could look like have always shaped my academic interests. I feel especially drawn to the entanglements between urban and capitalist space, socio-ecological alternatives to corporate food regimes, or compatibilities of degrowth and environmental justice. Being a lover of both geography and the outdoors, however, geoecology, climate, and vegetation will always fascinate me too.*

**Contact:** [lukas.emrich@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:lukas.emrich@rcc.lmu.de)

### ***Workshop C: A Multispecies RPG***

How would fungi react to a new infrastructure project? Is an industrialist able to stop deforestation? In this workshop, participants will play the roles of plants, animals, humans, and microbes, trying to co- and counter-exist. They will inhabit different biomes on a fictional island, and be faced with various ecological scenarios. Each player will be pursuing their own objectives, which may conflict with those of others: while farmers would want to clear the forest for new farmland, ecological activists will want to stop them. Each action also has direct and indirect consequences for other players: while trees are chopped down and squirrels lose their habitat, new plant species can flourish and viruses find new hosts. Players must negotiate amongst themselves to find a compromise between pursuing their objectives and keeping the island inhabitable for all. But only the human actors are able to communicate verbally - non-human species must find other ways to get their points across. As players make their decisions about how to interact with the land and one another, a narrator leads them through the consequences of their actions. Some of these actions may have island-wide consequences. Limited communication and obscure consequences mean participants will be confronted with multiple layers of ambiguity. Embracing this ambiguity, you are invited to immerse yourself in the perspective of “the other”, human and non-human. The goal of the workshop is not to relativize convictions, but to cooperatively simulate a multispecies existence.

The 90-minute workshop will be split into 3 parts: a 15-minute introduction, rules explanation, and role distribution; a 60-minute gameplay session; and a 15-minute group reflection. Pen and paper required.

### **Floris Winckel | LMU Munich**



*I am Dutch, but have lived abroad my whole life. Most recently I was based in the UK, where I did a bachelor's in History and master's in the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology. Both my bachelor's and master's dissertations addressed episodes in the history of eighteenth-century Dutch science, but my broader interests range from medieval natural philosophy to modern understandings of the Anthropocene. In my work I like to focus on scientific practices, materials, and visual cultures, and – particularly for my doctoral project – understanding them in their environmental contexts.*

**Contact:** [floris.winckel@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:floris.winckel@rcc.lmu.de)

**Katharina Karrenbauer | LMU Munich**



*I have been interested in climate change and social justice since my school days. After my bachelor's degree in Business Informatics, I chose to do the interdisciplinary master's program Responsibility in Science, Engineering, and Technology at the TU Munich, which dealt with issues of social responsibility in an increasingly technologically oriented society. As part of my master's thesis, I looked at the discourse around a sustainable transformation of the transport sector. I am particularly interested in how an ecological transformation can be designed so that social justice and sustainability goals are not seen as competing but as intertwined.*

**Contact:** [katharina.karrenbauer@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:katharina.karrenbauer@rcc.lmu.de)

**Lakshmi Dilipkumar | University of Augsburg**



*Growing up in a globalizing India, I was inspired by numerous environmental justice struggles near home and away. In my home region, it was the common people led by women and indigenous groups who fought against the global MNCs and state oppression. My understanding of the environment, shaped through such grassroots struggles, aligns with the political ecology approach and argues for a radical social change to alleviate the planetary environmental crisis in which we find ourselves. I find literature and the arts to be powerful and evocative cultural artifacts that can help us imagine and conceive such a change.*

**Contact:** [lakshmi.dilipkumar@wzu.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:lakshmi.dilipkumar@wzu.uni-augsburg.de)

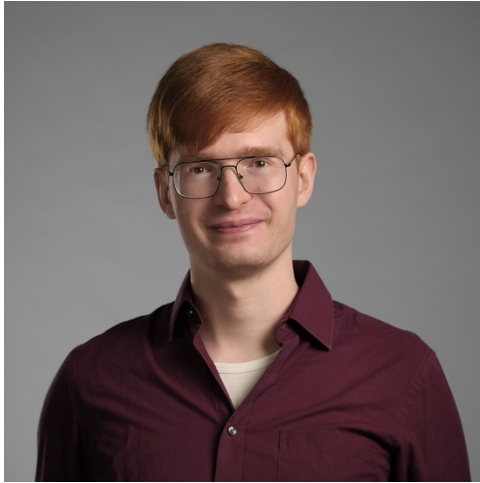
**Pia Wimmer | University of Augsburg**



*I am a freelance journalist, photographer, and environmental educator, primarily engaged in the topics of sustainable consumption and reduction of plastic in everyday life. I have studied History of European Culture, with an Erasmus semester at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and Environmental Ethics at the University of Augsburg. In my free time, I love to go outdoors, freediving, climbing, and horse riding and to find my balance in nature. I especially love traveling. Engaging with the realities of life different from ours is a crucial experience if we want to master our challenges and build a better future together.*

