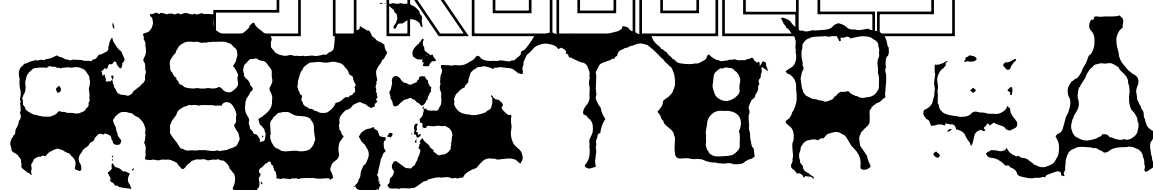


SYMPOSIUM BURNING, BITING, BLOOMING:

RETHINKING
POLITICS ACROSS
THE RANGE OF
MORE-THAN-HUMAN
STRUGGLES



ABSTRACTS

Tereza Arndt

The Memory of the Landscape as a Political Archive

This paper examines how landscapes become political, defining „political“ as the ways environments interact with power and historical struggle. This occurs through their capacity to preserve, materialize, and reactivate histories such as colonization, industrialization, displacement, ecological violence and resistance. Rather than approaching the landscape as a passive archive—a physical record—or mere symbolic backdrop, the paper argues that environmental materials actively resist depoliticization by retaining traces of past and current conflicts. „Depoliticization“ here refers to efforts to strip issues of political significance. Contaminated land, scarred forests, altered waterways, and degraded ecologies do not simply document political violence; they refuse erasure, destabilize official narratives, and re-enter contemporary disputes as sites of more-than-human struggle (conflicts involving both human and nonhuman actors). Drawing on Janine Natalya Clark’s concept of “other-than-human witnesses”—nonhuman entities that testify to events—this paper investigates how landscapes function as testimonial agents, whose material persistence makes political histories visible beyond human speech. It explores when environmental testimony (the evidence presented by landscapes) becomes politically legible (recognizable as political), who authorizes or suppresses such testimony, and which institutional, epistemological (related to knowledge), or legal mechanisms enable or obstruct its recognition within frameworks of memory, justice, and contestation. Through empirically grounded examples—post-industrial extraction zones (areas exploited for resources), post-conflict damaged territories, and landscapes marked by forced displacement—the paper discusses how landscapes shift from governed objects to politically recalcitrant (resistant) actors. It reconceptualizes memory not only as human recollection but as a more-than-human process, where landscapes participate in struggles over justice, resistance, and the limits of political engagement.

Ana Elisa Astudillo Salazar

Radically Sensitive Bodies: The Fifth River of Cuenca

Cuenca, a city in Ecuador's Andean highlands, is crossed by four rivers that shape the territory, collective memory, and sense of belonging of its inhabitants and the surrounding wetlands. In everyday language, people speak not of crowds, but of "rivers of people." On September 16, 2025, this metaphor became reality when Cuenca itself transformed into a "fifth river" as nearly 100,000 people filled the streets to oppose the Loma Larga mining project and defend the waters and wetlands of Kimsakocha. This mobilization was not an isolated event, but the culmination of more than three decades of struggle led by communities directly affected by the mining project promoted by Dundee Precious Metals. Located in the Kimsakocha wetlands, within the Macizo del Cajas Biosphere Reserve, threatening the fragile socio-hydrological fabric that sustains both life and community. Under slogans such as "No to mining!" and "Cuenca's water is not for sale!", the march brought together urban and rural actors, environmental collectives, and local communities in a powerful affirmation of democracy and collective memory. This work reflects on how relationships with water become forms of political action, deeply intertwined with the body, memory, and collective history, as well as with practices of resistance grounded in a profoundly radical sensibility rooted in body-territory relations. Through these relationships, a shared sensibility is embodied, one capable of sustaining mobilization and weaving a social fabric organized around the defense of water. Within this framework, the "fifth river" is not merely a mobilizing metaphor, but a mode of political existence. In one manifesto, the people of Cuenca are imagined as scattered drops of water that converge to form a river. In a time marked by increasing social fragmentation, the defense of water emerges not only as a form of resistance to extractivism, but also as a force capable of producing community and reweaving the social fabric.

