



Un/Building the Future: The Country and The City in the Anthropocene

**14-16 June 2023
University of Warwick
Coventry, UK**

Keynote Speakers

Tim Waterman (University College London, UK)

Fabienne Viala (University of Warwick, UK)

Amy Butt (Reading University, UK)

Sponsored by the Institute of Advanced Study, Sustainable Cities GRP,
Connecting Cultures GRP, Cyber Security GRP, Energy GRP, and Food GRP

Organising Committee:

Emrah Atasoy, Nora Castle, Joe Davidson, Emellyne Forman
University of Warwick

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Conference Programme

GMT+1	Day 1 - June 14	
10:30-11:30	Walking tour of Coventry City Centre with Nirmal Puwar (Meet at New Cathedral Entrance, Coventry Cathedral, at 10:15)	
12:30-13:00	Registration (WBS ^{1,2})	
13:00-13:45	Lunch (WBS Staff Lounge, 1.022)	
13:45-14	Introductory Remarks by Conference Organizing Committee (WBS 0.004)	
14-15:30	Keynote Address (WBS 0.004) From the Magical Extraction of the Curse of Labour to Bullshit Jobs Tim Waterman <i>Chair: Joe Davidson</i>	
15:30-16	Coffee Break (outside WBS 0.004)	
16-17:30	Roundtable: Surveillance and the City (WBS 0.004) Cyber Global Research Priority University of Warwick	Workshop: Welcome to the Swamp (Tocil Wood Nature Reserve; meet at WBS reception at 15:45) Heather McKnight & Kirsty Lumm
19:00	Informal Pub Night on Campus (Varsity)	

¹ Warwick Business School: <https://warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting/maps/interactive/>

² https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ias/researchandnetworks/calendar/upcomingevents/event/

GMT+1	Day 2 - June 15		
	WBS 0.004	WBS 0.006	WBS 1.009
9:30-11	<p>Water, Islands & Ice</p> <p><i>Chair: Paul Anthony Knowles</i></p> <p>Caleb O'Connor</p> <p>Eleonora Rossi</p> <p>Fatma Aykanat</p>	<p>Climate Fiction</p> <p><i>Chair: Drew Thornton</i></p> <p>Jesse van Amelsvoort</p> <p>David Gray</p> <p>Małgorzata Sugiera</p>	<p>Technology & the Future City</p> <p><i>Chair: Daniel Davison-Vecchione</i></p> <p>Karolina Pawlik</p> <p>Laura Mai</p> <p>Kim Bown</p>
11-11:30	<p>Coffee Break (outside panel rooms)</p>		
11:30-13	<p>Keynote Address (WBS 0.004)</p> <p>Space, Time and Kinship in Contemporary Hispanic Climatic Fiction</p> <p>Fabienne Viala</p> <p><i>Chair: Nick Lawrence</i></p>		
13-14	<p>Lunch (WBS Staff Lounge, 1.022)</p>		
14-15:30		<p>Gardens, Plants & Forests</p> <p><i>Chair: Owain Burrell</i></p> <p>Owain Burrell</p> <p>Paul Dobraszczyk</p> <p>Selmar Schülein</p>	<p>Set Panel: Climate Change & the City</p> <p><i>Chair: Jing Zhao</i></p> <p>Alessia Vacca</p> <p>Fidel Meraz</p> <p>Jing Zhao</p> <p>Yahya Lavaf-Pour</p>
15:30-16	<p>Coffee Break (outside panel rooms)</p>		
16-17:30		<p>Creative Writing</p> <p><i>Chair: Jesse van Amelsvoort</i></p> <p>Drew Thornton</p> <p>Ray Davenport</p> <p>(Lucia) Xu - Luo 吟光</p>	<p>Urbanization & the City</p> <p><i>Chair: Heather McKnight</i></p> <p>Daniel Davison-Vecchione</p> <p>Danxue Zhou</p> <p>Xuelin Zhou</p> <p>Rana Aytug</p>

GMT+1	Day 3 - June 16		
	WBS 0.013	WBS 0.006	WBS 1.009
9:30-11		<i>Junk & Salvage</i> <i>Chair: Mateusz Borowski</i> Mateusz Borowski Megen de Bruin-Molé Ana Tejero Marín Louise Jammet	<i>The Country & The City</i> <i>Chair: Emrah Atasoy</i> Anna Sophia Tabouratzidis Paul Anthony Knowles Arianwen Evans Adam Stock
11:11:30	Coffee Break (outside panel rooms)		
11:30-13	Keynote Address (WBS 0.006) Held in Common: Science Fiction and Collective Space Amy Butt <i>Chair: Nora Castle</i>		
13-14	Lunch (WBS Staff Lounge, 1.022)		
14-15:30	<i>Farming & Agriculture</i> <i>Chair: Ayushi Rakesh</i> Chen Zhou Ivonne Weichold Rob Booth Lakshmi Chithra Dilipkumar	<i>From Ruins to Rewilding</i> <i>Chair: David Gray</i> Timothy Wright Carla Almanza-Galvez Elif Kendir-Beraha Chak-kwan Ng	<i>Utopia & Hope</i> <i>Chair: Ray Davenport</i> Nudrat Kamal Filip Ryba Nikolett Puskas
15:30-16	Coffee Break (outside panel rooms)		
16-17:30		<i>Materials, Minerals, & Extractivism</i> <i>Chair: Karolina Pawlik</i> Ayushi Rakesh Jamie Hinch Lucy Grace	<i>Solarpunk & Beyond</i> <i>Chair: Megen de Bruin-Molé</i> Anja Lind Phillip M. Crosby Peter Sands Mariana Cruz
17:30-18	Closing Remarks by Conference Organizing Committee (WBS 0.006)		

Keynote Address Abstracts and Bios

Keynote 1: Tim Waterman

Chair: Joe Davidson

From the Magical Extraction of the Curse of Labour to Bullshit Jobs

“A working country is hardly ever a landscape.” — Raymond Williams (2011 [1973]: 120)

“Landscape is *nothing but* work.” — Don Mitchell (2017: 189)

Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* identifies the process through which the bodies of working people disappeared from the English countryside landscape during the enclosures as the “magical extraction of the curse of labour” (2011 [1973]: 32). A ‘disappearance’ seems a misfortune, but an ‘extraction’ is purposeful and this language aligns with the historic action of capitalism and colonialism. ‘Magical’ is perhaps a more problematic term, but it helps to remember that ‘magic’ as a performance involves sleight of hand, smoke and mirrors, illusion, pretense, and sometimes also fraud. The landscapes produced by colonialism around the world were constructed, planted, seeded, and designed (see Casid, 2005) explicitly to effect this magical extraction and simultaneously to appear ‘natural’—these landscapes, to paraphrase W.J.T Mitchell’s famous thesis on landscape, naturalize their conventions and conventionalize their nature (2002: 5). The extraction of labour and the concomitant landscaping of both colony and metropole created inhabited simulacra around the world through sleight of hand (or many hands). This talk seeks to read magical extraction through the lens of the ‘bullshit jobs’ so deftly identified by David Graeber: “not just jobs that are useless or pernicious; typically, there has to be some degree of pretense and fraud involved as well” (2018: 8). Bullshit jobs, while they might be visible, are still emblematic of the forms of the suppression of meaningful work and everyday practice which have historically been paired with ecocide and genocide (particularly of Indigenous lands and peoples—see Smith, 2011), and a “major attack on the social power of women” (Federici, 2019: 18).

References

Casid, Jill H. (2005) *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Federici, Silvia (2019) *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. Oakland: PM Press.

Graeber, David (2018) *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. London and New York: Penguin.

Mitchell, Don (2017) ‘Afterword’ in Ed Wall and Tim Waterman, Eds. (2017) *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays*. London and New York: Routledge, 188-192.

Mitchell, W.J.T. Ed. (2002). *Landscape and Power* 2nd ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Andrea (2011) “Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism” in Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, Eds. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 43-65.

Williams, Raymond (2011 [1973]). *The Country and the City*. Nottingham: Spokesman.

Bio: Tim Waterman is Professor of Landscape Theory at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. He is Chair of the Landscape Research Group (LRG), a Non-Executive Director of the digital arts collective Furtherfield, and an advisor to the Centre for Landscape Democracy at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He is also a former Vice-President of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS). He is the author of *Fundamentals of Landscape Architecture*, now in its second edition and translated into several languages, and, with Ed Wall, *Urban Design*, also translated into several languages. He has recently edited three collections: *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays* with Ed Wall, the *Routledge Handbook of Landscape and Food* with Joshua Zeunert, and *Landscape Citizenships* with Jane Wolff and Ed Wall. His most recent book is *The Landscape of Utopia: Writings on Everyday Life, Taste, Democracy, and Design* (2022). His writing has appeared in a variety of journals including the Journal of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Magazine (LAM). His brother is the prominent experimental musician, writer, and producer Alex Waterman.

Keynote 2: Fabienne Viala

Chair: Nick Lawrence

Space and Kinship in Contemporary Hispanic Climatic Fiction: Reading Rita Indiana's La Mucama de Omicunlé and Erik Mota's Habana Underguater

The future of the Caribbean region, where 50 islands belong to the Association of Small Island Developing States (AOSIDS) endangered by climate change, is conditioned by the combined legacies of slavery and extractivism, what scholars have termed the plantacionocene (Tsing, 2017; Ferdinand, 2019). In other words, social and environmental wrongdoing have been inseparable since the early 16th century in the region. Caribbean Speculative Fiction has remarkably merged in the last decade its concern for memory and for environmentalism, in a variety of plots that share the same focus on protecting the life of future generations from erosion, whether that is social erosion in the form of institutionalised racism and related discriminations, or the accelerating environmental disasters that cast a shadow on the Caribbean's inhabitability. Erosion, understood as a life endangering mechanism that brings the risk of extinction, from genocide to ecocide, finds its origin in the pre-capitalist period when European merchants saw the region as the perfect place to set up "the four cheaps" defined by Jason Moore as labour, food, energy and raw materials rendered cheap by the appropriation of the unpaid work of men and women, nature and colonies (Moore, 2014).

When it comes to Caribbean Literature since the abolition of slavery, numerous authors with radical and decolonial perspectives have established a canon in which memory operates as a reservoir of tropes triggering a process of imagination which enacts symbolic reparation. This process of Caribbean anamnesis (Viala, 2014) led to a vision of memory as inseparable from trauma; an obvious example of the symbolic inscription of trauma in the environment is the trope of the sea as a graveyard of unidentified bodies that demand justice and inclusion in the community after the middle passage. As Benítez Rojo put it in his seminal essay, the islands of the Caribbean repeat themselves since the "plantation machine" was a common foundational ground for the whole region, despite the fragmentary, multilingual, neo-colonial variations that make each of the islands of the region an exception (Benitez Rojo, 1997). The traumatic lens which often prevails in Caribbean Memory Studies tends to read the present as a variation of an unrepaired past which haunts the island's natural landscape. By remembering the pain in the form of emotions that demand justice, the past has been creatively retold and re-imagined in Caribbean fiction as an attempt to right the wrongs of erosion. Such strategies of retelling trust that the repetition of the trauma will act as a form of exorcism leading to repair.

I propose to shift the lens away from the trope of repetition and trauma to focus instead on futuristic tales of the Hispanic Caribbean that in recent decades have challenged traumatic and anthropocentric readings of time, space, nature and species, offering new stories to speculate on the meaning of reparation from the perspective of environmental futurity. In Erik Mota's *Habana Underguater* (2010) and Rita Indiana's *Le Mucama de Omicunlé* (2015), the future is both the time when climate change has become irreversible, and the source which holds the knowledge enabling environmentalism, defined as "a movement engaged in safeguarding the future of the future with a view that ecological viability is the foundation for all human and more-than-human worlds" (Lousley and O'Brien, 2017). Drawing on Afro-Caribbean spiritualities, more particularly on the *Regla de Ocha*, also

called the cult of the Orishas, in which mankind is only a small actor in a more than human universe, and where the initiation makes a deity become present in the body of the novice, both speculative novels envision reparation in the present as a form of embodiment of the future rather than the repetition of the past, thus challenging the reader's imaginative ability to empathise with different times, spaces and bodies at the same time. The stories are set in a near dystopic future, in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic, where the Orishas, the gods who have been the agents of the world vision of the enslaved since the plantation, have become the only chance left for humans to restore harmony in a globally, ecologically, and socially wrecked world. By making "oddkin" with the Orishas (Harraway, 2016), the human protagonists of those novels make the choice to cultivate the energy of love, remembering and repair, beyond the narcissist-depressive fatigue that characterise today's mainstream discourse on climatic anxiety (Byung-Chul Han, 2012)

Bio: Professor Fabienne Viala is the Head of Hispanic Studies at the University of Warwick and Director of the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies. Fabienne researches the question of the Reparations for slavery in the Caribbean at the regional level. She considers the different, multiple and mutable strategies for collective remembrance in the Hispanic, Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean, and the ways in which catharsis, historical memory and cultural performance are in resonance when it comes to represent the trauma of slavery in the civil society and in the public space. Fabienne's research looks at how colonialism and neocolonialism generated an extractivist ideology of dominance that has created the racial discriminations and climatic damages we are facing today all over the world. She explores Caribbean artistic responses to those issues where race and climate intersect in critical terms.

Prof Viala has published comparative studies on the Latin American and francophone historical novel, national memory and crime fiction in Cuban, Spanish and French literatures. Fabienne's last monograph is entitled *The Post-Columbus Syndrome: Identities, Cultural Nationalism and Commemorations in the Caribbean* (Palgrave Macmillan, New Caribbean Series, 2014). It examines the representation of Christopher Columbus in Hispanic, English and French Caribbean Cultural production, with a focus on literature, music and performance. It analyses the relationship between memory, historical commemoration and cultural nationalism in the Caribbean Islands since the 1990s and develops a transcultural and multilinguistic approach to the region.

Keynote 3: Amy Butt

Chair: Nora Castle

Held in Common: Science Fiction and Collective Space

We gather in this conference to collectively grapple with the dichotomy between the city and the country as constructed and ingrained by the spatial practices of capitalism. In response this paper casts a hopeful eye to the commons as a space and practice which unpicks and resists the enclosure of our collective futures. As imaginary places, the settings of science fiction (sf) can be understood as already extant sites beyond disciplinary enclosure, a vital and productive space within and from which we can both imagine and enact practices of commoning. These texts and the fictional spaces they contain are otherworldly, an elsewhere which is already held in common.

It will linger in the common spaces of sf texts such as *Everything for Everyone* by M.E.O O'Brien and Eman Ahdelhadi (2022), *The Fifth Sacred Thing* by Starhawk (1993) and *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1974) to reflect on the imagined architectures and spatial practices of commoning. As future fictions these texts resonate with José Esteban Muñoz's framing of the common as "not yet here" (2009: 1), not an idealised state to which we can return but a set of relations that is always in the process of becoming.

Just as such commoning practices are not the work of an isolated individual, this work is a collective endeavour and is particularly indebted to a workshop held as part of the London Festival of Architecture which invited participants to gather on Well Street Common and reflect on common space in sf through acts of collaborative construction. Through these acts of making and storytelling, lived and imagined experiences of commoning are valued and held.

As we weave together the designed, built, lived and imagined, this work makes use of the speculative space of fiction to attend to "the common beyond and beneath—before and before—enclosure" (Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, 2013:17), and reflects on the wider possibilities for spatial scholars and practitioners using sf as a point of common ground to enact shared futures.