**Contact:** [pia.wimmer@kthf.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:pia.wimmer@kthf.uni-augsburg.de)

## Sven Seelinger | University of Augsburg



*Since my youth, I have been fascinated by historical sites, artifacts, and books about them. The latter formed the backbone of my studies at university, while tangible spaces and objects only played a minor role. This changed when I entered the field of environmental history. Artifacts no longer remain with limited information value. Now, they provide links between culture and nature, humans and the animated world, abstract phenomena, and specific places. This new perspective on familiar subjects sparked my interest in inputs from other disciplines. Besides archaeology, I want to integrate influences from physics, biology, and geography into the existing global approaches to historiography.* **Contact:** *sven.seelinger@uni-a.de*

## Keynote Presentation | 18:00

**Frank Uekötter** | University of Birmingham

*Will We Ever Come to Terms with the Green Revolution?*

Everything was clear when Norman Borlaug won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970: his plant breeding work had produced new wheat varieties that boosted yields per acre beyond expectations. The ambiguities are evident half a century later: the Green Revolution is notorious for its side effects and path dependencies nowadays. But we continue to live on a planet with eight billion hungry mouths, and the war in Ukraine has sharpened our awareness that grain is not always plentiful. The presentation inquires how to write a global history of food in the twenty-first century.



*Frank Uekötter studied history, political science and the social sciences at the universities of Freiburg and Bielefeld in Germany, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA. He earned his PhD from Bielefeld University in 2001. A pioneer in the field, he has contributed substantially to the Environmental Humanities, organizing, among other things, a conference on the environmental history of Nazi Germany for the German ministry for the environment. In 2005, he spent some time at the German Historical Institute in Washington DC.*

*In 2006, he received a Dilthey grant from the Volkswagen Foundation which brought him to Munich. He taught at Munich's Ludwig Maximilian University and helped to build the Rachel Carson Center for*

*Environment and Society. In 2013, Frank Uekötter joined Birmingham University in September. He has since moved his primary focus on German and U.S. history towards a more global perspective on the past. Frank Uekötter is widely known for his work on Environmental History on a global level, and on environmental issues, both past and present. In his 2021 book "In unruhigen Zeiten", he analyses more recent environmental policies on a global level. The book reveals the background of these policies, evaluates past decisions and uses this knowledge to look to the future. In 2020, he published "Im Strudel. Eine Umweltgeschichte der Modernen Welt", which unfolds the historical dimensions of contemporary environmental discourse. First published in German in 2020 with Campus Verlag, the book is about to come out with the University of Pittsburgh Press, in English, this year. Frank Uekötter's keynote ties up with his most recent project on "The Making of Monocultures. A Global History Project." Funded by the European Research Council, this project analyzes the making of monoculture as the result of a long and conflictual history. Taking socioeconomic and environmental issues center stage, it addresses ongoing debates on the modern food system and addresses related issues on a global level. **Contact:** [f.uekoetter@bham.ac.uk](mailto:f.uekoetter@bham.ac.uk)*



**Transitions and Their Limits | 09:30 – 11:00**

**Rocío Hiraldo** | Open University of Catalonia

*Integrating Labor and Environmental Goals in Just Ecological Transitions:*

*The Southern European Case*

The deepening of current global climate and environmental crises has accelerated the development of ecological transitions. In this context the term Just Transition (JT) has become increasingly popular, although its creation dates back to the 1970s when US trade unions created it to demand the integration of labor issues within environmental and climate change agendas. Scholars have recognized the conceptual elasticity of the term. Besides the variety of narratives around it, JT's appeal to actors with different, often opposed, perspectives on how to implement them. As the number of JT programs across the world multiplies, it becomes central to understand how these different attitudes towards JT's interact, and the consequences for whose voices are included and excluded in the implementation of Just and Ecological Transitions. This paper addresses this question by studying the case of the Portuguese energy transition and the Spanish JT program implemented in the Andalusian region since 2020. The former involves the closure of two thermal power plants and an oil refinery and the development of renewable energies in the country. The latter involves: the closure of three thermal power plants; the subsequent provision of economic alternatives for the affected local areas; the creation of infrastructural support for these alternatives; and restoration of degraded lands by the power plant.