Lola Aubry

Whales as Borderworkers: Territory-Making and More-than-Human Resistance

This paper asks what happens to border politics when whales are taken seriously not only as objects of protection, management, or conflict, but as participants in the unsettled making of maritime order. Drawing on ethnographic research in the Pelagos Sanctuary in the northwestern Mediterranean and in the Faroe Islands, the paper explores how whales disturb, exceed, and reconfigure human attempts to govern marine space. In the Pelagos Sanctuary, cetaceans are at the centre of a transnational conservation regime that seeks to protect them from noise, ship strikes, harassment, and other forms of disturbance. Yet whales do not simply inhabit a protected area defined by states and experts. Through their movements, vocalisations, disappearances, strandings, and encounters with boats, they unsettle the spatial and legal categories through which marine protection is organised. Their presence produces new limits, mobile restrictions, scientific protocols, affective attachments, and political controversies. In the Faroe Islands, whales are differently entangled in struggles over sovereignty, identity, postcolonial relations, animal ethics, and environmental toxicity. Although whales are killed in the grindadráp whaling practice, their death does not reduce them to passive objects of human action. On the contrary, their bodies, blood, meat, toxicity, movements, and public visibility continue to exert political, affective, material, and symbolic force. Even when killed, whales trouble the terms through which they are governed, defended, condemned, and consumed. Rather than treating resistance as a strictly intentional or human form of action, the paper proposes to think with more-than-human recalcitrance: the ways in which marine animals and oceanic materialities complicate, redirect, and sometimes obstruct human projects of bordering, conservation, and sovereignty. Whales „struggle“ not by speaking in the idiom of activism, but by making governance unstable, relational, and continuously unfinished. In doing so, they invite a reconsideration of borders as more-than-human arrangements.

Ana Mariella Bacigalupo

**Mountains as the Material and Discursive Frames for Resistant Politics
in Northern Peru**

While northern Peruvians have long had kinship relations with more-than-human landscapes, political corruption, extractive racial capitalism and environmental devastation have led communities to engage mountains as moral political leaders of local movements that change the world order. I coined the term “subversive cosmopolitics” (Bacigalupo 2022) to describe how and why communities in Northern Peru engage in modern politics through the material and discursive frame of mountains. My perspective contrasts with the classic notion of cosmopolitics held by anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser where more-than-humans exist in “worlds otherwise,” with “partial connections” neither fully outside nor encompassed by modern politics. According to Marisol de la Cadena, more-than-humans play central roles in Indigenous communities’ mobilizations against mining companies, but their “radical incommensurability exceeds modern politics, which could not tolerate there being other than a cultural belief” (2015:275). Instead, I focus on three local movements born in Trujillo led by mountains. I address how such radically non-anthropocentric understandings of the world in Northern Peru can expand our understanding and approach to politics; mobilize environmental advocacy; and trigger a sense of moral responsibility to the earth. In offering a new way to politically engage the planet and our futures, these northern Peruvian regional movements led by mountains have global implications.

Swad Bruneel
(Animal Sanctuaries)