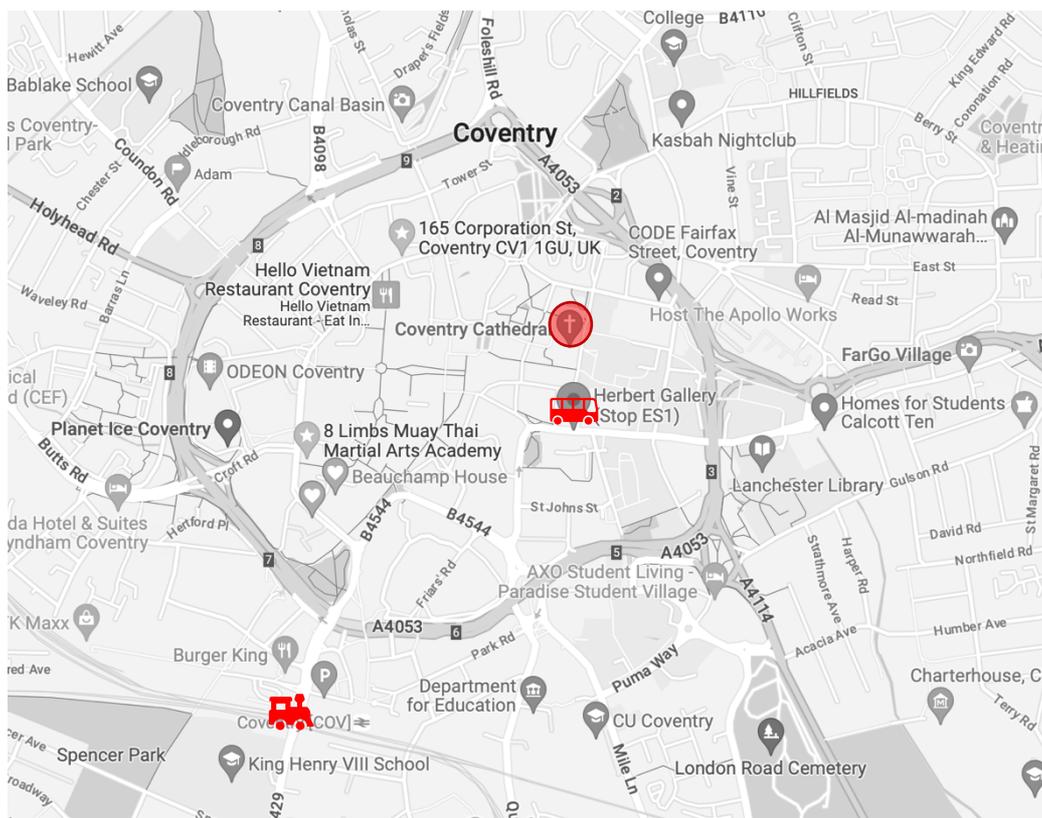
Bio: Dr Amy Butt is an architect and lecturer in architecture at the University of Reading with a specialization in architectural representation and communication. Her research explores the way the fictional worlds we construct influence and reflect the world we inhabit, writing about utopian thought and the imaginary in architecture through science fiction literature and film. Recent publications include 'Made up Ground: Architecture, Science Fiction, and the Surface of Imagined Worlds' in *Architecture and Culture*, and 'The Present as Past: Science Fiction and the Museum' in the *Open Library of Humanities* which won the Science Fiction Research Association Innovative Research Award 2022.

Walking Tour

To attend the walking tour, please meet at the entrance to the New Cathedral at Coventry Cathedral in Coventry City Centre at 10:15am.

On the morning of June 14, Dr Nirmal Puwar will lead a guided walk of Coventry. Dr Puwar's forthcoming book, titled *One Mile Walk* (Punctum Press), weaves theory and memoir to examine a one-mile stretch of the city through the lens of recomposing and decomposing. An extract of the book can be read [here](https://thegardenzine.co.uk/Nirmal-Puwar-1) (https://thegardenzine.co.uk/Nirmal-Puwar-1). She has previously been involved in the production of several films about the cultural and ecological history of Coventry, including *Memorium: Tree Felling at the Plaza* (available [here](http://www.adelemreed.co.uk/index.php?/series/202007-tree-felling-at-the-plaza/): http://www.adelemreed.co.uk/index.php?/series/202007-tree-felling-at-the-plaza/) and *Coventry Ritz* (available [here](https://archive.org/details/Coventry_Ritz): https://archive.org/details/Coventry_Ritz).

The walk will provide a fascinating insight into the city hosting the conference, taking in some of the most famous aspects of Coventry, such as the ruined cathedral, as well as considering how its industrial history (particularly, car manufacturing) continues to shape the city today. However, the walk will offer more than a straightforward history of Coventry. Following Dr Puwar's decomposing-recomposing method and taking Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* as a theoretical guidebook, we will be encouraged to reflect on the complexities of urban space as it currently exists and speculate on its possible futures.



From campus: take the 12x or 11 to the Herbert Gallery (ES1) stop
From the rail station: walk (14min), or take the 12x or 11 to the Herbert Gallery (ES1) stop

Roundtable

Surveillance and the City Warwick Cyber Security GRP

The rise of the megacity cannot be denied. The urbanization of the world's population is one of the most dramatic global trends. In the 1950s, only 30% of the global population was located in cities; by 2014, the degree of urbanization had reached 54%, and now most commentators suggest that by 2050, the figure will reach almost 70%. Overall, while the growth of the global population is slowing, it is still expected to reach 10 billion by 2050. The world's population is not growing evenly, instead the fastest growth is focused on what some academics have called "megacities," in other words, cities with more than ten million people. During the 1980s, there were only three megacities in the world, now there are more than twenty.

Cities have always divided those thinking about 'security'. For decades, the dominant guerrilla strategists, including Mao and Castro, conceived of resistance and revolution as a predominantly rural activity because the countryside endowed their followers with all important secrecy. Then, in the 1970s, revolutionary writers in Latin America, a region with some of the world's fastest growing cities, reversed this logic and argued for an urban strategy. In cities as far away as Belfast and Beirut their ideas were widely copied and tested. The authorities responded with the first 'smart cities'. The urban landscape continues to be divisive. Protesters and revolutionaries in the northern hemisphere watch the arrival of smart cities warily, anxious about their surveillance potential, but academics enthuse about them as a panacea for problems of sustainability. Here, ideas of 'smart cities' are attended by optimism even neo-liberal fantasy, with intelligence already wired in, but across the global south the 'megacity' evokes feelings of fear on the part of authorities rooted in opacity. Do the authorities now confront a 'surveillance gap' amid these dystopian urban landscapes?

Participants:

Professor Richard J. Aldrich, Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

Dr Georg Löfflman, School of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary College,
London

Professor Christopher Moran, Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

Dr Davinia Hoggarth, formerly University of Warwick and UN Food Programme Rome

Dr Dina Rezk, Department of History, University Reading

Dr Zaki Shiraz, Institute of Security and Global Affairs, University of Leiden

Dr Simon Willmetts, Institute of Security and Global Affairs, University of Leiden

Workshop

Welcome to the Swamp Heather McKnight and Kirsty Lumm

“50% of DNA in your body is not human DNA – a community of creatures must coexist for us to exist – cooperating forces that allow human life to go. See yourself as a ‘swamp amongst swamps’ the earth is your extended body.” – Kim Stanley Robinson, Ecology and Utopia Lecture

Swamps (or wetlands) are a valuable part of our Earth’s ecosystem. The swamp is a transitional space with slow-moving saturated soils. Swamps are sources of fresh water and oxygen, and breeding grounds for biodiversity. They help protect from flooding absorb excess water, protect fragile coastlines, filter waste, and purify water. Sadly, almost half of U.S. swamps were destroyed before environmental protections came into place in the 1970s. In the UK we have altered many so they are barely recognisable.

Welcome to the Swamp, is a project that explores understanding ourselves as biodiverse beings in transition through artistic practices. Through doing so it hopes to counter apathy and feelings of disempowerment, inspire climate activism, and generate understanding of the importance of biodiversity. This swamp utopia of this project is not a place, nor a no-place, it is a process living, breathing, material and embodied.[i] The swamp is always in process, in motion neither ground nor water, an unclosed system of infinite potential, of change, action and hope...

This workshop will explore how the project aims to bridge the gap between thought and activism, challenging the paralysing impact of eco-anxiety and apathy through an embodied understanding using immersive creative practice that brings the swamp into our lived and built environment. Drawing on theories of utopia, as a process and not a place, and practices of somaesthetics we are developing an evolving series of workshops to be delivered at conferences, activist spaces, festivals and in the community.[ii] These workshops combine acts such as urban foraging, using natural paints and dyes in expressive artwork, soundscapes and audiovisual experiences into accessible, immersive group interactions.

For practical information about attending the workshop on the day, please see:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jHSsO4vX_ORzkEEuXv0FBuNovk6FApsomviABWGrkEU/edit

References

[i] Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Anthony A Nassar tr, Stanford University Press 2000); Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope, vol One* (Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight eds, The MIT Press 1995).

[ii] Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge University Press 2012).

Bio: Dr Heather McKnight is a utopian theorist, activist, and creative facilitator. Her PhD in Law from Sussex explored Reimagining the University through Resistance. She is interested in integrating video work and soundscapes as a way to collapse the boundaries between theory and activism. Her interests include the utopianism of activism, climate justice, unionism, education, gender, and feminism. She has published articles on the utopian narratives of the school strikes for the climate crisis, and nano-utopian activism in times of chaos. She is the founder of the Magnetic Ideals Collective.

Bio: Kirsty Lumm is an expressive artist who runs community workshops that transcend the boundaries of art, history and science, and also conducts creative and therapeutic work with the Art in Mind charity. She is a member of CHASE Feminist Network, publishing her artwork through their journal and blog. She has run interactive online workshops "Breaking through boundaries with art". Her approach explores the relationship between art, socio-political issues and psychoanalytic approaches. She is the Founder of Arts for Life who promotes well-being of 2 disadvantaged and vulnerable people, by supporting them to develop their creative practice through a variety of artforms.

Panel Abstracts and Bios

Panel 1: Water, Islands & Ice

Chair: Paul Anthony Knowles

15 June, 9:30-11:00 | WBS 0.004

Caleb O'Connor: Queer Futures on Urban Waterfronts: A Queer-Ecological Perspective on Urban Waterfront Redevelopment through the Poetry of Julian T. Brolaski

Waterfronts around the world have emerged as a particularly powerful and ubiquitous mode of urban (re)development generally offering sustainable, mixed-use areas for commercial and housing initiatives (Avni and Teschner, 2019). Greening former industrial areas along waterfronts has become a widespread trend in urban redevelopment over the past 15–20 years (De Sousa, 2014). While the contemporary movement towards rewilding and detoxifying urban-ecological sites such as canals and rivers has been largely supported by green political movements, the redevelopment of those areas has resulted in the displacement of communities over time. This process is known as eco-gentrification, which is gentrification facilitated by the “creation or restoration of an environmental amenity” (Gould and Lewis, 2012 p13). It is a process of private schemes cleaning up polluted waterways and redeveloping urban waterfronts to attract investments for commercial ventures which promise esplanades and clear views, pricing out specifically working-class and queer communities from the area.

This paper provides a queer-ecological perspective on the troubled relationship between queer communities and urban waterfront redevelopments in New York City by reading *Gowanus Atropolis* (2011) by the U.S. indigenous queer poet Julian T. Brolaski. Through Brolaski’s poetry, this paper will explore the entangled history of queer community development and the toxification of urban waterfronts in New York City to consider how we might negotiate the social and ecological factors involved in ‘cleaning up’ and redeveloping urban waterfronts from a queer-ecological perspective. Centrally, this paper investigates the understudied hydro- social developments of queer communities in urban centres before considering how sustainable futures can be built without the displacement of marginalised communities in urban centres.

Bio: My name is Caleb O’Connor, I am a PhD candidate at University College Dublin in the school of English, Drama, and Film. My project, ‘Queering Urban Ecologies’ investigates how contemporary indigenous- queer poetry can conceptualise the fractured relationship between queer communities and ecology by reading responses to the social-ecological factors involved in the dis/placement of queer communities in New York City. My research is interested in contextualising queer histories and cultural production into contemporary discourses on environmentalism. Central to my work is questioning who sustainable futures are being built for, who is not being represented in environmental politics, and how queer- ecological thought can contribute towards ensuring a more just approach to the development of urban space.

Eleonora Rossi: Marine Depths as an Alternative to Urban Life: The Challenges and Promises of Living Underwater.

Over the last two decades, discourses concerning the acceleration and intensification of climate change, its implications for planetary survival, as well as the role played by human society in processes of environmental destruction, have become of central importance to a wide range of academic fields. Within the Humanities, new approaches, practices, and aesthetics (which Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén term a ‘multivalent toolbox’) have unfolded to capture the vastity, intangibility, and alienating potential of this state of crisis. Against this background, water has emerged as a critical space and concept for navigating the tensions, scale, (uneven) impact of, as well as adding nuance and sometimes imagining hopeful resolutions to existing ecological challenges (Chen et al. 2013). Specifically, the rise, withdrawal, and the deadly potential of increasingly polluted waters have taken centre stage in contemporary speculative accounts of the ongoing environmental catastrophe. This paper draws on science fiction (SF) as well as on interdisciplinary and intersectional scholarship to examine the feminist, decolonial, and ultimately utopian potential of reimagining life in the deep, and away from the city and the country as the charted landscapes that constitute the traditional spatial horizons of human society. I will rely primarily on Abi Curtis’s 2017 dystopian novel *Water and Glass* to explore the concomitance of the undoing of urban and suburban spaces and the emergence of marine depths as an unmappable domain which facilitates the undoing of terrestrial logics of mastery, and the development of more-than-human communities sustained by a shared commitment to collective survival.

Bio: Eleonora Rossi (she/her) is currently in the final year of her doctoral programme at Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research focusses on the intersections between posthuman and feminist theory, gender and critical race studies, speculative fiction, and art. Her work with the research collective Beyond Gender (beyondgender.space) has appeared in edited collections by Palgrave (2022) and Routledge (forthcoming). She currently resides in Berlin.

Fatma Aykanat: Living Entrapped in the “Cities That Don’t Think Like Planets”: The Ecologically Challenged Cartography and Urban Fabric of J.G. Ballard’s *Concrete Island*

Emerging as one of the most complex built environments and/or anthropogenic ecosystems of the Anthropocene, with distinct urban dynamics, diverse socio-economic and biophysical characteristics, cities provide rich grounds for the analysis of urban ecology and their literary portrayals pave the way towards literary urban studies. “Coupling human-natural systems” as Marina Alberti describes in *Cities That Think Like Planets: Resilience, and Innovation in Hybrid Ecosystems*, the contemporary cities accommodate enclosed pieces of nature that are surrounded by urban debris. However, the modern cities literally have blind spots. In *Concrete Island* (1973), British novelist J.G. Ballard portrays an environmentally problematic cartography through a metaphorical urban island composed of rubble and shreds of metal scraps as well as untrodden weeds and grass, on which the protagonist Robert Maitland is flung down and stranded due to a traffic accident he got involved on his way back home. His crashed car is stranded in the median strip, which he later recognizes to be a blind spot triangulated between the traffic flow of motorways and high-rise condos. Remaining helpless and out of sight of the surveillance cameras for a long time, Ballard’s concrete islander, survivor, and ironically an architect, Maitland

reclaims this neglected contemporary space, repurposes the discarded materials there as “home”, and sustains life in this concrete island. The median strip that Maitland is stranded can be interpreted a surplus of the city and a blind spot of contemporary urban planning. In *Concrete Island*, Ballard attempts to merge the temporal and the spatial dimensions, and he utilizes the urban space to symbolically stand for the condition of the ecologically challenged humans in the Anthropocene; alienated from their once-pristine natural habitat, isolated in the built environments of their own creation, and trapped in the Sisyphean cycle of their anthropogenic ecological fate. In this regard, this paper aims to discuss Ballard’s literal and metaphorical treatment of the “concrete island” as a fruitful symbiosis to explore and illustrate the interaction between the city and the country as his fictional characters - being the denizens of this environmentally challenged ecopolis- experience both the benefits and setbacks of the intersection of the urban and the rural spaces.

Bio: Holding her BA and MA degrees in English Language and Literature, Fatma Aykanat lastly obtained her PhD degree at Hacettepe University, British Cultural Studies Doctoral Programme in 2018 with her doctoral thesis on the ecocritical and ecopsychological readings of the selected examples of the British Climate Change Fiction in the Anthropocene. Currently, she works as Asst. Prof. at Cappadocia University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature. She is also the Book Review Editor of *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities*, the chair of Cappadocia University Sustainability Commission, and the executive member of Cappadocia University Environmental Humanities Research Center. Aykanat’s recent publications include “The Contemporary Reflections of Tengrism in Turkish Climate Change Fiction” which appeared in *Turkish Ecocriticism: From Neolithic to Contemporary Timescapes* (Eds. Serpil Oppermann and Sinan Akilli, 2020), and “Dark Humorous Mode in Anthropocene Fictions: A Contemporary Carnival of Victorian Grotesques in Liz Jensen’s *Ark Baby*” in *NALANS Journal of Narrative and Language Studies: Special Issue on Ecocriticism* (2020).