By putting into dialogue theoretical advances in the fields of critical social sciences engaged in the intersections between labor and ecology, and through an analysis of the narratives of labor and environmental organizations emerging in the Spanish and Portuguese cases, the paper suggests that a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges around the integration of labor and environmental goals in ecological and just transitions can be developed by paying more attention to: labor and environmental movements' and organizations' conceptions of labor, nature and the labor-nature connection and the interactions between their different narratives; the material and cultural dimensions of labor in polluting industries and in environmental as well as labor organizations; and the historical political connections and tensions between labor and environmental movements and organizations.



*Rocío Hiraldo is an affiliate researcher at the Urban Transformations and Global Change Laboratory (TURBA) of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, where she worked as a post-doctoral fellow studying the politics of working class environmentalisms in the context of urban green spaces. Previously, she studied the labour dimension of alternative food networks in Andalusia (Spain), and conducted her PhD research on the development of capitalist conservation in Senegal through a focus on class relations. She has also worked as a researcher on various international projects on the social and political dimensions of climate change mitigation and adaptation. She has received five research and dissemination grants in competitive calls from different institutions and has participated as a speaker in 12 international interdisciplinary conferences.*

*Her publications include four articles in peer-reviewed Scopus-indexed international journals, including Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space, Journal of Agrarian Change, Human Geography and IDS Bulletin; two chapters in the book Low Carbon Development: Key Issues published by the editorial Routledge and one chapter in the book "Through the Working Class Ecology and Society Investigated Through the Lens of Labor" published by Edizioni Ca'Foscari, four working and occasional papers an article on the blog of the European network of political ecology blog and in Spanish newspapers. **Contact: rhiraldo@uoc.edu***

**Nisha Paliwal** | Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur

*Farming the Wind: Exploring Energy Transition in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan*

Recent scholarship in the field of energy humanities has disproportionately focused on petromyopia and its discontents while disregarding the exploitative potential of wind and solar energy, which are understood to be seemingly benign energy infrastructures as debated by energy scholar Christopher F. Jones. Although the global transition towards renewable energy resources should indeed be perceived in terms of its restorative potential, an uncritical assessment may often elide the political motivations, capitalist ideologies, and private interests which often govern such projects, especially in the Global South(s).

The current intervention focuses on the escalating number of green energy projects in the Thar Desert, Rajasthan, threatening sacred groves under the façade of clean energy. These sacred lands, known as 'Oran', are community-protected areas of land dedicated to local folk deities that function within a set of complex rules and restrictions to protect and preserve these micro biodiversity reserves while also acting as a major source of livelihood for communities nearby. Any kind of private or government intervention on the Oran is strictly prohibited, it is also prohibited to fell trees for purposes other than religious. These sacred lands known as 'Oran' become a site of ambivalence as the idea proposed by the energy companies of green development is antithetical to what the Orans stand for.

Taking Aalaji ka Oran in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, as a site of contestation of the conflicting beliefs, the current paper deconstructs the motivations of the local communities and the industrialists masquerading as clean energy advocates through an ethnographic framework. As the "eco-investors" spread through the desert devouring various villages to set up their industries, the Orans stand on the brink of extinction. The Jaisalmer Wind Park, developed by Suzlon, is considered to be one of the largest wind farms in the world. The energy transition endangers not only the ecological structure of the area but also the livelihood of the rural communities. The land that was once the grazing land for the cattle is being transformed into industrial sites alienating the

communities. The Orans had been claimed by the government after the independence and wrongfully declared as ‘wastelands’ under the Revenue Department which makes it easier to allow these lands to be given away to energy companies. In conclusion, the current paper addresses the ambivalences of the environment and sustainability.