Farm animal sanctuaries (FAS) are often cited as a starting point for overcoming the capitalist and speciesist system that enslaves both humans and animals. But how does this utopian vision work in practice? I am conducting a multi-sited ethnographic study within three FAS, which take in animals rescued from the livestock industry. These organisations embody interspecies alliances, for by their very existence they alter the trajectories of animals and transform their status, shifting them from objects of consumption to individuals endowed with personality. Humans confer this status upon animals by giving them a name, constructing their biography, and considering some of their individual preferences (Nayak, 2024). The term 'alliance', however, needs to be nuanced to describe the intertwining of domination and emancipation within FAS's. The definition of politicisation proposed by Kymlicka and Donaldson—namely, the capacity to have a say in decisions that affect them—allows me to consider sanctuary animals as possessing political agency. For example, refusing to eat, conflicts between individuals, or breaking down fences are behaviours recognised by the humans. They may respond by offering alternatives and improving living conditions. A certain degree of political freedom is possible provided that the initial act is one of resistance. It is indeed through (micro-)resistance to a decision originally made by humans, that negotiation can begin. Furthermore, I observed three non-negotiable principles: when a behaviour harms another animal; when an animal is in poor health; when individuals attempt to leave the sanctuary. These situations can lead to more overt resistance. The concept of resistance is not ideal due to the risks it entails (reification, romanticisation); nevertheless, it can be a relevant approach for describing how power is structured between humans and animals, as well as for understanding other interspecies power relations. Thus, rather than reducing the lived experience of animals, it could help refine the diversity of tactics developed to enable the interspecies cohabitation required by the sanctuary and further help to nuance the human/animal binary (Petitt, 2026). Is it appropriate to conceive of FAS's as comprising a plurality of resistances acting at different scales and from different perspectives?

Dominik Gallenberger

Luhmannian legitimization through procedure under disagreement in Te Awa Tupua

More-than-human politics is often narrated as recognition or relationality. A complementary bottleneck is procedural. Agency becomes politically consequential only once an ecological entity is translated into an addressable and criticisable decision-position that can bind expectations under disagreement. This proposal develops a Luhmannian reconstruction of how such positions are produced and kept contestable through legitimization by procedure (Luhmann, 1983), using the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 as a case. In this perspective, legal personhood is not a symbolic breakthrough but the construction of a legal address. The operative problem is how decision authority is allocated so that critique can attach and decisions can continue to function as premises for further decisions. The analysis centres on Te Pou Tupua, the two-person office designated as Te Awa Tupua's human face. Its nomination-and-appointment architecture is read as a recruitment decision that concentrates competence to speak and decide in the name of the address, thereby stabilising responsibility, contestation, and accountability. This corresponds to a key insight in rights-of-nature scholarship that rights require an institutional bearer capable of triggering claims and bearing critique (Cano Pecharroman, 2018; O'Donnell & Talbot-Jones, 2018). Recruitment alone, however, remains exposed to ceremonialisation or capture. The Act therefore couples recruitment with programming. Tupua te Kawa and related provisions operate as programs that structure admissible reasons and keep objections processable as questions of alignment and misalignment with integrity (Charpleix, 2018). On this basis, conflict is relocated. The question shifts from whether the entity can have a voice to whether representation followed the program. Rights-based arrangements thus do not dissolve struggle; they reorganise it into arenas of representation and accountability (Immovilli et al., 2022). The contribution specifies how more-than-human struggle is procedurally formatted through recruitment plus program, and why contestability is a condition of legitimacy in Anthropocene governance. This procedural lens speaks to more-than-human struggles by showing how institutional arrangements do not merely represent agency but actively format the arenas in which it can be contested, resisted, and made politically consequential.

Claire Galloni d'Istria

Biting Proximities: Disease, Care, and More-than-Human Struggles in the Transboundary Alps