Panel 2: Climate Fiction

Chair: Drew Thornton

15 June, 9:30-11:00 | WBS 0.006

Jesse van Amelsvoort: Of Birds, Land, and Windmills: The Silent Destruction of a Small Village in Juli Zeh's Unterleuten

Juli Zeh's novel *Unterleuten* (2016) is set in an eponymous, fictional German village, an hour driving north of Berlin. Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, the planned construction of wind turbines near the village rips open historical wounds and threatens to tear apart the village's social fabric. In this presentation, I analyse *Unterleuten* as realist climate fiction that reflects on the challenges posed to communities in the transition to a sustainable and green future.

Torn between the past and the future, the village central to Zeh's novel raises questions of land ownership, community, and the pull of history. As the government plans to build wind turbines, *Unterleuten's* inhabitants, both old and new, are forced to confront their region's post-communist legacies, especially the dismantling of the collective farms as they were run under Communism. As hard as the move from centralized, community-owned farms to capitalist, individual property was at the time, the spectre of certain individuals profiting from selling the land once more divides the village. Central to *Unterleuten* is thus this relationship to the land, with nearby fields being a breeding spot for a rare species of birds adding another, non-human layer to the discussion. Who owns the land, and what is it for?

Ultimately, as an example of climate fiction situated before the Anthropocene catastrophe has fully hit, *Unterleuten* engages with discussions on how the transition to a circular economy should take shape in Germany and, by extension, Europe. The destruction brought by the decision to build wind turbines acts as a warning sign that a transition too hastily made runs the risk of destroying the world as we know it in another way.

Bio: Jesse van Amelsvoort is lecturer in modern European culture at the University of Amsterdam. He is interested in the cultural representations of societal transformations such as migration, climate change, and new notions of identity and belonging. He has published on these topics in *Dutch Crossing*, *Global Perspectives*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, and *Politique européenne*. Together with Nicoletta Pireddu, he has co-edited the forthcoming special issue "Imagining Communities, Multilingually," with *parallax*.

David Gray: Slow post-apocalypse and distorted pastoral in Jessie Greengrass' The High House

Jessie Greengrass's cli-fi novel *The High House* (2021) is set in a near-future Britain and is chiefly dystopic in its depiction of the effects of Anthropogenic climate change on people and landscape. Set mostly in rural and coastal East Anglia, the story is noticeably devoid of urban spaces, digital technological, social media and the overall speed of modern life. Any yet, despite the rural setting, the novel's post-apocalyptic narrative distorts any tendency towards easy pastoral associations. As Terry Gifford tells us, the long pastoral tradition is based on the paradigm of Theocritus *Idylls*, as "a vision of simplicity of life in contact with nature" (16). This heavily idealised representation of life in the country has been central to

the Western literary tradition yet has changed dramatically in the early modern era. This paper will show how Greengrass employs traditional features of pastoral, such as a simpler, slower bucolic life, nostalgia, and a life lived in harmony with the seasons, together with more modern forms of the genre such as anti-pastoral or the harsh realities of rural life to present a form of pastoral disfigured by climate change. In addition, this paper will argue that *The High House* relies on elements of slowness related to Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence": "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." (2) Ultimately, this paper argues that the conflation of rural slowness - a staple feature of the pastoral tradition - with the slow violence of climate change are central to the novel's dystopic nature.

Bio: David Gray is a senior lecturer in English at the School of Language, Literatures and Learning, at Dalarna University, Sweden. He has published on eighteenth and nineteenth century British and Irish literature, climate fiction and the dystopian novel, as well as ecocriticism and Shakespeare. He was also editor of the e-journal *Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*.

Małgorzata Sugiera: Cities and Their People: Dwelling in the Anthropic Time of N.K. Jemisin's New York

In his *The Neganthropocene* (2018) Bernard Stiegler rethinks Derrida's 'history of the supplement' as organogenesis and neganthropological différance within the framework of thermodynamics to draw the consequences that follow from today's critical phase of the Anthropocene. What is important in the context of the present article, the French philosopher counts cities among those exorganic processes of psychic, collective and technical individuation which condition the form of life of the noetic beings. As he writes, each city is "the social concretion of a society individualizing itself exorganically" (121). Therefore, it institutes a kind of soul (a sense of place), founded on diversely symbolized history as well as forms a learning territory capable of thinking and territorializing.

However, in the critical phase of the Anthropocene the city is threatened by algorithmic governmentality that is changing the place of human dwelling into an automated, "dead" city. For this reason Stiegler emphasizes that "a new geopolitics of exosomatization" (121) has to be elaborated. In my article I will read Brooklyn author N.K. Jemisin's speculative duology *The Great Cities—A City We Became* (2020) and *The World We Make* (2022)—as an attempt at imagining and implementing such a new geopolitics. Jemisin not only depicts New York as a new stage of a différance that remains to be made. She also shows it as a great battleground of two competing cosmic forces: entropy of Lovecraftian automatization and negentropy of noetic bifurcation. The latter becomes embodied in five people as avatars of New York's boroughs who have to fight against the ancient enemy of living cities as well as the city's legacies of racism and bigotry for a (better) future of dwelling in the cosmos as process within which localities are produced.

Bio: Małgorzata Sugiera is a Full Professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland, and Head of the Department for Performativity Studies. She was a Research Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, DAAD, the American Andrew Mellon Foundation, and the International Research Center "Interweaving Performance Cultures" at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Her research concentrates on performativity

theories, speculative and decolonial studies, particularly in the context of the history of science. She published and co-edited several books in Polish as well as in English and German, most recently *Crisis and Communitas: Performative Concepts of Commonality in Arts and Politics* (Routledge 2023). She carries out a three-year international research project *Epidemics and Communities in Critical Theories, Artistic Practices and Speculative Fabulations of the Last Decades* funded by the National Science Centre (NCN).

Panel 3: Technology & the Future City

Chair: Daniel Davison-Vecchione

15 June, 9:30-11:00 | WBS 1.009

Karolina Pawlik: Dazzle and Utopia: Reconsidering the Relationship Between the Light, Technology and the Arrogant City

This paper offers an inquiry into the production of new imaginary locales by reflecting on technologically advanced lightscares of major Chinese cities and the message they convey against the climate crisis. The broad spectrum of ideas and completed illumination projects accomplished in the past decade, varying from the dreams of hanging the man-made moon above the city of Chengdu to Shanghai's constantly upgraded synchronized skyline illumination, rises many significant questions and offers valuable insights concerning the urbanization and imagination of the future, digitalization and energy futures in relation to the built environment and ecosystem.

I propose to conduct an analysis of two complementary aspects of some of those projects eagerly developed by the Chinese state to project the story of an accomplished modernization. On the one hand, this is a story of full control over the city, its ecosystem, and surrounding landscape (this is particularly well seen in cases of cities which include in its illuminations rivers, surrounding hills and water reservoirs), even if occasionally these illuminations need to be turned off due to the excessive waves of heat and energy shortages. This is still a story of urban modernity beyond the Anthropocene. The arrogant city is supposedly unthreatened, self-reliant and smartly nested in a high-tech bubble. It is celebrated through carefully crafted and edited short videos and photographs (occasionally removing excessive pollution or other inconvenient components). On the other hand, these artificial, immersive locales, blurring the boundaries between the actual urban fabric, nature, and virtual reality, reveal the broader mechanisms of climate change denial. This paper proposes to reconsider relationship of major Chinese cities with nature in the context of the contradictory actions providing opportunities for temporary imaginary escapes from the burdened, unlivable city, while implementing solutions that enhance harmful impact on the city and its surroundings.

Bio: Karolina Pawlik is an anthropologist and scholar on visual culture in China, and has been based in China as a researcher and academic teacher since 2012. Between 2018 and 2022, Karolina worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry in Shanghai. One of her major research projects investigated interrelations between calligraphy, design and creative thinking. Another one formed an inquiry into light and urban lighting in Shanghai in relation to communication, soft power, art and heritage. She co-edited the book *Creative Industries and Digital Transformation in China* (2022), and has published a number of other articles and scholarly essays. Karolina holds a PhD in Cultural Studies, and currently works as an Associate Professor at the School of Film and TV Arts at Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University in Suzhou. She is also a poet and creative non-fiction writer.

Laura Mai: Anthropocene Environments: On the Absence-Presence of the (Non-)Urban in Data-Driven Climate Governance

Urban spaces have emerged as key sites in global efforts to respond to the unfolding climate crisis. The Paris Agreement, the most recently concluded international treaty on climate cooperation, for instance, recognises the important role of cities in reaching globally agreed climate mitigation and adaptation targets. Concomitantly, data have been mobilised as a central means to organise efforts to respond to climate change at the local level. The *Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy*, an influential network of more than 11,500 city administrations, for example, has developed the ‘Common Reporting Framework’ as a worldwide standard for measuring and managing urban greenhouse gas emissions and quantifying local climate risks. Based on ethnographic research of how the *Covenant of Mayors’* Common Reporting Framework is influencing cities in Malaysia, Colombia and England, this paper asks critical questions about data-driven climate governance in (non-)urban spaces: How do data construct the city as a site of climate governance? And specifically, who and what comes into view, and who and what is marginalised, when relying on technologies of quantification, disclosure, and digital processing to render the city governable? Given that many spaces which epitomise the climate crisis are located outside of the city, such as sites of extraction, production, and disposal, as well as global energy and transport infrastructures, the paper is specifically interested in the absence-presence of the (non-)urban in data-driven climate governance. Conceptually, the paper speculatively proposes the notion of ‘Anthropocene Environments’ as an alternative frame for denoting (non-)urban spaces as dense knottings of social, ecological, digital, infrastructural and other dimensions. The paper thus marks an attempt to work across artificial divides between the urban and the non-urban and offer a more relational analytics of how spaces are become implicated in the global climate crisis response envisioned by the Paris Agreement.

Bio: Laura Mai is an interdisciplinary postdoctoral researcher working within the [Constitutionalizing in the Anthropocene](#) project at the Department of Public Law and Governance at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. Laura applies a socio-legal perspective that combines ethnographic methods with theoretical registers from the social sciences and the humanities to investigate how ways of thinking and doing law are becoming reconfigured under conditions of the unfolding climate crisis. Focusing on the interplay between global, transnational, and local climate governance, Laura’s recent research has explored how digital infrastructures influence the design and implementation of climate programmes in (non-)urban spaces. Laura has published in *Climate Law*, *Global Environmental Politics*, *Earth System Governance*, *Transnational Legal Theory* and *Global Policy*.

Kim Bown: Un/built environments in E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops*

This paper explores un/built environments in E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* (1909) and places the novella in conversation with discussions of increased surveillance, data collection and management, predictive technologies, and automation in today's smart cities.

Forster's text asks what the individual may relinquish in order to exist in a technologically 'improved' environment. In the story, the Machine's function is to protect humanity from an 'un-inhabitable' earth's surface. In carrying out its function, the Machine forces humanity to become reliant upon it by tailoring to and catering for humanities every need.

The novella's solution to the Machine's complete control is the total collapse and breakdown of the built environment as Vashti's son, Kuno, questions and resists machine society. Yet - despite a seemingly revolutionary rejection of the Machine in the text - Kuno's resistance relies on symbolic notions of unbuilt environments.

In his analysis of literary representations of the countryside and the city, Raymond Williams briefly mentions *The Machine Stops* as an early literary example of 'self-enclosed automatic cities, in which the inhabitants cannot believe in a world outside' that have been 'imagined again and again, often with the theme of an attempt to break out into the wild'. (Williams, 1973)

In offering a detailed analysis of un/built environments in *The Machine Stops*, I argue that resistance in the smart city today should not rely on symbolic notions of the unbuilt but instead place importance on who owns, uses and benefits from the latest developments in digital systems as they become ubiquitous and habitual parts of everyday urban environments.

Bio: Kim Bown's creative writing and research questions surveillance, data collection and innovative forms of control operating in the digital urban space today. She is a PhD candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London, a director at The London Science Fiction Research Community, and founding and former general editor at The Hong Kong Review of Books.

Panel 4: Gardens, Plants & Forests

Chair: Owain Burrell

15 June, 14:00-15:30 | WBS 0.006

Owain Burrell: Fiona Mozley's *Elmet* and the English Xylosphere

The forest has a long history as an imagined site of resistance in England. This has been figured as resistance to tyranny, as in the myth of Robin Hood, and resistance to urban encroachment, typified by the signing of the Charter of the Forest in 1217. Particularly after the 1707 Act of Union, the forest increasingly became a site of English nationalism, a Romantic bastion of untouched nature, opposed and threatened by industry-orientated Britishness (Nitzke & Braunbeck 2022). This resistance was not radical but highly conservative, the opposition to deforestation driven by belief in the absolute royal privilege to hunt in the forest (Pogue Harrison 1992, Schama 2004). This imaginary of the forest resulted in the archetype of the woodland outlaw, who demonstrates the moral failings of the urban legal system by operating outside of it.

Fiona Mozley's novel *Elmet* (2017) adopts the forest outlaw archetype, with its resistance to British state logics of extraction and quantified space, but by incorporating contemporary ecocritical thought it transforms the English forest from a conservative imaginary into the locus of a radical, environmentally conscious English nationalism. *Elmet* provocatively suggests the forest as the site of community-organising, something which has become impossible in the deindustrialised British city. *Elmet* is symptomatic of a wider turn in literature toward envisioning a radical Englishness based in the forest, most prominently demonstrated by Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* (2009). Following Gardiner and Stone's model of the 'Scottish lithosphere' (2020), I argue that this literary turn represents the imaginative genesis of an 'English xylosphere', a woodscape which provides the space for thinking about a progressive English nationalism. *Elmet* frames the English xylosphere as a space of communal degrowth, against a British state urbanism.

Bio: Owain Burrell is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. His thesis is titled *The Grammar School Ideal in British Literature 1945-1990*, which investigates the cultural history of the grammar school as an institutional tool of the British state to transform regional schoolchildren into British citizens. He is interested in regional literatures, post-British imaginaries, and meritocracy and productive logics in British cultural contexts.

Paul Dobraszczuk: Strangling cities: Aerial roots, architecture and the unruly agency of plants

In recent years, attempts have been made to make buildings 'bioreceptive' - namely to redesign their facades as substrates for organic growth of plants, such as mosses. This to challenge the growing environmental destructiveness of the most widely-used building materials, concrete and steel. However, in most cases, the way these materials are colonised by vegetation is controlled by us, whether in the design stages or in ongoing maintenance once built.

This paper asks what cities might become if we negotiated a 'natural contract' between plants and architecture. It does so by focusing on the unruly agency of one particular family

of plants: the Moraceae, or strangler figs. There are endemic in both tropical and mediterranean cities and are characterised by aerial root systems which, over time, can grow to monstrous proportions.

This paper first considers how strangler figs have created distinct kinds of plant/architecture entanglements in Palermo and Hong Kong, linking these with speculative proposals such as David Fletcher and Juan Azulay's *Parasitic Vegetal Structure* (2021). It then focuses on how strangler figs have been used to grow architectural structures, namely, the living root bridges created by indigenous people in northern India. These ancient structures have been read as seamless melds of nature and artifice - an example of a truly organic method of building. Yet, in other contexts, that balance may shift in favour of the plant: for example, Brian Aldiss's novel *Hothouse* (1961), which imagines a single strangler fig on a far future Earth enveloping an entire continent. This paper presents a forceful challenge to instrumental understandings of plants in architecture that tend to ignore or prohibit vegetal agency. By linking symbolic and material readings of plants, and architectural practice and speculation, this paper expands what plants might actually do to our buildings and cities.

Bio: Dr Paul Dobraszczyk is a lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, and is currently researching the links between plants and architecture for a book *Botanical Architecture: Design and the Vegetal*, to be published by Reaktion in 2024. He is the author of *Animal Architecture: Beasts, Building and Us* (Reaktion, 2023), *Architecture and Anarchism: Building Without Authority* (Paul Holberton, 2021), and *Future Cities: Architecture and the Imagination* (Reaktion, 2019), amongst others.