*Nisha Paliwal is a research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Jodhpur, India. She is interested in folklore and cultural practices at large. Her PhD research area involves intersections between energy humanities and environmental and ecological practices in the Thar desert of Rajasthan. She is currently researching the Orans, which are community-protected sacred groves, of Thar Desert. In the long term, she is interested in the documentation of the cultural and artistic practices of Rajasthani communities through writing, photography, audio-visual formats, and forming a body of work showcasing their culture. Contact: [paliwal.4@iitj.ac.in](mailto:paliwal.4@iitj.ac.in)*

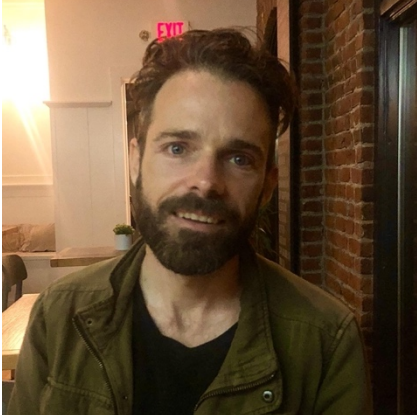
**Samuel Coren** | Brown University

*Only Disconnect: The Promise and Pitfalls of Green Infrastructure in a Rainy City*

After serving for two centuries as a sink for toxic effluent, the Providence River is becoming fishable and swimmable again. Eelgrass is slowly regaining a foothold, and the RIDEM just recently opened the river to shellfishing for the first time in 75 years. This is thanks in part to the Combined Sewage Overflow Abatement Project (CSOAP), a network of tunnels 300 feet below the city that capture sewage-leaden water after heavy rains. Meanwhile, green infrastructure sites throughout the city compliment the work of the CSOAP, diverting surface runoff from local rivers and streams while providing habitat for wetlands plants and pollinators.

It is a remarkable transformation, but tentative, and by any measure, far from complete. For it is unclear how present-day infrastructures will hold up against more frequent storms and rising seas. And it remains to be seen whether resilience planning will empower frontline communities, as pledged by the city’s Climate Justice Plan, or merely deepen the city’s yawning wealth divide. Does watershed restoration lay the groundwork for a more just and habitable city, or is it just a way “to sustain capitalist urbanity so that nothing really has to change”? Are constructed wetlands, rain gardens, bioswales and similar interventions “trivial,” as one analyst remarked to me, or do they provide an opening to reimagine urban life? What kinds of futures is this green turn seeding?

The paper I propose to share is titled “Only Disconnect: The Promise and Pitfalls of Green Infrastructure in a Rainy City.” Combining history and ethnography, I situate the recent emergence of green infrastructure in the context of the Providence’s sanitarian legacy of hydraulic governance. I then consider how the city’s still-evolving combination of green and gray systems work to reassemble the socio-ecological order, and to what effect.



*Sam Coren (PhD Candidate, American Studies) is a writer, public scholar, and creative practitioner whose research focuses on socio-ecological assemblages in the urban United States. Sam has written for Contingent Magazine, Doors Open RI, The Journal of Planning History, and The Journal Flux (pending). In 2019, he co-organized a daylong series of events titled ReSeeding the City, which brought together participants from Indigenous, diasporic and Western knowledge traditions to share their perspectives on the entwined lives of humans and plants in urban New England. He has also exhibited as a research-based artist, exploring the afterlives and animacies of industrial landscapes. **Contact:** [samuel\\_coren@brown.edu](mailto:samuel_coren@brown.edu)*

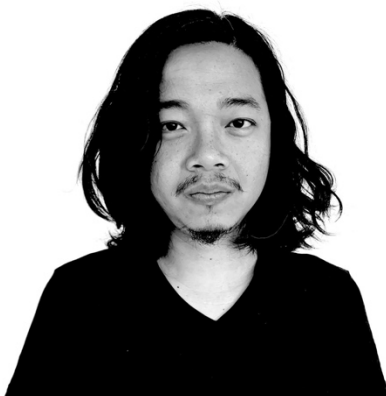
## Parallel Workshops | 11:30 - 13:00

### Workshop D: *Second: Images of Fieldwork*

**Indrawan Prabaharyaka** and **Teresa Staudt** | Humboldt University of Berlin

Second is a rich, polysemous concept. As a noun, it implies more-than-one, a prerequisite of ambivalence. It also reminds us of temporality, as time ticks and moves from the first to the second, second by second. Nevertheless as a verb, it expresses a decision, surpassing ambivalence in itself. Second might also be taken as an abbreviation: Space, Ecology, Complexity, Options, Narrative, and Density. This game prototype aims precisely to capture the richness of second by thinking in pictures. It is a critical speculation exercise for developing analytics by way of multimodal, more-than-textual collaboration. You are an ethnographer, doing fieldwork in a city where you encounter the locals and their stories, investigate and question to what extent you might second their opinions.