This paper examines how a sanitary crisis involving cattle, insect vectors, a virus, pastoral practices, mountain materialities, and three neighbouring states unsettles the conditions of more-than-human coexistence in the Northern Alps. Drawing on photo-ethnographic fieldwork conducted since 2024 in the Aosta Valley, Haute-Savoie, and the Canton of Valais, it asks how Lumpy Skin Disease reconfigures the ways proximity, care, movement, and seasonal pastoral life can be maintained, restricted, or rendered uncertain. Transmitted through the bites of flies and horseflies, Lumpy Skin Disease makes politics emerge through contact. In the summer of 2025, transhumance was not suspended: cattle continued to move between valley floors and alpine pastures. What changed was the relational density of pastoral life. Inter-herd contact was restricted, shared enclosures were avoided, and collective gatherings were modified, postponed, or cancelled. In some valleys where no case had been detected, anticipated viral circulation was enough to reshape practices. The threat was not only contagion, but the possibility that a single infected animal could lead to the culling of an entire herd, abruptly interrupting years of labour, care, and seasonal continuity. Rather than treating disease as an external crisis imposed upon pastoral life, the paper follows its unruly capacity to disturb the conditions under which humans, animals, insects, infrastructures, and mountains coexist. The virus does not act alone: insect vectors complicate fixed territorial control, cattle mediate relations of care and vulnerability, and mountain materialities structure altitude, enclosure, exposure, and seasonal rhythm. Through this case, alpine space appears as a lived and volumetric environment in which more-than-human relations are not simply present, but constantly negotiated, strained, and made politically consequential. By foregrounding biting, exposure, and the regulation of proximity, the paper contributes to discussions of more-than-human struggle beyond human-centred models of resistance or activism. It shows how pastoral worlds are unsettled not through spectacular rebellion, but through fragile negotiations over what can touch, move, gather, endure, or be destroyed.

Lýdia Grešáková

More-than-human challengers: Feminist spatial practices as emergent political fields in Slovak and Czech planning

In Slovakia's „hungry valley“ of south-east Gemer region, Včelí kRaj (Bee County) weaves care for pollinators with experiential learning and social inclusion for the long-term unemployed. Like similar practices in Slovak and Czech context, they challenge anthropocentric planning by foregrounding the needs of actors like animals and ecological systems, often sidelined in planning processes. Drawing on exploratory research (2021, with Zuzana Tabačková), this contribution examines situated more-than-human practices across five Czech and Slovak groups, such as ecological assessments (COLridor), heritage storytelling (Čierne diery), and multispecies workshops (Včelí kRaj). Framed by Strategic Action Fields (Fligstein and McAdam 2011), planning emerges as a structured field where actors with unequal resources negotiate, stabilise, and contest prevailing rules and meanings. Established planning practices embedded in political paradigms of neoliberal development logics collide with emergent practices like relational care, bridging gaps in municipal expertise and historic legacies. More-than-human perspectives do not revolt outright but subtly reshape field rules: biodiversity becomes „public space,“ as one communication partner notes, fostering alliances that introduce feminist values without explicitly naming them. This contribution asks how more-than-human feminist spatial practices become political within and across strategic action fields of planning and with what effects. Working through internal tensions, procedural gaps, and flexible moments, researched groups participate in ongoing struggles over field definition and expanding recognised actors and expertise. In the Central Eastern European strategic action field of spatial planning – where feminist spatial practices remain unestablished, unlike in Western debates – such absences open space for post-anthropocentric reconfiguration. Instead of treating the limited institutionalisation of feminist or more-than-human planning as a deficit, this reframes it as an analytical opening for examining how experimental practices anticipate future planning challenges related to ecological transformation, social inequality, and multispecies justice.

Fernanda Gallegos: Burned Landscapes, Unsettled Futures: Pyropolitics and the Political Life of Fire in Viña del Mar, Chile