Selmar Schülein: Cohabitation in *Dotopia*: Exploring a more-than-human *Relationscape* in the Inner Periphery of Berlin

By outlining the theoretical guiding figure of *Dotopia* (a conceptual association linking *Utopia*, *Dys-topia*, and *Doing*), the PhD-project seeks to develop an empirically saturated perspective of reading sustainability as a spatial process that emerges from a diffuse more-than-human doing. This due to the increasingly salient pitfalls of feasibility approaches that are not immune to re-imagining ('Western') humans as the centered protagonists of change, and sustainability narratives that, however well-intentioned, often become complicit as the core drivers of the Anthropocene.

My post-qualitative empirical field research focuses on two neighboring urban green spaces in Neukölln, a district of Berlin: the „Prinzessinnengärten“, a DIY community garden project, and the „Anita-Berber- Park“, an area of minimal design, which can be described as a „Brache“ (Wasteland), as it emerged from a planning and economic moratorium. As an Inner Periphery that can be categorized neither as city nor countryside, nature nor culture, the „Brache“ serves as an ideal site for investigating the complex and dynamic relationships between human and non- human entities (plants, animals, streets, vehicles, ‚waste‘, lights, etc.). This zone is at the same time a resistant heterotopia against the utilitarian regime of modern urban development, as well as a resilience space for the plants and animals that exist there against the progressive sealing of land. In this context, the neighboring community garden, as a people-shaped place, offers a comparative template for a prominent imagination of sustainability.

The research aims to address the increasingly precarious dichotomy between 'urban' and 'rural' areas in the burning backdrop of the climate and biodiversity crisis. And closely

related to this the urgent need to move beyond the individual- centered educational paradigm, with the objective to explore alternative forms of relational pedagogy in posthumanist ‘urban’ spaces (also as sites of knowledge production). By revealing the unseen agency from which ‘urban’ Relationscapes emerge, this project seeks to identify potentials for “vitalocene” (Schroer 2022) cohabitations away from capitalocene commodification and dualistic nature- protecting stewardship phantasms.

It therefore investigates whether the partly euphoric attributions and expectations associated with Wastelands – „they serve as portals into alternative conceptualizations of agency, identity and modernity (Gandy 2022, p. 250) – are reflected in the analyses of the empirical field research.

To do this, the project develops a forensic approach inspired by „Investigative Aesthetics“ (Fuller & Weizman 2021). It is characterized by collecting and analyzing contact signatures in spaces of spontaneous green that reveal relational patterns of placemaking and their underlying intersectional power dynamics.

Bio: Selmar Schülein is a PhD candidate specializing in relational theory and educational philosophy with a focus on socio-ecological-technical transformation. He works as a research associate at the Chair of General Education at the University of Bayreuth and teaches at the University of Bamberg. Schülein’s research investigates the value and potentials of dense more-than-human spaces as arenas for sustainability as a spatial process in the Anthropocene, drawing on interdisciplinary concepts like post-qualitative methods and critical posthumanist theories. With a background of degrees in Philosophy, German Literatures, Cultural Theory, and Pedagogy, he previously worked as a lecturer and research associate at the Chair of Political Theory at the University of Bamberg. Schülein has collaborated with artists and theater collectives (such as “Rimini Protokoll”) to explore urban sites through aesthetic and embodied strategies. He is currently organizing a German major conference on spatial productions in the Anthropocene with the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Additionally, Schülein’s essays and features on socio-political issues have been published in prominent print media outlets across the German-speaking world.

Panel 5: Climate Change & the City

Chair: Jing Zhao

15 June, 14:00-15:30 | WBS 1.009

Alessia Vacca: EU Green Deal and energy efficiency of buildings: a solution for the energy crisis?

This Buildings, which account for nearly 40% of global energy demand today and are responsible for 36% of CO₂ emissions in the EU, play a critical role: they are the largest source of energy demand globally and are of paramount importance addressing climate change. Sustainable commercial buildings use less energy, have reduced environmental impact and improve the life of those who work or live in these buildings. Disclose building energy data is of paramount importance in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, have smarter government, energy efficiency, consumer transparency, If a building purchaser considers two comparable buildings and discovers that they have huge different energy efficiency ratings, he or she will be influenced. Investing in energy efficient measures can offer significant returns. Green buildings improved marketability. In the EU some Directives were adopted on this topic. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) (Directive 2002/91/EC127) was the main EU policy instrument to improve the energy performance of buildings. It introduced a framework for energy performance certification and called for energy performance legislation in each of the EU's member states. This Directive requires development of performance and inspection standards as well as energy performance certification for commercial, residential, and government buildings¹. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, adopted in 2002, was a key element to improve energy performance of buildings. Directive 2002/91/ EC has been amended consequently Directive 2010/31/EU was adopted which is the main legislative instrument to reduce the energy consumption of buildings. A map has been set out at EU level, as regards new buildings, with these required to be nearly-zero energy by 2020 or 2018 in the case of buildings owned and occupied by public authorities. Nearly-zero buildings means buildings that have a very high performance. The nearly-zero or very low amount of energy required should be covered to a very significant extent by energy from renewable sources, including energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby. The public sector should show a leading example investing in such buildings. On 25 October 2012, the EU adopted the Directive 2012/27/EU. In 2018 a new Directive has been adopted, EU Directive 2018/844136, which includes measures that will accelerate buildings renovation also making them smarter. The European Union's 2020 Climate and Energy Package (known as the "20-20-20" package) set three crucial objectives for 2020: a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels, raising the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20% and improve of 20% the EU's energy efficiency. The new directives set new more ambitious targets, in particular two new targets for the EU for 2030: a binding renewable energy target of at least 32% and an energy efficiency target of at least 32,5%. These targets are more ambitious than the previous ones (20%) and their aim is to boost growth and jobs, reduce energy bills, improve air quality, Europe's industrial competitiveness and energy poverty and, if well implemented, it is possible to reduce gas emissions of 45% by 2030 relative to 1990. At the moment the existing target under the Paris Agreement is reducing greenhouse gas emissions at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990, the clean energy package for all Europeans regarding greenhouse gas emissions reduction has a target of 45% thus another further improvement.

About 35% of the EU's buildings are over 50 years old and almost 75% of the building stock is not energy efficient. According to Directive EU 844 of 2018 renovation of existing buildings can lead to significant energy savings, can create economic, social and environmental benefits and stimulate the economy. The new Directive underlines the paramount role of renovation of buildings. EU countries can set mechanisms to help finance renovations that make buildings energy efficient and smarter. The European Green Deal further improved these targets and it is clear that the European Union considers the energy efficiency of buildings as a tool to overcome the energy crisis.

Bio: Dr. Avv. Alessia Vacca started to work at the beginning of 2020 at the School of Law of the University of Lincoln, before she was working, since 2013, at the School of Law of the University of Sassari, Italy. At the School of Law of the University of Sassari Alessia was working on a research project regarding Transparency in the Energy Law sector and lecturing on Public Law (Energy Law and Local Government Law). She is also a qualified lawyer in Italy. Alessia holds a PhD in Law from the University of Aberdeen, UK, where she also worked tutoring EU Law and Foundations of Private Law at the School of Law. She graduated in Law (Laurea in Giurisprudenza Vecchio Ordinamento, which corresponds to a five-year degree) at the University of Cagliari, Italy, with 110/110 cum laude, presenting a thesis on Administrative Law. She has been a trainee lawyer in Italy but also in London for 6 months (as a winner of the Leonardo da Vinci EU award) and in Barcelona (Spain), and a lawyer in Italy in several law firms. She has also been contract researcher at the University of Cagliari. In 2009 she was awarded with the CB Davidson Bequest from the University of Aberdeen (CB Davidson Trust). She attended several post-graduate courses in Energy Law, Administrative Law, EU Law, International Law and Human Rights Law in Italy and abroad (e.g. abroad among others: International Public Law at the Hague Academy, the Netherlands, Human Rights in the EU at the University Carlos III Madrid, Spain, Cooperation among Mediterranean Sea Countries, University of Marseille, France).

Fidel Meraz: Sustainable technology in architecture: some implications on education and practice

This paper first describes understandings of technology in architecture nowadays pervasive in the globalised world. It focuses more specifically on the perception of sustainable technologies in architectural teaching and its impact in practice. First, two possible visions of the challenge of technology integration in architecture are acknowledged. Secondly, the appropriateness of conceiving architecture from a more holistic concept of human dwelling is suggested, proposing a renewed awareness of the technological aspects. Finally, the current understanding of technology within architecture, in particular within the learning stages is challenged, first analytically and then with an integrative intention.

Bio: Fidel is Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture and Environment. He has an established career in architectural education in Mexico (Anahuac University) the United Kingdom (Universities of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent and Suffolk) and Asia (India, Sri Lanka). He has participated in the planning, validation and pedagogical direction of architecture programmes, coordinated international collaborations, and performed as an external examiner of these disciplines in India, and as link tutor in UWE's partner City School of Architecture in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is the Programme Leader of the MArch Architecture and contributes to teaching and learning in architectural philosophy, theory,

history and design at the undergraduate, master and doctoral levels. Fidel's research focuses on philosophical approaches, mainly through phenomenology, to relationships between spatiality, temporality and architectural places, as well as on collective memory, heritage conservation, cultural identity and perceptions of wellbeing. He has contributed with articles in books, journals and conferences at international level. He is peer reviewer and member of editorial committees for several publications in the UK and abroad.

Jing Zhao: How Not to Become an Axiom Human (the Chair People in WALL·E) – The paradox of energy efficiency and human behaviour

Buildings are the UK's second-largest source of emissions. The household sector in particular, contributes to more than a quarter of the overall energy consumption and GHG emission, with space heating contributing to 63% of household energy consumption. In alignment with setting the sixth carbon target, the government published the Net Zero Strategy (NZS) in 2021, aiming to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Sustainable building standard, such as the German Passivhaus standard has gained popularity as an efficient way to reduce operational energy use. The Passivhaus model emphasises a high standard of building fabric insulation and controlled ventilation with heat recovery in order to achieve comfort and reduce energy use. The implication is that environmental control is achieved by the building fabric and ventilation system with little need for significant occupant interaction or behaviour change in order to achieve comfort and energy efficiency. This paper challenges such views with empirical data from case studies of houses in the UK built to the Passivhaus standard. It uses inductive analysis of interview data, documenting user interactions with the houses, and opinions and attitudes of the occupants towards living in a Passivhaus. The results of this study show both comfort-driven and energy saving-driven behavioural adaptations among the occupants and that the Passivhaus system demands a high level of occupant interaction in order to achieve both comfort and energy efficiency. 'Designing out' occupant's behaviour and reinforcing the image of automated comfort without facilitating occupant behavioural adaptations, could lead to user dissatisfaction and energy performance gap. To conclude, designing for energy efficiency or passive design does not necessarily mean designing for 'passive people'. Behaviour adaptation is key in reducing energy demand even in a high energy standard dwelling as Passivhaus

Bio: Dr. Jing (Jill) Zhao is a Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the University of West of England. Her research aims to integrate the human element within various social and cultural context into the design of sustainable architecture. This relates directly to the occupants comfort, wellbeing, experience and behaviour, with focuses on a socio-technical approach to the interaction between human and non-human elements within the built environment. She has received Architectural training and education in both China and the U.K, where she also practiced in a number of international architectural practices. She completed her PhD degree in Architecture at the University of Edinburgh in 2018, Her thesis examined the sociotechnical perspective of Passivhaus methodology. Since then, she has worked at the University of Lincoln, leading the BA(Hons) Architecture programme prior to joining UWE.

Yahya Lavaf-Pour: Atmospheres as Environments: Metaphysics of Sustainable Architecture

In this discussion I provide a critique of prevalent sustainable architecture practices and propose a new conceptual framework for sustainable architecture. I argue that current sustainable building standards have failed to capture a more inclusive worldview, which has led to a lack of implementation by influential architects. It is noted that much of the literature on sustainable architecture has taken a positivistic perspective, with few articles exploring non-positivistic, theoretical viewpoints from humanities disciplines of architecture. To address this gap, I use Ken Wilber's integral theory as an epistemological tool to develop a more inclusive view of sustainable architecture, and to approach design by constructing atmospheres and environments. I invite architects to practice sustainability through the lenses of this novel integral framework: to entangle subjective and objective, individual and collective worldviews, and to exercise physics and metaphysics of sustainable design; to reject the commodification of architecture and move from a "simplicity and mitigation" to "complexity and causation" ideology.

Bio: Dr Yahya Lavaf-Pour is a Senior Lecturer and the Programme Leader for the BSc Architecture course at UWE, Bristol. His research focuses on the exploration of geometrical form in architectural design, with an emphasis on spatial sensibility and responsiveness to the environment and preexisting conditions. Dr. Lavaf-Pour's current work centres around theoretical and critical sustainability in architecture, which seeks to entangle social, theoretical, psycho-physiological, and ecological considerations into sustainable design practices. This emerging field aims to go beyond the technocratic aspects of sustainability, such as energy efficiency and materials, to address the complex and interconnected social and cultural dimensions of sustainable architecture. His research contributes to this field by exploring new ways of understanding and practicing sustainable architecture through a critical and theoretical lens in particular, Wilber's "Integral Theory" and Derrida's concept of "Metaphysics of Presence"

Panel 6: Creative Writing
Chair: Jesse van Amelsvoort
15 June, 16:00-17:30 | WBS 0.006

Drew Thornton: Place-based creative writing and narratives of futurity at Lake Monger, Perth Western Australia

Place-based creative practices constitute individual and collective efforts to think through the relationship between people and place—a dialogue that has become increasingly urgent in an era of climate change and ecological and social upheaval, as recognised by scholars such as Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Povinelli and Amitav Ghosh. The products of creative engagements with place are informed not just by the relationship between an individual and their environment, but are also determined in part by social context: disciplinary and/or creative conventions, cultural perspectives, and existing narratives of place.

Lake Monger in Perth, Western Australia, is one of the few remaining large wetland bodies within Perth's well-developed inner suburbs. In this research, the lake is approached as a case-study that explores the textual representation of suburban ecological spaces. The research investigates the various categories and genres of text that engagements with place can produce, seeking to understand how these different ways of imagining place can open up or foreclose different visions of the future of Lake Monger.

A year-long writer's residency was conducted at Lake Monger, from 2022-23, as novel method of enquiry into the future imaginary of the lake. During the residency, local writers produced original contributions to the body of literature concerning the lake's future—their creative works offer further insight into the connection between the place itself, its present-day environmental and social imaginaries, and the kinds of futures that might be possible.

This paper introduces Lake Monger and some of the narratives associated with the lake, followed by some discussion of the implications these narratives may have for future conservation, management and/or development of the lake and reserve. The paper concludes with examples of work produced during the residency, explicating the various ways they attempt to navigate Anthropocene futures.

Bio: Drew Thornton is a Higher Degree by Research student in Curtin University's School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry. His research explores human relationships to environment and place, how the mediation of these relationships through text, and how human, text and environment converge to produce imagined futures. Drew completed the degree of Master of Biological Arts in 2019 at the SymbioticA artistic research laboratory, University of Western Australia, and has subsequently contributed work to the edited volume *Fantasy and Myth in the Anthropocene* (2022). His PhD research at Curtin University is due for completion in 2024..

Ray Davenport: Practical Utopia: A Vision of the Semi-Rural Devonshire Village

In September-November 2022, I participated in ‘Practical Utopias: An Exploration of the Possible’. This project led by Margaret Atwood was launched in response to the ongoing climate emergency. It aimed to provoke creative, practical and hopeful responses to this crisis through individual and collaborative research and practice.

The utopia that I constructed during this project is titled The Telacene; a combination of the Latin word for ‘web’ (tela) and the ancient Greek word for ‘new’ (cene). The Telacene is titled as such in recognition that disrupting assumptions of human exceptionalism and reorientating ourselves towards philosophies that view humankind as one of many threads within a web of interconnected living beings is central to creating a better future with lasting changes.

This project, alongside my existing PhD research into literary representations of climate trauma, has demonstrated that it is not only essential to change how we behave, but also how we think and what we value. This paper will be delivered in two parts. The first section will outline the framework of the project and the main research that contributed my imaginings of the Telacene. The second section will consist of a reading from a short piece of fiction that depicts this practical utopia. In keeping with the project framework, this piece is set ten years in the future. The narrative takes place within Bere Alston, a semi-rural Devonshire village. It depicts three residents, a care assistant, a secondary school student and a farmer as they navigate their way within a world that has not escaped climate change but has found methods to mitigate and co-exist with these changes.