**Indrawan Prabaharyaka** | Humboldt University of Berlin



*Indrawan Prabaharyaka is a researcher at SFB-1265 „Re-figuration of Spaces“, studying the urban microclimate planning regime of extreme heat in Stuttgart. Indrawan has completed his doctoral dissertation at the Institute of European Ethnology, Humboldt University of Berlin. Indrawan’s manuscript When Infrastructure is a Verb is an intense experimentation of theorizing by way of storytelling, written at large with and in ethnographic fiction. Before doing anthropology, Indrawan has studied environmental engineering in Indonesia and water management in South Africa, and has worked for non-governmental and governmental organizations in water and sanitation projects.*

**Contact:** [indrawan.prabaharyaka@hu-berlin.de](mailto:indrawan.prabaharyaka@hu-berlin.de)

**Teresa Staudt** | Humboldt University of Berlin



*Teresa Staudt is currently studying Modern South- and Southeast Asian Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Her master thesis, the Drama, captures ambivalent stories of employers of domestic workers and the disappearance of their employees, the former’s immobility and the latter’s mobility, and the contemporary transformation of Indonesian millennials. **Contact:** [staudtte@hu-berlin.de](mailto:staudtte@hu-berlin.de)*



## **Workshop E: *Engaging People to Climate Actions through a combined Emotions-Immersion Approach***

Climate change perception is an increasing point of interest, sparking out attention but also conflict, judgments, and high levels of ambivalences. The motivation of our research is to start with establishing a causal pathway from affect and emotion towards climate action. Explicitly considering the mechanisms by which emotions influence decisions, we designed an innovative concept of climate awareness event, aiming at effectively fostering climate actions and pro-environment behaviors (PEB). The actual proposition explores empirically a mix between a so-called serious game (derivative from the Climate Fresk) and nature immersion (giving room for interaction with nature).

The Climate Fresk is a French non-profit organization that conducts workshops to raise public awareness on climate change. The interactive game called “Klima Puzzle” in German, is based on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. At the time of writing 330.000 participants have been trained across the world, but mainly in France.

In the workshop, participants are first led by a facilitator to establish cause and effect relationships about climate changes through card sequencing, activating the group’s collective intelligence, and then debrief the implications for society and workshop participants, engaging them to commit on subsequent actions. The emotional path during the workshop is very much correlated to the well-known Kübler Ross curve, particularly because the “Fresk” (as a chain of occurrences) is showing an irresistible pessimistic future scenario, endangering the future of mankind.

Out of our personal experience (more than 50 Fresks & 200 participants trained), the difficulty at generating positive energy out of this debrief phase has been seen as a clear shortcoming. Our idea was to transform the negative emotions into more positive ones using the concept of resonance (H. Rosa, 2016 & 2018) and so feeding the energy for PEB.

A known favorable condition to generate resonance moments is to allow a strong and specific dialog between individual and their environment, for example during an intensive experience of nature immersion.

We’ve found many of those pre-requisites in outdoor activities like planting trees or country hedges or another one called “seatrekking”, where a group of trekkers combine walking and swimming for a short autonomous journey along the littoral shore.

Together with local associations we’ve developed a combination of the two activities (an on-site “Climate Fresk”-derivate and the immersive activity) which delivered very promising results in terms of readiness to climate action commitment.

## François Dumont | University of Upper Alsace



*After achieving a strong technical background with a PhD in Engineering, François Dumont developed competencies through an 18-year career at Airbus Group, the world-wide biggest airplane manufacturer. He specialized in transversal activities aiming at increasing the ability of organizations to prepare and implement changes.*

*A new life stage started for him last year, as he started an Executive-MBA dedicated to ecological transition during which he learnt about:*

- Extra-financial reporting
- Measurement of environmental impact and strategy to minimize it
- Sensitize organization and ensure staff dedication to change (through moderation of dedicated workshops like the Klima Puzzle)

*François is now finalizing his master on sustainability at the Mulhouse university and will then go on developing methods to become effective at engaging people to action against climate change, as a freelancer.*

**Contact: [francois.dumont@edu.groupe-ifg.fr](mailto:francois.dumont@edu.groupe-ifg.fr)**