The deadliest fire disaster in Chile's history unfolded in Viña del Mar, within a landscape increasingly prone to burning: shaped by prolonged drought, exotic tree plantations, and socially segregated urban-rural interfaces. In its aftermath, a complex and contested reconstruction process emerged, marked by delays, negligence, and eligibility disputes—conditions that left survivors facing deeply uncertain circumstances. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among survivors, local leaders, NGOs, and state agents, this paper traces how fire, as a more-than-human force, participates in the making of political relations beyond the event itself. Rather than centering the fire solely as catastrophe, I focus on its afterlife and on what it sets into motion. I approach fire as an agentive force that exposes and reconfigures latent social divisions. As flames moved across hillsides and into marginalized neighborhoods, they rendered visible longstanding inequalities tied to land-use policies, informality, and uneven state presence. In the aftermath, these revealed conditions became the grounds upon which residents organized, protested, and mobilized claims over recognition and reconstruction—demanding the possibility of different futures. I conceptualize these forms of collective mobilization as *pyropolitics*—the struggles that emerge once flames subside—and ask how they become political. I argue that fire mediates this process by disrupting everyday life and making structural neglect perceptible and contestable. Through eligibility disputes, delayed subsidies, and sustained collective action, survivors compelled fragmented state institutions to respond, transforming dispersed grievances into political claims about how life should be rebuilt. Moving beyond explanations that distribute blame across different actors, I foreground fire as an actant that mobilizes social unease and collective action around uncertain and contested futures. By doing so, the paper contributes to debates on when and how relations of resistance become political, and what is at stake in recognizing more-than-human forces within political life.

Sára Hájková and Anna Mírková

“The River Showed Them!”: Emergence of more-than-human alliances with unruly rivers in Dolní Lutyně and Jesenicko, Czechia

In September 2024, severe flooding caused by a genoa low called Storm Boris hit Central Europe. In the Czech Republic, flow rates surpassed the threshold for a 500-year flood, causing widespread destruction. Aside from that, the floods also sparked discussions about land use, environmental management and control. So, what did the rivers show? Despite being subdued by multiple layers of control infrastructure, the flooded rivers thwarted human attempts at control. This unruliness became the starting point for emergence of more-than-human alliances of which we present two case studies. In Dolní Lutyně, the flood became an ally for local activists opposing the construction of a gigafactory. While they recognised the agency of the water, suggesting a move beyond the nature-culture dichotomy, this dichotomy was also activated to support their arguments about ‘uncontrollable nature’. The flooding rivers play a key role in the struggle to renaturalise river basins in face of drought and extreme weather events in the Jesenicko area. ‘Let’s not teach the river how to flow’, say the local environmentalists, while negotiating with the watershed and forest management about the future politics of rivers. Based on these two ethnographic cases, we ask: how can unruliness provide a basis for more-than-human alliances? What forms do these alliances take, and are they inherently political? And does the river that floods become a partner in the struggles, or is it simply instrumentalised?

Radan Haluzík

"This City is a Canyon! These Places Are Nature...": A discussion excursion to the inner peripheries of Prague

Our cities like to boast that they are "full of greenery", but closer analysis shows that surprisingly often this is spontaneous, unintended and often unwanted greenery. Anthropocene nature, spontaneously created in the gaps of the inner peripheries of cities, in places in-between and in terrain vague. *Politics is the art of putting things on scene*, says the philosopher Jacques Rancière about the relationship between politics and aesthetics. The scene that this discussion excursion will try to show you is a river canyon in the middle of a city of Prague, which its human inhabitants do not perceive as a canyon, with numerous islands of urban wilderness that they do not perceive as nature. Put on scene beautiful places in the middle of the capital, which no one sees as beautiful (yet!)... We will walk through the rocks, the river and the islands, mythical places of the oldest national history and the origin of Czech water sports. We will talk about why Prague is the city with the most officially declared urban nature reserves in Europe and we will take a look into the life of some of them. The author of the excursion – social anthropologist and ecologist Radan Haluzík – will introduce us to the project of the upcoming campaign, which seeks to inversely reverse our vision of urban space and urbanism. And discuss his vision of inverse urbanism, which will no longer see only its official places, but also its places in-between, the gaps in the space and time of the city.