Bio: Ray Davenport is a second year PhD student studying English Literature at Plymouth University. Her current research involves examining representations of climate trauma in twenty-first century fiction from the Global North.

(Lucia) Xu - Luo 吟光: Utopia through transmedia narratives: from the future city to ecodystopia

My speculative fiction *The Memory Puzzles of Hong Kong Drifters* 港漂记忆拼图, a close reading with emphasis on the future city, eco- cities and multispecies design. This is an urban novel in which the chaos of memory blends itself into the chaos of narrative, as numerous plots stir in sometimes “silkpunk” motions as a metaphor for the epidemic, and end up with a new Hong Kong – a submarine ecological underwater city. Additionally, I would also touch upon the comparison between my Eastern Fantasy series *Scroll of the Sky and Sea* 天海小卷, forged in the aesthetics of classical mythology, extending from the mythological universe of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* about art- utopia and ecodystopia (human/nonhuman, nature/culture). The protagonist, a “bard” (protector of music), born a member of the romantic Mermaid (鲛人), visited the freeflying Harpies (羽人) in the celestial palace, and travelled through the human world filled with song. An attempt to combine agile imagination and weighty history, to explore an area of academic interest with fantasy writing such as identity, gender and art. All the works are presented through the trans- media and Distributed Narrative approach (a hypothesis for future narrative), including novels, poems, RPG games, music, new media art, AR, etc.

Bio: Lucia Luo Xu (呷今光) is an award-winning novelist interested in fantastic writing. She is a member of China Writers Association, and the executive director of HK Writers Association and World Chinese Science Fiction Association. She is the author of *The Memory Puzzles of Hong Kong Drifters*, *Scroll of the Sky and Sea* and *An Ulysses* published in Chinese, co-editor-in-chief of *Nine Cities, Millions of Futures*, and co-writer of *China Science Fiction Development Yearbook 2021*. Her science fiction *Emotion Alchemist* has been adapted to mechanical installation art, winning Organizing Committee Award during the 8th Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture. Her works have won honors of the Chinese Internet Literature Newcomer Award of the Year, Young Poets of the October Poetry Society and Taiwan King Car Fantasy Fiction Prize.

Panel 7: Urbanization & the City

Chair: Heather McKnight

15 June, 16:00-17:30 | WBS 1.009

Daniel Davison-Vecchione: Max Weber, the City, and Classical Social Theory: Between Despair and Hope

The city occupies a central place in classical social theory, often seen as both an expression and a driver of the historical processes associated with modernity. In this sociological imaginary, the city comes to exemplify dual aspects of modern existence: its sources of hope and despair, freedom and entrapment, dynamism and malaise. This paper argues that one can understand these complex dualities in how classical social theorists viewed the city and its modern significance in terms of utopia and dystopia. That is, the kind of imagination on display in classical social theory has an evaluative, future-oriented dimension akin to the kind of imagination on display in many works of speculative fiction, with the city coming to embody both the utopian and the dystopian aspects of modernity. The paper furthers this argument through a discussion of Max Weber's writings on the city, which are increasingly recognised as complicating his often bleak view of modern culture as inexorably caught up in processes of rationalisation, bureaucratisation, and disenchantment that leave the modern self encased in a "shell as hard as steel". This is because, to Weber, the city as a social formation was born as a "revolutionary usurpation" against feudal and other pre-existing forms of domination, creating a new kind of fraternal association with its own novel type of legitimacy relation. At this contingent, historical juncture, forms of democratically interpreted power coalesced and were innovatively articulated as a cultural imaginary. As this paper elaborates, Weber's view of urban creative power and its significance to modernity represents a "utopian" strand in Weber's otherwise dystopian perspective on modern culture, which raises thought-provoking comparisons between, on the one hand, Weber's social-theoretical project and, on the other hand, forms of speculative fiction that complicate the traditional categories of utopia and dystopia.

Bio: Daniel Davison-Vecchione holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Cambridge. His research interests include social theory and the history and philosophy of social science. His PhD thesis investigated the interwar American reception of Georg Simmel and Max Weber and its long-term consequences for Anglophone sociology. Since 2019, he has been collaborating with the literary scholar Sean Seeger (University of Essex) on a series of journal articles on the relationship between speculative fiction and social theory.

Danxue Zhou: Social Inequalities and Spatial Disparity: The Representation of Urban Villages in Post-2000s Chinese Science Fiction

Chinese science fiction is on the fringe compared to Western science fiction or classic science fiction. In post-2000s Chinese SF works, cities have been re-imagined, and urban villages are represented as the boundary between the city and the countryside. The pace of urban development in China has been speeding up over the last four decades since the reform and opening up. Urban development in China is featured firstly by "progress and advancement" in terms of expansion, affluence, mobility, and diversity, and at the same time, "dislocation and tension" in terms of inequality, uncertainty, degradation, and confrontation. China's rapid urbanization, characterized by large-scale rural-urban

migration and radial expansion of urban built-up areas, produces a new type of urban neighborhood, namely the “urban village” (*chengzhongcun*). The urban village cannot be seen simply as an obstacle to urbanization. It also plays a positive role in China’s rapid urban development. The urban village embodies the problems brought about by rapid urbanization. Migrant workers have witnessed urban development and have no place to live after the cities have taken shape, so they have to coexist with the cities in urban villages. Representative works include *Wild Future* by Wang Weilian and *Flower of Shazui* by Chen Qiufan. Different images of “subaltern,” including rural migrants and original villagers, were created to reveal and reflect on intersectional social problems in post- 2000s China.

This paper attempts to answer the question of what kind of insights are generated from the combination of realistic experience and imagination. What are the particular artistic effects of presenting these social issues in a science-fictional way? How are the (re)distribution of urban space and (re)configuration of human-city relationships imagined in these works? How are urban villages represented as boundaries? How is the role of science and technology presented and discussed? How is spatial writing representing the problems of urbanization?

Bio: Danxue Zhou is a PhD Student of the Department of China Studies, at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (Department of Modern Languages, Cultures and Film, University of Liverpool). She got her Bachelor of Arts degree in Contemporary English Language and Literature from Hong Kong Baptist University in 2018, and got Master of Arts degree in Comparative Literature from University College London in 2019. She worked as an assistant instructor in the English Language and Literature Studies programme at Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University, from September 2019 to September 2020. She joined the London Chinese Science Fiction Group and became the co-leader in 2022.

Xuelin Zhou: “Mother, I want to go home”: Screening the city and the country in contemporary Chinese cinema

Contrasts between city and countryside exist in every culture, but the specific dynamics of their direct opposition are unique to the Chinese culture. For three decades after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, pro-ruralism (and anti-urbanism) was the dominant ideology. Since the 1980s, China has experienced rapid economic growth and unparalleled urban development. In a span of another three decades, China transformed from an agrarian nation into an urban society. This presentation examines how the unprecedented urban expansion in the human world is imagined and commented by closely referring to the Chinese sci-fi blockbuster film *The Wandering Earth* (2019), a box-office hit adapted from the award-winning writer Liu Cixin’s popular novella of the same title (2000). The presentation argues that the ability of the film to offer imaginative and critical perspectives into the global urbanization and its impact on the future of the Earth complements Raymond William’s insights elaborated in his classic *The Country and The City*.

Bio: Xuelin Zhou is Associate Professor in Media and Screen of the University of Auckland, New Zealand. His research interests cover film (genre) studies, cross-cultural studies and youth culture study. Xuelin has published extensively in the field of Chinese-language film studies. He is the author of *Young Rebels in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Hong Kong University Press, 2007), *Youth Culture in Chinese Language Film* (Routledge, 2016) and *Globalization and Contemporary Chinese Cinema: Zhang Yimou’s Genre Films* (Palgrave, 2017).

Rana Aytug: For public space: how might explorations of the social use of public space inform public sociology?

This presentation draws on research from an interdisciplinary ESRC funded project (ES/W008343/1) Just Turn Up, which examines the relationship between informal sport and urban inclusion in increasingly superdiverse and increasingly unequal cities. The project explores the extent to which the growth of collective participation in non-club-based sports activities (volleyball, parkrun, basketball, urban walking, street cricket, football) in the open spaces of cities involves groups who are marginalised or under-represented in club-based sport. It considers how informal sports activities may generate forms of belonging and social interaction, while recognising that such activities may incorporate their own mechanisms of exclusion. Over the last decade, theorising on everyday and ‘lived multicultural’ has re-emphasised the value of public space in making ‘good cities’ (Amin 2006). As urban inequalities become more multi-dimensional, non-income related, environmental resources become ever more critical for social inclusion. Despite the increasing numbers of participants in informal sport, its visibility in the everyday spaces of cities and its appeal to socially and ethnically diverse communities, the ways in which micro material environments prompt collective informal sport practices have attracted less attention.

Drawing on observational and qualitative social maps and architectural drawing the presentation first, sets out to provide a social and a visual ‘index’ of the range of urban spaces that successfully invite and facilitate informal sport participation and second, uses this as a base from which to reflect on how sociology’s engagement with public space and the social uses of public space may contribute to the ambitions of public sociology.

Bio: Rana Aytug is a Research Associate in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. Rana’s research interests span across the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, engaging with themes around urban diversity, socio-spatial inequalities, creative placemaking, and inclusive urban planning. Coming from a spatial planning and architecture background, Rana is interested in bridging research, practice and policy to contribute to shaping socially inclusive and sustainable cities.

Panel 8: Junk and Salvage

Chair: Mateusz Borowski

16 June, 9:30-11:00 | WBS 0.006

Mateusz Borowski: Junk Cities and Future Communities. The Case of *Neptune Frost* (2021)

Garbage is nowadays becoming one of the environmental emergent effects of colonial entanglements beyond human control. These unwanted parts of cultures across the globe although rejected, persistently act on today's urban communities in ways that cannot be foreseen or comprehended. No wonder that more-than-human environments composed of waste of various kinds become a subject of scientific (Goldstein et al. 2012; Zettler et al. 2013) and critical-theoretical (Clark 2014) speculation which conceives them as sites where old forms of belonging are subverted and modified. These unwanted remnants of the Anthropocenic cultures turn into junk (Bardini 2013) – a productive entanglement of beings and forces emerging in the wastelands left by extractive capitalism.

The paper approaches this topic through the lens of speculative fiction, particularly the trope of junk cities that emerge out of the devastated landscapes inherited after the modern era. It is in this context that I set the Afrofuturistic musical *Neptune Frost* (2021), directed by Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman, taking place in a village in Burundi made entirely of computer parts. Neither a city, nor the country, this location provides a proper background for a plot centered on a revolution against the colonial oppression and extractive capitalist culture with its excessive ways of life. Interestingly, *Neptune Frost* connects the problem of extractivist practices with queer critique of binaries as one of the tools of modern biopolitics. Through the lens of speculative figure of junk city I trace the way in which decolonial practices of managing and reusing garbage and waste in urban contexts provide models of working out possible futures, relationalities and forms of dwelling in the ruins of the modern capitalist world.

Bio: Mateusz Borowski is a Professor at the Department for Performativity Studies at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków. He holds a PhD from Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany and the Jagiellonian University. Currently his main areas of interest are green humanities, counterfactual discourses and speculative fabulations in the context of climate change. He published, among others, *Strategie zapominania. Pamięć i kultura cyfrowa* (Strategies of Forgetting: Memory and Cyberculture, 2015) and, with Małgorzata Sugiera, *Sztuczne Ntury. Performanse technonauki i sztuki* (Artificial Natures. Performances of Technoscience and Arts, 2017). He is currently Principal Investigator in the OPUS 22 research project *After Climate Crisis. Non-Scalable Survival Strategies in Speculative Fabulations of the Last Two Decades* (2022-2026) funded by the Polish National Science Center.

Megen de Bruin-Molé: Salvaging the Suburbs: Dutch Libertarianism and Failed Utopia in Almere Oosterwold

In 2012 a team of architects and governmental real estate developers presented their plans for a utopia of 'do-it-yourself urbanism': the Dutch suburb of Almere Oosterwold. Constructed as part of the municipality of Almere, a new city built on land reclaimed from the former South Sea, Oosterwold was envisioned as a place where people could build free

of government rules and sanctions. Residents could buy a parcel of land to live on, work on, or farm on as they saw fit, collaborating with their neighbours to construct local amenities and infrastructure. “With this development” wrote project initiator Adri Duivesteijn, Almere could show that “the city is a creation and that the people themselves can make the city”. Twenty years later, this statement has proved very true: many residents are wealthy, hold libertarian views, homeschool their children, and dream of living off the grid and away from government influence. Accordingly, the neighbourhood has fiberoptic internet, but no public transport or parking, no schools or community centres, and no sewage system.

Responding to a recent article by Japhy Wilson, who writes about the failures of Amazonian city of Iquitos as a capitalist utopia and its rebirth as a ‘salvagepunk metropolis’, this paper considers Oosterwold as an inverse example: a site of ruin and failure in a landscape of suburban utopia. As a theoretical framework, salvage is often taken up by leftist activist academics to represent a post-capitalist method for living in ruins, working through them to build towards a more progressive (if precarious) future. Almere Oosterwold shows us that when applying these theories there is also significant work to be done to understand how ideas like ‘salvage’, ‘ruin’, ‘subversion’, and ‘precarity’ are also put to use by the elite, in line with libertarian politics rather than socialist ones.

Bio: Dr Megeen de Bruin-Molé (@MegenJM, she/her) is a Lecturer in Digital Media Practice at the University of Southampton. She specialises in ‘monstrous’ adaptation and contemporary remix culture, in particular the digital afterlives and appropriations of historical archives, ephemera, and memory in popular culture. She is also an editor of the [Genealogy of the Posthuman](#), an Open Access initiative curated by the Critical Posthumanism Network. Her next project is on salvage. Read more about Megeen’s work on her blog: [frankenfiction.com](#).

Ana Tejero Marín: “The most beautiful place in the world”: Garbagetown and the cultural significance of trash in Catherynne M. Valente’s *The Past Is Red*

As capitalist cultures champion ever-rising production rates and benefit from the disregard of old products in favour of new ones, the proliferation of human waste has become one of the most pressing environmental concerns of our contemporary era. Despite its ubiquity, trash has usually been regarded with disgust and consequently pushed outside of cultural practices, which ignores its deep connection with the functioning of human societies.

Catherynne M. Valente’s science-fiction novella *The Past Is Red* (2021) brings garbage to the forefront in the construction of its post-apocalyptic scenario. After a massive sea level rise due to anthropogenic global warming, all major landmasses disappeared and humanity survives in Garbagetown, a settlement built on top of a pile of trash floating in the ocean. This living arrangement consequently shapes the culture of its inhabitants and the importance they attach to trash, which becomes the basis of their existence. Although garbagetowners generally realise that late capitalist societies caused the destruction of the old world, many are attracted to their promises of abundance and aspire to come back to a time before the apocalypse. However, Tetley, the main character, is set to block this futile quest, as she believes this romanticisation of the past will lead to the sacrifice of their future.

This presentation will examine how Valente uses trash as the aesthetic centre of her novella in order to comment about the possible consequences of the Anthropocene. It will analyse how she constructs her post-apocalyptic setting and how she connects place, culture and

personal identity through the motif of garbage. In particular, it will focus on how Garbagetown both defies and perpetuates the traditional constructions of the city, imitating models of the past while regarding the natural/artificial distinction as ineffective in its deeply transformed world.

Bio: Ana Tejero-Marín is a predoctoral researcher at the Department of English at the University of Salamanca (Spain). She holds a B. A. in English Studies from the University of Málaga and three master's degrees in English Studies, European Studies and Publishing, respectively. Her doctoral thesis project, which focuses on the representation of the Anthropocene in contemporary anglophone science fiction and fantasy, is fully funded by the Spanish Ministry of Universities.

Louise Jammet: Metropolises' backside imaginaries and scale issues

In the Anthropocene the rural/urban opposition is no longer applicable for many reasons, one of them being linked to the redefinition of the terms of the problem. This is now understood as going beyond the notions of built forms and density.

To study how territories will be transformed in a post-oil future, we are interested in how the “backsides” of metropolises are designed under these conditions. The backsides are all those places whose functions, uses and/or spatial and urban forms are undesirable although essential and heavily frequented. They often provide essential metabolic functions, from water treatment to waste management and fuel distribution, and/or they occupy large areas, whether underground or industrial wasteland.

The imaginaries of post-oil futures that are not based on the electrification and automation of large-scale infrastructures therefore raise the question of the scales of territories and try to rethink them based on “catchment areas” energy, ecology, food ... Rather than the urban/rural opposition, it is now the scales that are questioned because the large scale is symptomatic of the carbon era.

These questions raise reflections on the scale of an ecological habitat, an essential question but which tends to forget or elude the systemic scale of the territories and infrastructures that we inherit.

Indeed, it becomes necessary to rethink the future of these metropolitan structures which cannot simply be abandoned but whose functions and potential ruins must be imagined to think about their future.

Bio: Louise Jammet is an architect and doctor of sociology. She works on urban futures and imaginaries. Her current research focus on the imaginaries of the backside of post-oil metropolises and observe that many of them are limited in their scope. By revealing the limits and the weaknesses of the ways the backsides are (not) thought, she wants to renew the practice and foster alternative ways of thinking about the future of the city and the metropolis engaging all facets of the oil-era we inherit.

Panel 9: The Country & The City

Chair: Emrah Atasoy

16 June, 9:30-11:00 | WBS 1.009

Anna Sophia Tabouratzidis: “Prototype for a World We Want to Live In”: New Forms of Life and Literary Modes in Futures Narratives

The country and the city are, according to Raymond Williams, “changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations” but two idea(l)s or forms which, to this day, retain great force (1973: 175). The unfolding environmental catastrophe, as the CfP suggests, disturbs or troubles in the Harawayian sense the symbolisation of both country and city and their respective but also entwined cultural imaginaries.

In John Lanchester’s speculative eco-fiction *The Wall* (2019) the city (London) retains its form as infrastructural hub through which people of all walks of life move in anonymity afforded by the size and fast pace of the cityscape. The metropolis is then contrasted with three different spaces: the romanticised countryside (evoked not least by references to Wordsworth and other contemporaries), the border space of the wall, and the sea, which threatens to flood the island. The self-reflexive novel constructs a spatial field of tension charged by traditional but also new subversive cultural narratives: the British island state – no longer the happy island of “the centuries of exploration and voyaging” (Williams 1973: 166) – is confronted with the slow violence (Nixon 2011) of climate change as well as self-inflicted post-Brexit isolation, which cause the autodiegetic narrator to take refuge in utopian daydreams about alternative ways of life – not least inspired by the British countryside. The self-reflexivity of the novel, I argue, affords a grappling with the idea of anthropogenic climate change as a never-ending catastrophe without event(s) (Horn 2018: 55) and the literary mode(s) it requires narrate such a phenomenon.

Bio: Anna Sophia Tabouratzidis has recently completed her dissertation on contemporary speculative fictions as laboratories of cultural self-reflection at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen and University of Warwick and is working as a research assistant at JLU’s English Department. Her research is situated on the intersection of narratology, sociology, and futures studies and she is currently working on a postdoc project on epistemological practices and the fabrication of (non)knowledge about the future in non-fiction texts. She has co-edited a special issue on “Ecocriticism and Narrative Form” published with *SubStance*, a forthcoming contribution on Globalised Dystopias and Precarious Futures with WVT Trier as well as an article on the politicisation of temporalities: divergent and incommensurable time regimes (also with WVT).

Paul Anthony Knowles: Transiting from the Edenic-pastoral to the Counter-Pastoral in Kevin Barry’s short stories

Raymond Williams, in *The Country and the City*, theorizes the counter-pastoral movement as a reaction to ‘the traditions of Edenic- pastoral poetry’ by presenting a ‘realis[tic]’ representation of the natural environment — one where rural traditions, both ugly and beautiful, are captured on the page and nothing is omitted from the descriptions of the British and Irish landscape. I argue in this paper that Kevin Barry’s 2007 short story collection *There are Little Kingdoms* champions this counter-pastoral aesthetic. *There are Little Kingdoms*’ counter-pastoral aesthetic acts in opposition to the Edenic-pastoral of the

Irish Free State in its construction of a rural nationalism. I argue that the counter-pastoral is concerned with the Ecocentric repossession of the pastoral that symbolises a shift from the representation of nature as a theatre for human events to representation in the sense of advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake, exemplified in the stories: ‘Atlantic City’, ‘Party at Helens’ and ‘Wintersong’. I argue that the stories use the counter-pastoral to exemplify the ways in which the positioning of oneself towards nature leads inevitably to a humbling that is a necessary requirement of the shift from the anthropocentric position of the pastoral to the Ecocentric view of the counter-pastoral. In the 2020s, a time of ecological crisis, I argue that *There are Little Kingdoms*’ counter-pastoral aesthetic presents new ways of conceptualizing human relationships with the more-than-human world.

Bio: My name is Paul Anthony Knowles, and I am a Second Year PhD student at The University of Manchester. My research is on: Haunted Pasts and Possible Futures in Ecogeographical Short Fiction: Crisis and Chronotope, under the supervision of Dr. Anke Bernau and Dr. Robert Spencer. My research focuses on contemporary British and Irish short story and Ecocriticism. My research critically engages with formulations on the pastoral, especially in relation to the works of Ingold, Williams, Olgwig and Rebanks. Another critical concept my research engages with is Bakhtin’s ideas on the chronotope. My research asks: ‘How do we conceptualize different understandings of time from different species and the nonhuman world?’ I am also currently a member of the European Network for short fiction..

Arianwen Evans: Artificial Apocalypse: Reconciling This is The Nemesis with twenty-first century anxieties of ecological crisis.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams asserts that the city had “gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light” (1). Eight years prior to this definition’s publication, across the North Atlantic Ocean, an artist had indeed depicted the city as a centre of light. Rather than intellectual light, this blazing light was nuclear. William Kurelek’s 1965 painting *This is The Nemesis* is a fictional depiction of the Canadian city Hamilton during a nuclear bomb strike. This painting communicates anxiety of an artificially made apocalypse contemporary to the late twentieth century which I attribute to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the ongoing Cold War. Climate change has become a larger concern in the zeitgeist of the twenty-first century. However, I argue that the Anthropocene has exacerbated our current ecological crisis and this 1960s painting is relevant to contemplating how the symbolisations of the city and the country could change. Kurelek’s depiction of the country challenges Williams’ statement that, in the late twentieth century, “the country has gathered the idea... of peace, innocence”. In *This is The Nemesis*, while house roofs peek innocently from lush green forests, Kurelek’s brush strokes communicate that the billowing clouds of debris will move from the city to obliterate the country. The painting’s composition encourages the viewer to first sympathise the suffering of a hospital patients who are situated in the foreground and then experience deeper sorrow in reflecting the repercussions of this ecological crisis to all, indiscriminate of whether they country or city dwellers. In this presentation, I shall explore how Kurelek’s artistic depiction of ecological crisis reforms categories of the country and the city. I shall employ psychological and religious perspectives to unravel why Kurelek decided to reform the city into a site of suffering.

Bio: I am a third year English and History Joint Honours BA Warwick student who is currently completing a Study Exchange year at McMaster University in Canada. I am taking classes in philosophy and art history which is increasing my appreciation of interdisciplinary research skills. My ambition is to pursue a career in curation, so I am excited to have this opportunity to critically engage with an art piece and its relevance to this conference. Throughout my studies, I have developed an interest in examining history through fine art and literature. To help satiate this desire, I acquired a volunteering position at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. While at the gallery, I discovered William Kurelek's *This is The Nemesis*. I arranged meetings with Margaret Fong, chair of the volunteer Association Executive at the AGH, so I could situate this painting in the wider context of the galleries collection.

Adam Stock: Terraforming desert terrains in apocalyptic and dystopian fictions

In the post-Romantic western Orientalist imagination, deserts are a timeless source of pre-history, foundational myths, fossils and ruins. Near empty and rarely occupied, such spaces have been a repository for wild flights of fancy, time travelling adventures and imaginaries spatially and temporally estranged from the urban late capitalist environment. These imaginaries have a destructive potential to the lived experience of desert life, in city and country alike. According to Diana Davis, "deserts and drylands cover some 40-45% of our world and support about 38% of our population" (175). Notwithstanding the precarity of sustainable living conditions in many of these communities in our era of climate emergency, the idea deserts are inherently hostile environments antithetical to civilisation, or else are blank spaces onto which inner psychic torments may be projected, is deeply revealing of cultural anxieties in the western imagination.

This paper takes a tour through some textual deserts and drylands in postapocalyptic and dystopian literature, considering the questions these terrains provoke about the narrative agency of space and setting more broadly. I argue that the trope of terraforming, by which speculative cities are born in utopian, dystopian, and science fictions, is deeply embedded in the architecture and planning of spectacular desert cities from Nevada to Dubai. Leaning on relational conceptions of both space (Massey, 2005) and setting (Freed-Thall and Zhang, 2018), I show how a series of speculative narratives written in and about deserts and drylands can move beyond the post-romantic tradition and push back against the colonial logic of terraforming. Such texts show the literary fecundity of deserts, and provide a richer and more complex engagement with landscape and setting.

Bio: Dr Adam Stock is senior lecturer in English Literature at York St John University. Adam's research explores utopian and dystopian fictions, modernisms, and science fiction. His book *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought: Narratives of World Politics* was published by Routledge, 2019. More recent publications include a 'cluster' on Modernism/Modernity's Print+ platform on 'Modernism & SF' (2022) co-edited with Miranda Iossifidis, and chapters in the *Palgrave Handbook of Utopian Literature* (2021) and the Routledge collection *Intersectional, Feminist and Non-Binary Approaches to Speculative Literature, Film and Art in the 21st Century* (2021). In 2024 he will be a Fellow of the Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) at the University of Heidelberg, where he will work on a book project on speculative fiction and deserts.

Panel 10: Farming & Agriculture

Chair: Ayushi Rakesh

16 June, 14:00-15:30 | WBS 0.013

Chen Zhou: Consuming Ecological Food: Permeable Imaginations of Rural Authenticity under the Ecological Crisis

Ecological produce from rural farms promises a way out of the ecological crises caused by the extractive trap of the modern paradigm, as introduced by the Beijing Farmers' Market, one of the most significant ecological food markets in China. Beyond a rigid rural-urban dichotomy, both the farmers living in the rural and urban consumers in this case are suffering from the climate change at different levels around food: the disturbed farming plans, the reduced production yield and the precarious access to high-quality food. Resilience collapse has become a common challenge under the ecological crisis traversing the geographical bifurcation. To (re)build the farming/living resilience as a way of improving the coping capacity towards the unpredictable future, the rural farmers and urban consumers pin their hopes on the rural authenticity, imagining country as the space where authenticity takes root and where resilience can be originally cultivated, as an animate feature coming from the authentic life. Focusing on the urban consumption of the ecological food produced in the rural, this paper examines how the rural authenticity is imagined and functions around the Beijing Farmers' Market under the ecological crisis while problematizing the rural imaginations constrained to a country geography. Through unfolding how rural geography and nonhumans become mobilized with the ecological produce, enter the urban eaters' body and work to stimulate practices of rural authenticity in the urban context, this paper argues that the more-than-human entanglements based on care, what are deprived of in the industrialized food system, contribute to constituting the imagination of rural authenticity, which enhances Ingoldian 'meshwork' relations within and among actants and which is embodied in an 'alive' food materiality that not only exists on rural farms but penetrates the urban life as well as the becoming of a rural-urban hybrid that inter/intra-builds resilience towards the future precarity.

Bio: Chen Zhou is a PhD Candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), University of Amsterdam. Her research interests particularly concern the inter/intra-weaving relations between rural and urban spaces, humans and nonhumans, the real and the imaginary. Based on the methodology of ethnography and visual/narrative analysis, her doctoral research traces the circulation of organic and inorganic objects that integrate rural elements between rural and urban China, and examines what and how rural imaginations are constructed in the process. By acknowledging the animate force of objects and the materiality, she tries to unfold further-blurred boundaries with permeable happenings in the encounter of different domains and explores ways to contribute to an ecological future through visualizing the co-constitution relations. Before the PhD programme, Chen Zhou completed her MA in anthropology at University College London (UCL).

Ivonne Weichold: Agroecologies – Reimagining an Agri-Urban Design for Luxembourg

The challenges of urbanization, the decline of arable land and the rise in climate uncertainty worldwide raise concerns about food security for a booming global population. One key aspect of meeting this challenge is exploring alternative densification scenarios in the built

environment without giving up productive agricultural land. This paper addresses those issues by proposing an agri-urban design; a planning reference that provides a way of thinking about agroecology and its spatial implications. Such an agri-urban perspective proposes a re-imagination of land that alters agriculture within the existing planning paradigm and processes, by valuing multiple perspectives such as agroecological principles. The agroecologists, however, try not to give a blueprint solution. Instead, it defines a new planning strategy that incorporates and accommodates agriculture as a tool for urban planning, by examining its effect on multiple planning levels.

The agri-urban spatialisation is interrogated through a contemporary case study addressing the future of spatial development in the Luxembourg region. The paper reflects on work undertaken as part of the author's PhD research project on Luxembourg's territory, which is characterised by a rapid economic and demographic growth rate and an ambitious agricultural agenda. The investigation draws upon a mixed-method approach by involving several disciplines such as architecture, urbanism, agriculture, landscape planning and geography. The contribution details an alternative planning reference, which provides a way of thinking about agroecology and urbanization as a starting point for an agri-urban design applied to the territory of Luxembourg.

Bio: Ivonne Weichold is an architect, urban designer and researcher working at the intersection of urbanization, design and geospatial analysis. She holds a Doctor in Architecture from the Department of Geography and Spatial Planning, University Luxembourg (2021). In her doctoral dissertation, she examined the role of agriculture and its soil in the built environment. Currently, she is a Research Associate at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), continuing her work on the dialogue of soil fertility and urbanism in Luxembourg in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture in Luxembourg. Besides her engagement at LISER, she is currently affiliated with the KU Leuven where she is teaching Design Studios at Master's level. Currently, she is engaged as a section editor of the forthcoming book "Mapping the Edible City: Connecting people and place through food" (K. Bohn, M. Tomkins (eds), Routledge). Her recent work includes contributions in "Architecture on Common Ground. The Question of Land: Positions and Models" (F. Hertweck ed., Lars Müller Publisher, 2020) and in "New Forms of Urban Agriculture: An Urban Ecology Perspective" (J.A. Diehl and H. Kaur, Springer, 2021).

Rob Booth: Towards Plant Factories or a 'Planet of Fields'? Exploring the spatio-temporalities of horticultural futures.

Controlled environment agriculture (CEA) operations such as vertical farms have long been associated with utopian speculation about the future of food growing. Yet growing fruits and vegetables within structures offering varying degrees of environmental control is now commonplace within agri-food commodity chains in the Global North. Furthermore, expansion of the sector is touted as a solution to a range of environmental and economic problems. Such horticultural imaginaries offer diverse avenues via which to explore prospective future relationships of exchange and extraction between the rural and the urban. This presentation will explore these questions, focusing on how such nascent food systems infrastructures provoke analysis of the relations between labour, technology, and futurity as facets of the political ecological processes which serve to produce rural and urban space-times and attendant lifeways.

To do this I will connect insights from my ethnographic doctoral research within the sector to the conference's subject matter and the foreseen ways that such methods of food production might shape future urban and rural landscapes. Fundamentally, CEA offers greater possibility for urban (or peri-urban) growing and rural rewilding via its foreseen capacity to concentrate food production, with stacked vertical farming units the apex of this tendency. However, I will then move to critically interrogate the desirability of this imaginary, questioning the extent to which it can be read as indicative of the intensification of a trajectory of agricultural industrialisation and consolidation that fails to see the potential of the rural to become the site for diverse forms of lively and convivial agroecological production. The presentation then concludes by using these tensions in order to argue for an approach to envisioning futures which attends as much to the present balance of social forces and extant materialities as it does to the extrapolation of speculative spatial visions.

Bio: I am a final-year doctoral student in Human Geography at the University of Birmingham. My research explores contested approaches to the future of agriculture and agricultural technology in England and draws on human geography, political ecology and science and technology studies. This includes a particular attention to the emergent field of plant-human relationships and vegetal geographies. Outside of my doctoral research I provide graduate teaching support on the MA in Landscape Urbanism at the Architectural Association. I have also worked on questions relating to agricultural innovation and the right to food with the progressive think-tank Common Wealth, both of which areas are I continue to write and campaign on outside of academia.