Cymene Howe

Elemental Politics: Immersions in the Burn and the Bloom

The elements are all around us, all the time: composing us, and every thing, from beginning to end. Elements are the matter of the universe—such as carbon, hydrogen and oxygen—and they are our context: the dispositions and processes of earth, air, water and fire and weather that comprise worlds. Elements guide and condition our every breath and our very step. Given all that the elements are, all that they make, and all that they make possible, we can ask: what analytical ground can the elements offer to us? What might they illustrate about our own ontological limits or the edges of our epistemic curves? This presentation is a short meditation on elements as invitation to evaluate more-than-human modes of resistance, and the politics they inform. It asks: if immersive research allows us to intimately experience, follow, document and understand socioenvironmental phenomena, what happens when we make the elements our central point of encounter with more-than-human forces and entities as researchers, as thinkers, and as creatives? In brief: Where can the elements take us, if we are willing to be delivered?

César E. Giraldo-Herrera

Malaria and its Lord, the master of alligators; the road and the sacred site of the Lord of Mumps

The paper explores the partial commensurability between microbial ecology and Colombo-Panamanian Kuna *nelegana* or „shamanic“ understandings of the body, the environment, and pathogenic beings responsible for mental and infectious diseases such as malaria. It starts examining perplexed biomedical efforts to translate Kuna understandings of malaria (which involve an elephant-like master of alligators but no mosquitoes), showing the shortcomings of One-Health-style approaches to other-than-Western knowledge, which are often reductionistic, instrumentalizing, and antagonizing. Kuna ontology describes how organisms and the environment are „holographically“ constituted and permeated by multitudinous perceivable beings that have bodies, require nourishment, and reproduce. Some of these beings protect specific animals, plants, or places by inflicting specific infectious or mental diseases, i.e., pathogens. The master of alligators is also the master of specific swamps. Given that Kuna epistemology emphasizes subjective experience, we explore potential means of subjective, phenomenological access to the microbial world and their alignment with Kuna descriptions of the malaria master. Consulting with the community, we focus on sacred sites: when plans for a national road crossing the sacred site of the mumps(like) master materialize, road workers are afflicted by the disease. Westernized and Kuna ontologies turn out to be partially commensurable as the national health system acknowledged bouts of an unidentified fever syndrome at the time in the area. The road was completed, the workers left, and the outbreak ended. Years later, the road turned the area into a scenario of a humanitarian crisis of mass-scale human trafficking, calling for a closer look at sacred sites. But also, how they challenge Western approaches to pathogens, suggesting more-than-human diplomatic alternatives.

Mateusz Laszczkowski

Dam it! Multispecies allyship with beavers and humans

This paper, based on preliminary fieldwork with pro-beaver environmental activists in Poland, explores some of the possibilities and already existing practices of multispecies allyship in resistance to Anthropocenic thanatopower. In Poland, beavers, although common, are a legally protected species. Their critically important role in water retention and sustaining biodiversity is well recognized. Thus, beavers are key allies in the struggle against the anthropogenic climate catastrophe. However, beavers are regularly killed, their dams, lodges and habitats destroyed, legally as well as illegally, by various actors. I argue for a concept of multispecies allyship where members of different species - such as humans and beavers - contribute skills and capacities the others don't possess to resist dominant power. For example, human activists learn to imitate beaver dams to sustain habitats, while they also 'build paper dams', using the law to protect the beavers.

Neal Cahoon and Roger Norum
Befriending Invasiveness? Mosquitoes, Pink Salmon,
and More-Than-Human Recalcitrance

This talk explores how mosquitoes and pink salmon emerge as recalcitrant more-than-human actors within contemporary efforts to govern environmental change across Arctic and Mediterranean regions. As warming waters and shifting seasonal conditions facilitate new forms of species mobility, these animals increasingly unsettle ecological categories, management regimes, and everyday expectations about where life belongs and how it should move. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in river systems, fishing communities, laboratories, and peri-urban settlements, the talk follows encounters in which mosquitoes and pink salmon become objects of irritation, containment, familiarity, and political dispute. Pink salmon, an anadromous holobiont species introduced in the Kola peninsula by the Soviet Union in the 1950s, complicates fisheries governance by crossing National borders and exceeding classificatory boundaries: it is rendered both as an invasive threat to river ecosystems and as a potential food resource for communities in northern Norway and Sápmi. The Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*), first identified on Mediterranean islands in the 1990s, has been linked to rising temperatures, increased trade, and human mobility. Its potential to transmit diseases including dengue and Zika has generated growing ecological and social concern amid wider European debates in which biological and social discourses of invasiveness increasingly intersect. Rather than treating invasiveness as a self-evident ecological condition, we examine how species become politically charged through struggles over classification, control, and coexistence. Engaging recent work on friendship, borderlessness, and ecological sociality, we ask whether invasive species relations might be understood not only through exclusion and eradication, but also through uneasy forms of accommodation, exposure, attachment, and friendship. We argue that mosquitoes and pink salmon actively reconfigure the political terrains through which belonging, care, coexistence, and mobility are negotiated in the Anthropocene.