Lakshmi Chithra Dilipkumar: "The Poison was always there": Samanta Schweblin's Fever Dream as a Toxic Pastoral

Raymond Williams in his iconic monograph, *The Country and the City* analyzes literary works and the 'structures of feeling' conveyed through them to unravel the violent processes of capitalism that has shaped the history of the country and the city as we know it. Towards the end of this work he also indicates the rise of the new metropolises that are dependent on the produce and raw materials from what he identifies as "effective hinterlands". Samanta Schweblin's novel *The Fever Dream* textualises a similar effective hinterland of soy monoculture in Argentina. The protagonist of the novel, Amanda and her daughter Nina were visiting the scenic countryside a weekend retreat. The novel problematises the idea of the 'getaway' pristine countryside and it with an eerily haunting gothic landscape redundant with death and deformities. Raymond Williams remarks that the idea of the countryside often invokes a "feel of childhood". This structure of feeling expressed by poets like Wordsworth is essentially ruptured in this novel through the images of deformed children and children whom even their mothers identify as monsters. Even though the reason behind these diseases is not explained, the novel implies it is the agrotoxic pesticide used in soy cultivation. The soy grown in this manner is exported throughout the world, and is now the healthy vegan climate friendly alternative for the new ethical consumer. Through its portrayal of the city dwellers who were in the city for a getaway as victims and not mere observers of suffering, the novel alludes to the shared precarity and morbidity of all of us wrenched into a system that prioritises profits. This paper will argue that the novel subverts the trope of pastoral to toxic pastoral (David Farrier) to unravel the violent processes and contradictions of capitalism. This new image of the pastoral, one in which death, disease and poisons lurk behind vast green sublime

landscapes responds to and engages with the current climate crisis and locates the crisis within the exploitative processes of capitalism.

Bio: Lakshmi Chithra Dilipkumar is a PhD student at Universität Augsburg. She is a part of the International Doctoral Program (IDK)- “(Re)thinking Environment " / (Um)welt Denken co-hosted by Environmental Science Centre (WZU), Universität Augsburg and Rachel Carson Centre, Munich. Her area of interests include energy humanities, political ecology, literature of environmental justice and literature of the Global south. Through her doctoral project she attempts to analyse texts, that attempt to reimagine the environment as an active agent that affects and is affected by the capitalist world system and locate the resistance movements against the exploitative forces within a wider political framework of class struggle and unequal distribution.

Panel 11: From Ruins to Rewilding

Chair: David Gray

16 June, 14:00-15:30 | WBS 0.006

Timothy Wright: Voids and Things: Ruins, Reminders, and the Agency of the Obsolete in 21st Century Johannesburg Literature

Since the fall of the apartheid regime, Johannesburg has often lent itself, particularly in the white middle class imagination, to visions of ruin, abandonment, and even apocalypse. This talk is a literary-critical meditation on twinned figures in the Johannesburg imaginary that seem at first to play into this dystopian image: things – the infrastructural by-products of a frenetically transforming and spatially disconnected city – and voids: the absences, hollows, and empty spaces that dot the city, literalised most vividly in the defunct mining tunnels that snake under the city centre. I take as my starting point the peculiar object encountered by the flaneur-narrator of Ivan Vladislavic's *Portrait with Keys* (2006): a squat metal pole, 2.5 metres tall and 70cm in diameter, with no apparent purpose. The encounter, which perplexes, frustrates, and fascinates the narrator, prompts us to read the city not for its ruin but rather for its vibrant thingliness. I trace this fascination with the identity-usurping potential of infrastructural things through Malcomess and Kreuzfeldt's experimental montage-text *Not No Place* (2013), in which the discomposition of the city is turned into a critical poetics. I suggest that these two texts put obsolete urban infrastructure to work in ways that undo both catastrophist and boosterist of the city. Temporally, voids and things direct us to conceptualise the city outside the paradigms of growth and development: in following the logics of entropy and unexpected reconfiguration, they suggest ways of futuring without the guide rails of progress. Spatially, they function in these texts as perceptual hinges that open onto the 'parallax geographies' (Sarah Moore's term) of the city, in the process illuminating the unplanned ecologies, networks, and lifeworlds, both human and non-human, that constitute the city.

Bio: Timothy Wright is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Bilkent University, Turkey. Originally from South Africa, he studied architecture in Johannesburg and later obtained a PhD in literature in the US. His research broadly explores how people imagine life from within the midst of ruins – material, political, or philosophical. He has published on a variety of topics in 20th and 21st century global Anglophone literature, especially on the aesthetics of disconsolation in the global novel. He is currently working on a book about the speculative film and fiction of post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Carla Almanza-Gálvez: Mexico City or the Ruins of the Future: Ecodystopia and Urban Survival in Fictions by Carlos Fuentes and Homero Aridjis

In the years before the turn of the millennium, a number of apocalyptic narratives revolved around the imaginary destruction of Mexico City. Among the Mexican authors who have contributed to the futuristic portrayal of the Mexican capital city as a dystopian megalopolis are Carlos Fuentes (1928–2012), an influential novelist and essayist, and Homero Aridjis (1940–), a prominent poet, novelist and environmental activist. Their fictions of anticipation show how the inhabitants of a polluted and corrupt Mexico City struggle to survive in a cataclysmic urban environment. In the context of such a dysfunctional civilisation resulting from the alienating effects of modernisation and neoliberal globalisation, this paper seeks to study the representation of the collapsed city from an

ecocritical and postcolonial perspective in Fuentes's *Christopher Unborn* (1987) and Aridjis's *The Legend of the Suns* (1993). The analysis examines the use of Mexico's capital city as a tool to denounce the dystopian progress deriving from the destructive consequences of industrialisation, while confronting this reality with the utopian function of the pre-Hispanic and mythical Mexican past. Given that both narratives feature the devastating 1985 Mexico City earthquake, another key aspect of the study is the conception of earthquakes as vehicles for processes of urban and socio-cultural transformation, as opposed to their representation as fatalistic events. The paper ultimately discusses the idea of cities as entities that are constantly reshaped by the impact of historical and cultural changes brought about by successive governments and societies.

Bio: Carla Almanza-Gálvez is a Hispanic Studies scholar. Her research interests include urban and environmental fiction, graphic narrative, utopianism and the Enlightenment. She is the author of *Form and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Spain: Utopian Narratives and Socio-Political Debate* (Cambridge: MHRA/Legendia, 2019). She currently teaches Spanish and Latin American literature and culture at the University of Limerick.

Elif Kendir-Beraha: Ode to the Void: Scenarios for a City of Rural Agglomerations

The introduction of *Gûlyabânî (The Wild Ghoul)*, an early 20th century Turkish gothic novel, starts with a description of the countryside, just outside of the Üsküdar neighbourhood of İstanbul. Depicted as a vast void of forbidding hills and uninhabited pasture, the landscape provides the setting of a horror story that satirises the gullible urban dwellers at loss in a countryside setting. Contemporary İstanbul, after a hundred odd years from the time of that novel, is an agglomeration of many villages and ex post facto legalised informal settlements in between those villages. What was once a source of wild imagination and vast biodiversity, the countryside has been subsumed by the city, with just a fraction of the breathing spaces in between. As imminent ecological collapse and seismic instability is pushed to the background by unbridled capitalist growth policies, urban voids become rarer commodities affording a fertile ground for research.

This presentation will examine a couple of such voids in the city of İstanbul, and propose alternative scenarios by tracing the networks they sustain over time, especially in terms of multispecies urban existence. The discussion will incorporate samples from final student projects that were produced as part of the graduate research design studio, *Rewilding the Metropolis – Scenarios for Urban Green and its Inhabitants*, taught in Spring 2021 at İstanbul Bilgi University's Faculty of Architecture.

Bio: Elif Kendir-Beraha, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture in İstanbul Bilgi University, works on the political ecology of urban environments, craft culture, architectural phenomenology, and the epistemological impact of sites on building praxis. She has exhibited her research nationally and internationally, the most recent being *Calx Ruderalis Istanbulensis*, a short video at Pera Museum in 2021 with Ali M. Demirel and Aslihan Demirtaş. In Fall 2020-21, she conducted a graduate research studio focusing on the political ecology of the city of İstanbul titled *Rewilding the Metropolis* with Zeynep Turan Hoffman, and organised a seminar series titled *Wild Talks* in parallel to the research studio..

Chak-kwan Ng: The Dynamics of Poiesis in Rewilding Narratives

In face of environmental degradation in the Anthropocene, narratives of destruction and loss are often used to alarm people to impending crises so as to stimulate actions to maintain environmental sustainability. Among different strategies of ecological management, rewilding as a conservation approach has received wide attention recently, for it suggests the possibility of regenerating wildness and biodiversity. Rewilding is variedly defined as the restoration of native plants in landscapes or the reintroduction of keystone species to habitats that lost them in order to rebuild the ecosystems. In *Rewilding: The Radical New Science of Ecological Recovery*, Jepson and Blythe point out that rewilding narratives demonstrate the structure of “recoverable earth” narrative, which highlights nature’s creative force and possibilities of change and action that can bring hopes of betterment. This paper will analyse how rewilding narratives attempt to move away from the dichotomous thinking that usually underlies common environmental narratives that focus on destruction and loss. It is argued that the “recoverable earth” characteristic of rewilding narratives depends on seeing human interventions as acts of conjoining with nature’s creative dynamics, which can be understood as *poiesis*. Andreas Weber’s concept of “enlivenment” provides useful insights for conceiving the implications of *poiesis*, which is sometimes placed in opposition to *techné*, an idea that comes to signify instrumental reason and technology, but such binary is to be undermined when agency is considered in terms of aliveness and experiential relationships. The paper will examine examples of rewilding narratives, such as Derek Gow’s *Bringing Back the Beaver* and Benedict MacDonal’s *Rebirding: Rewilding Britain and Its Birds*, from the perspective of a language of “enlivenment”, which figures rewilding as a way of poietic nature rebuilding that is forward-looking with a consciousness of non-duality.

Bio: Chak-kwan Ng is currently an assistant professor at the School of Arts and Social Sciences of Hong Kong Metropolitan University. She obtained her BA in English and MPhil in English (Literary Studies) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and graduated with a PhD in English Literature from the University of Edinburgh.

Panel 12: Utopia & Hope

Chair: Ray Davenport

16 June, 14:00-15:30 | WBS 1.009

Nudrat Kamal: Building Cities of Hope in the Age of Kuber: Community, Ecology and Utopian Worldbuilding in Vandana Singh’s “Indra’s Web” and “Reunion”

This paper will explore two science fiction stories by Indian physicist and writer Vandana Singh, “Indra’s Web” (2018) and “Reunion” (2019), which take place at the end of the 21st century, in a South Asia ravaged by climate change (most major cities have drowned), neocolonial corporate power (Gaiacorp, a ruthless multinational corporation has won the bidding war to run the subcontinent’s government), and ethnic and religious strife. The stories focus on indigenous and marginalized communities working together to find new modes of living. In looking at these two stories, the paper will argue that Singh articulates a specific utopian vision that is particularly useful in our own climate change- ravaged world: one which is built through a deep engagement with local communities, epistemologies and ecologies, and which simultaneously relies upon an awareness of planetary connectivity amongst different communities and their specific modes of living, and which is an ongoing process of hard work, joyful resistance and playful creativity. Specifically, this paper will explore the ways in which Singh’s stories center localized forms of resistance, indigenous knowledges of relating to and working alongside nature, and a conscientious use of technology as the three constituents of a roadmap in building cities in the Global South on a climate change-ravaged planet.

Bio: Nudrat Kamal is a PhD student of Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, she taught comparative literature and writing in Karachi, Pakistan. Her research and teaching focuses on South Asian literatures in Urdu and English, particularly in the intersections of environmental humanities, postcolonial theory, gender and sexuality studies, and science fiction and fantasy. Most recently her chapter “The Postcolonial Cyborg in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*” was published in Palgrave Macmillan’s *Ethical Futures and Global Science Fiction*. Her current project is interested in tracing a history of the speculative fiction tradition in Urdu and Hindi in the subcontinent from the 19th century onward and bringing it into conversation with contemporary Anglophone science fiction and fantasy in South Asia.

Filip Ryba: Does Beirut portray a Future of Cities? Middle Eastern Fabulations about Future

Nowadays, Lebanon, especially Beirut, is often perceived as a contemporary kind of training ground on which the future problems of the modern world are coming up with considerable intensity. The country and its capital are changing by the monstrous political and economic crises generated by clientelism and ubiquitous corruption. From this crisis, many other crises emerge (ecological crisis, petrol crisis, energetic crisis and so on) and change not only the Lebanese everydayness but also the Lebanese landscapes. Based on all these crises and their effects, I would like to portray contemporary Beirut as a fabulation about the existence of the city in the era of the Anthropocene. This portraying is not an attempt to predict something or to warn about something, but it is a sort of exercise in the imagination. If we consider the climate crisis as a crisis of imagination and a certain culture, fabulising seems to be a viable strategy to counteract this crisis.

Based on my field research (interviews, observations, and autoethnographic notes) in Lebanon I would like to confront the onto- epistemological reality of modern Beirut with the imaginations of the future cities; imaginations that are produced in the other regions of the Middle East. The aim of this confrontation is not to show the utopian status of many imaginations, but to show the reality of Beirut as well as these imaginations as competing fabulations about the (un)possible futures. Reflecting on these fabulations can be understood as a pursuit of an antifragile which is a competitive way of thinking about living in a future dominated by the climate crisis; a competitive way in comparison with the way built on predicting, planning, modelling, creating strategies, and managing a future in a present.

Bio: Filip Ryba is a doctoral student at the Doctoral School in the Humanities (Jagiellonian University) and an activist, member of the academic society Collegium Invisibile and the Inspireurope branch in Krakow. His research focuses on the modernity of the Middle East in a posthuman and postmodern perspective with reference to postcolonial reflection.

Nikolett Puskas: Collaborative infrastructures: reimagining urban landscapes towards prosperous futures

This presentation argues for dismantling the divides and radically reframing issues around urban landscapes. Building on this year's conference theme, drawing on recent case studies conducted by the author, it is demonstrated how there are already villages in the city. These are defined via local communities with particular attention to what such communities are capable of, knowledges they hold and power they can (re)claim to participate in shaping their environments and future. A holistic, networked approach is needed to address our increasingly urgent and complex grand challenges, notably around social and ecological injustices - which are inherently intertwined and include nonhuman entities! Divisions and fragmented approaches won't serve any constructive purpose in our future of uncertainties – a future we are already living in! Thus, it is suggested to ask critical questions, imagine regenerative, caring and liveable futures collectively.

Possibilities of these collective efforts and pathways will be demonstrated via examples from across three communities: Kings Crescent Estate in Hackney (London, UK), Burj Hammoud (Beirut, Lebanon) and Pesterzsébet (Budapest, Hungary).

Bio: Niki is an activist and researcher, engaged in action alongside theory. She believes in bottom-up, grassroots initiatives for social inclusion and real change, to help pave the way to the right to the city and right to environmental justice. Currently finishing her PhD at the Institute for Global Prosperity at UCL, and part of the RELIEF Centre, she holds a BSc in Light Industrial Engineering, an MA in Sustainable Design and an MSc in Leadership for Global Sustainable Cities. Niki utilises transdisciplinary practices and research methods, building on her diverse academic and professional background from former careers. "Mine is a holistic approach aiming at transformative, and consecutively regenerative design for a more prosperous future that is pluriversal."

Panel 13: Materials, Minerals & Extractivism

Chair: Karolina Pawlik

16 June, 15:30-16:00 | WBS 0.006

Ayushi Rakesh: Concrete Jungle: Dystopic Struggle of Anthropocene and Ecocentrism.

The use of cement in architectural design and construction raises interesting questions about its production through calcination, a process that involves heating substances to high temperatures in the absence of oxygen. This study explores the philosophy of the unity of means and ends as it applies to an ecocentric perspective, considering how the means used to produce cement reflect on the end result and our impact on the environment.

Cement production is often carried out in closed environments and through harmful processes, which can damage both its constituents and the environment. According to Kim Foerster, the homogenization of architectural diversity through the creation of cement-based buildings has led to a saturation of design that violates the Gandhian philosophy of means justifying the end. All elements on the Earth should be allowed to exist in a stable state, but cement production violates this by being manufactured in hazardous conditions that emit greenhouse gases.

Cement, which is used as a foundation for our homes, is created in ways that resemble experiments on lab rats, and this can lead to life-threatening chaos and disorder, as seen in recent catastrophic events like the Turkey- Syria earthquake. This study highlights the need to shift towards ecocentrism within an anthropogenic culture to avoid dystopic ecological wars.

Bio: Ayushi Rakesh is a research scholar with a passion for literary theory and cultural studies. She received her undergraduate degree from Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, where she earned the top rank in the university. She is continuing her academic pursuits at the University of Warwick, where she is completing a Master's degree in English Literature. Her field of study focuses on cultural theory, critical theory, petroculture, and postcolonial theory. Ayushi has published one article, "Transition of Romanticism through Ages", and is working on others to get herself published. She aspires to be a literary scholar of stature and is dedicated to expanding her knowledge. In her free time, she enjoys eating variety of cuisine and pursuing her passion for travel.

Jamie Hinch: Temporal Shifts at the Rural Margins: The Speculative Visions of Post-Brexit Britain's Critical Minerals Strategy

"As technology evolves faster than ever, we become more and more reliant on a new cohort of minerals. We are moving to a world powered by critical minerals..." This excited, frenzied declaration comes from the UK's 2022 Critical Minerals Strategy (CMS). The CMS is the crystallisation of an emerging priority for post-Brexit Britain- securing a domestic supply of critical minerals to facilitate the UK's green transition. The speculative visions concerning the green transition and the rural margins of Britain found in UK critical mineral policies and reports, such as the CMS, are the subject of this paper. I argue that there is presented a temporal shift away from the 'slowness' associated with Britain's faded, heritage-imbued rural margins, to an exciting, technologically-innovative perimeter. The resulting vision is of a cohesive post-Brexit Britain with entangled urban cores and

rural margins working together. My argument is inspired by the work of Laura Watts, whose ethnography on renewable energy in the Orkney Islands uses Anna Tsing's idea of 'Friction' in relating margins and centres, bound by centrifugal and centripetal forces joining them together. This paper also builds on work analysing increasing reindustrialisation of deindustrialised ruralities in Europe, amidst the search for critical minerals. This paper's point of departure is not only to analyse this in the context of post-Brexit Britain, but also through bringing together an analysis of policy, narrative, and temporalities. I conclude by highlighting the justice implications underlying this discussion; many rural margins, including in the UK, have been devastated by changing land uses determined in far-off urban cores. Spectres of the past haunt these excited policy dreams... Thus, in making this argument we must ask what stories are being left out of this vision; who has the power and capacity to control these temporal cycles?

Bio: I am a first-year DPhil student in the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. My research is concerned with speculative lithium mining in Cornwall, with a particular interest in, firstly, how mining pasts, presents, and futures are entangled in conversations on reindustrialising the Cornish landscape; and secondly, what this means for different local communities. My interest in speculative environmental futures builds off my previous research in Pakistan, where I worked with WWF on the environmental justice concerns of the country's 10 Billion Tree Tsunami Afforestation Programme and its impact on the mobile pastoralist Bakarwal people. Alongside my PhD, I work for a climate justice education thinktank called the Third Generation Project. Some examples of my work can be found on the thinktank's blog, *The Frontline*.

Lucy Grace: What Lies Beneath: A Polysensorial Reading of the Post-Industrial Pit Tip and a Reimagining of Coalscapes - The Transformed Rural in the Anthropocene

This paper considers the liminal third-space of the pit tip, or colliery spoil heap, through Bertram Westphal's (2011) geocritical lens of sensoriality. The haunted post-industrial landscapes of collieries, now 'partially emptied of the human' possess what Mark Fisher describes as an eerie quality (2016). In an uncanny Freudian double, the words 'pit' and 'tip' are mirror reversals of each other, in spelling as in life, above the surface and below, flickering between a now, and another now; they are a metaphorical fissure to our past and future.

In asking geographical questions of literary texts and asking literary questions of geographical representations, geocriticism combines social sciences and the humanities: when considered in conversation with polysensorial readings, multiple layers of understanding are revealed. Jennifer Haigh's novels *Baker Towers* (2005) and *Heat and Light* (2016) are both set in the same Pennsylvania coalscape; the first novel is set in the 1940s when the colliery is actively extracting coal, the second in 2015 with the colliery closed and the town above the Marcellus Shale, a massive deposit of natural gas suitable for fracking. Close critical analysis of Jennifer Haigh's descriptions of this coalscape across time allow scholars deeper understanding through a geocritical reading.

I propose the geological imagination in the Anthropocene to be overlooked in geocriticism: until now, the lens has focused more on the 'geo' of geography than the 'geo' of geology. Our lack of comprehension about the scale of time is dangerous. In thinking like geologists we can reframe the Anthropocene epoch and begin to appreciate rocks as verbs (processes),

not nouns. Haigh's 'tower' or pit tip, in literature and the post-industrial coalscape, represents our spoiled past and possible future.

Bio: Lucy Grace is a novelist and PGR based at Nottingham Trent University, funded by the AHRC and M4C. Her research is creative and critical, examining the post-industrial UK coalscape in the Anthropocene through a haunted geologic lens. She is interested in deep-time and how this might manifest in the subterranean world of the coalmine, through playful experimentation in words. Her fiction is found in print anthologies and online at Aesthetica, Mslexia, Faber, Bristol Prize, Alpine Fellowship, Berlin Writing Prize, Bath, Bridport and others. The title of her current fiction project is 'The Unconformities'. She can be found on twitter at @lgracewriter.

Panel 13: Solarpunk & Beyond

Chair: Megen de Bruin-Molé

16 June, 15:30-16:00 | WBS 1.009

Anja Lind: A Slow City for a Slow Fiction? Reading Slowness into Fictional Solar Futures

The great acceleration of petroculturalism has profoundly shaped our lives, our cities, and our narratives. Oil has enabled this speed, compressing space and time through its vast energetic potential, abstracting urban space through the proliferation of ‘non-places’ which Augé (1995) diagnoses as an urban condition of supermodernity—perhaps more rightly ‘petromodernity’—paralleling Lefebvre’s (1991, 38) critique of the neoliberal tendency toward abstract space, wherein “lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is ‘conceived of.’” Taking inspiration from the slow food movement, the slow city or Cittaslow movement seeks to unsettle this accelerated urban alienation through a conscious, local and ecological placemaking, attempting to reinstitute a rhythm of the communal everyday. The conception of a slow city, and the slow movement more broadly, could prove a generative resource for the energy humanities in imagining the necessary disruption of energy transition beyond oil, and beyond its accelerated mobilities: if petromodernity is the fast and alienating city, is the slow city the urban future of solarly?

To answer this question, this paper reads Becky Chambers’ *Monk and Robot* duology as slow (science) fiction, asking to what extent this slowness is paradigmatic of the solarpunk genre in which it is a part—to what extent slowness, from cities to science to narrative, is a feature of solar futures, set against the speed of petroculturalism. From the standpoint of the rich work of energy humanities and in particular solarities (see Szeman 2020, Vemuri and Barney 2022, Timofeeva 2022), and inspired by Ingwersen’s (2020) musings on a slow science fiction, this paper reads the slow city into Chambers’ fictional solar future, with a view to science fiction broadly as “the genre” for analysing “present and future energy crises” (Macdonald 2014, 111), and solarpunk specifically as embodying the imaginary of solarly (Williams 2019).

Bio: Anja H. Lind is a soon-to-be doctoral researcher at TU Dresden, Germany, studying solarpunk and fictional solar futures through the lens of the energy humanities, with a particular view to gendered and political organisation after energy transition.

Phillip M. Crosby: Towards a Solarpunk Urbanism: Rethinking Cities for a Just Transition to a Decarbonized World

In December 2022 the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, committing 196 participant countries to conserving 30% of land and sea by 2030. This is an important step towards achieving the goals of imminent biologist E.O. Wilson’s Half-Earth Project, which claims that by conserving 50% of the planet we can stave off the sixth mass extinction and create a world in which 85% of animal and plant species will survive. This goal is seemingly at odds with the knowledge that our world is becoming increasingly urbanized, with 68% of the world’s population expected to be living in urban areas by 2050. This conflict between the built and the unbuilt represents an imperative to rethink our cities and their relationship to the natural world.

The science fiction subgenre of solarpunk offers important roadmaps towards achieving these goals. Solarpunk has been described as a “practical eco-futurist utopianism” that imagines worlds in which communities imbued with optimism work together towards ecologically-just futures. This paper will explore how solarpunk narratives can inspire urban designers to create cities that are diverse, healthy, cooperative, multi-species, and in balance with nature. The ideals expressed by the solarpunk genre enable us to radically rethinking the concept of resilience by recognizing that decarbonizing our cities is not simply a matter of replacing carbon-burning technologies with cleaner ones. Solarpunk lights the path towards overhauling the exploitative and colonizing socio-technological systems that have developed alongside the urbanization and industrialization of our world. In response to this essential call for imagining what a decarbonized world will look like and what it will feel like to live there, this paper will include case studies from various disciplines illustrating innovative approaches to urbanism that embrace solarpunk ideals.

Bio: Phillip M. Crosby is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture at Temple University as well as an Adjunct Faculty member in the Master of Urban Design—Future Cities program at Thomas Jefferson University. His research focuses on how cities are represented in science fiction narratives of various media, with a particular focus on utilizing the sub-genre of solarpunk as a tool for exploring the future of sustainable cities. He is the co-author with Kate Wingert-Playdon of the book *Library as Stoa: Public Space and Academic Mission in Snøhetta’s Charles Library* (ORO Editions, 2021) and the Associate Editor (with Megan Born, Helene Furjan, and Lily Jencks) of the book *DIRT* (The MIT Press, 2012). He holds a B.Des. in Architecture from the University of Florida, an M.Arch. from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and an MS in Architectural History and Theory from the University of Pennsylvania.

Peter Sands: City, Country, Future, Past

Carl Abbott observes that cities “are one of the most common science fiction settings” and at the same time not featured prominently in critical discussions of SF. Critical work on utopias and dystopias, however, is replete with discussion of cities, as even the earliest utopian works explore the built environment. Urban spaces are rich environments for imagining alternatives to the present. Utopian imagination of the city tends toward tight integration with forms of social control and boundary-setting that undergird fully formed utopias; dystopias magnify problems of governance, population density, venality, particularly in near future or extrapolative settings. This presentation will focus on the contrasting horizons of possibility opened by solarpunk visions of the future, with particular attention to how a solarpunk future resolves (or not) tensions between city and country, the present and the (possible) future, and narratives of progress or devolution.

I will first place Edward Bellamy and William Morris at either end of a spectrum of societal choices. Raymond Williams contrasts Morris with English contemporaries and successors such as Thomson, Huxley, Orwell, and Wells, but the distinction with greater resonance today is between the New World vision of industrialization and growth, and the Old World vision of degrowth and strategic reformation of urban, suburban, and rural centers; Bellamy/Morris. In the absence of a true rupture and interregnum wholesale reimagining of city and country seems unlikely, but it is also hard to imagine there won’t be a gradual reshaping of major urban and rural spaces in response to the climate crisis. The presentation

will nod toward Calvino, Le Guin, Piercy, Jemison, and others, and conclude with a short reading of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge* as a thinking tool for the imagination of other forms of city and country in an Anthropocentric present and future, solarpunk or otherwise.

Bio: Peter Sands is Director of the Honors College at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, president of the Society for Utopian Studies, and president of Slow Food Southeast Wisconsin (WiSE) His current work looks at the intersections of Slow movements, utopianism, and alternative forms of academic work and writing.

Mariana Cruz: “Reimagining the country and the city in the solar-powered futures of Andrew Hudson’s “Under the Grid” and Cat Rambo’s “Big Rural”

Solarpunk has secured its place within the genre of speculative fiction as a source of counter-cultural hope among literary visions of catastrophe, countering the pervasive despair with images of bright eco-futures where the relationship between the human being, technology, and the environment has been reconceived. The imaginaries created by solarpunk texts oscillate between optimistic images of sustainable civilizations and a concern with the obstacles hindering the accomplishment of these utopian projects.

Andrew Hudson's "Under the Grid" and Cat Rambo's "Big Rural" portray two energy imaginaries where the transition from a fossil fuel economy to a global investment in solar power has not been accompanied by a dissolution of the petro-capitalist template of socio-economic relations. Focusing on how solar energy infrastructures transform the urban and rural landscapes and disrupt local modes of living, these short stories speculate on the limitations of an energy revolution unfolding without the parallel development of a globalized ethical system based on the principle of connectivity.

This paper will analyse how "Under the Grid" and "Big Rural" subvert the aesthetic elements usually associated with solar technology, such as light and transparency (Williams 2019), to critically interrogate the relational systems surrounding these infrastructures, namely the imbalanced interplay between local and global forces and its impact on the configuration of urban and rural spaces. It will argue that by envisioning community-oriented solutions for the problems brought about by an uneven distribution of the solar footprint, Hudson's and Rambo's short stories outline the ideals of a new political space of collective responsibility, where the global network of energy interdependencies is matched by a new ethics of interhuman and interspecies solidarity.

Bio: Mariana Cruz is a Ph.D. student of Modern Literatures and Cultures at NOVA University of Lisbon and the recipient of a Ph.D. research grant provided by FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia). Her current research focuses on representations of institutionalized aging in Contemporary Anglo-American Literature. She completed her master's degree in Modern Literatures and Cultures at NOVA University of Lisbon with a dissertation titled "A No Man's Land of the Ages: Colonialism, Power Dynamics and Transculturality in Robert L. Stevenson's short Pacific fiction". Mariana Cruz has been associated with the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies since 2017. Her research interests include age studies, eco-fiction, postcolonial literature and transmediality.

Organising Committee

Emrah Atasoy

Emrah Atasoy, Associate Professor of English, is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow (EUTOPIA-SIF COFUND) of the Institute of Advanced Study, working in the Dept. of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick, UK. He served as a visiting postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford's Faculty of English Language and Literature between September 2021 and September 2022. He is the author of the monograph *Epistemological Warfare and Hope in Critical Dystopia* (Nobel, 2021). His work appeared in journals such as *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (with Marta Komsta), *Studies in the Novel* (with Thomas Horan), *Utopian Studies*, *Librosdelacorte.es*, *Literary Voice*, *Methis. Studia Humaniora Estonica*, *SFRA Review*, and *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*. He also contributed chapters to *The Postworld In-Between Utopia and Dystopia: Intersectional, Feminist, and Non-Binary Approaches in 21st-Century Speculative Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2021) and *Speculations of War: Essays on Conflict in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Utopian Literature* (McFarland, 2021). He is currently co-editing the forthcoming volume *Entangled Futurities: Utopian and Dystopian Explorations of Pandemics and Ecological Breakdown* (Routledge, planned for 2024). His current project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 945380.

Nora Castle

Nora Castle is an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick. She recently completed her PhD, entitled "Food Futures: Food, Foodways, and Environmental Crisis in Contemporary Science Fiction." Nora's research interests include food futures, critical animal studies, critical plant studies, and utopian architecture and design in/as science fiction. Her recent publications include "In Vitro Meat and Science Fiction: Contemporary Narratives of Cultured Flesh" (*Extrapolation*, 2022), a co-edited Special Issue on "Food Futures" (2022) in *Science Fiction Studies*, and a forthcoming co-edited volume on *Animals and Science Fiction* (Palgrave).

Joe P. L. Davidson

Joe recently completed his PhD in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge and is now a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick. His current project is focused on representations of the climate apocalypse in contemporary culture. His work has been published in the *European Journal of Social Theory*, *Feminist Theory*, *The Sociological Review*, *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Environmental Politics*, and *New Formations*.

Emellyne Forman

Emellyne Forman (she/her) is Programme Administrator for The Sustainable Cities and Energy Global Research Priorities. With a background in community development, embodiment practice, and education, Her research interests lie at the intersection of various fields, including black feminism, queer theory, and the transformative power of creativity in fostering structures of collective care and belonging.