Jessica L. Olivares

The Horse as an Embodied Technology in the Multispecies Policing Assemblage

The material and symbolic issue of horses as tools of both oppression and liberation emerges as a critical focal point amid ongoing protests against police brutality and broader questions about the role of law enforcement in state power in the United States. This paper captures the different understandings of horses by police and activists in the Texas Gulf Coast region. Drawing on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork, the paper analyzes how the multispecies policing assemblage, counter-traditions, and racialized surveillance and control are interconnected, particularly when viewed through the lens of horses' history during slavery and frontier mythology. It argues that law enforcement officers utilize horses as mounted patrol agents to amplify the reach of police officers, thus revealing the horse as an embodied technology of state governance. By focusing on the role of horses in policing and protesting, the paper critically examines how the human-horse relationship becomes politicized in these contexts. It explores what counts as political action when non-human animals are integral to both state enforcement and community resistance, and how meanings of the political are negotiated and contested across these more-than-human lines. This paper contributes to anthropological understandings of technology, policing, and multispecies relationships by specifically addressing the neglected question of when and how more-than-human struggles become political, offering empirical insights into how animals are enrolled in, and actively shape, debates about state power and its contested legitimacy.

Julia Ostertag

From Burning to Blooming? Contested Hydropolitical Spaces of Contamination in Bitterfeld-Wolfen, Eastern Germany

This paper turns to the substance of water, focusing on how water and other human and nonhuman actors vertically (co-)produce and shape both the underground and the surface as hydropolitical spaces in Bitterfeld-Wolfen, Eastern Germany. The Bitterfeld-Wolfen region embodies a long industrial history in which lignite mining, chemical production, hydraulic engineering, and wastewater management have shaped hydrological conditions to this day - leaving approximately 1,300 hectares of groundwater severely polluted. The resulting dynamics of pollutants—particularly those associated with persistent Hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH)—generate not only ecological risks but also complex arenas of political negotiation among nature conservation, remediation of contaminated sites, property relations, agricultural use, and regional transformation goals. Drawing from qualitative fieldwork in the Bitterfeld-Wolfen region and building on works in the field of more-than-human geographies, hydrosocial theories, and current debates on subterranean geopolitics, I argue that these (sub-)terranean hydropolitical spaces emerge within a constellation of fluid and contested co-constitutive relations among human and nonhuman actors – such as water, contaminants, soils, infrastructures, microorganisms, plants, and animals. In this context, water contamination materializes not merely as a local legacy condition but as an active structuring force in regional transition politics. By foregrounding hydropolitical spaces of contamination as a constitutive element of (sub-)terranean governance, the paper demonstrates how regulatory regimes of surface and subsurface systems are always negotiated, contested, and shaped by situated, more-than-human relations. Investigating these relations—their conflicts, materialities, temporalities, and histories—is therefore crucial for understanding how contaminated hydropolitical spaces can become inhabitable and be transformed in more sustainable ways.

Valentina Lomanto-Perdomo

Caring for life, defending territory against green extractivism: Violence, resistance, and re-existence with the more-than-human

In 2018, the Canadian corporation Libero Copper started to reactivate a large-scale copper mining project aiming to extract copper and molybdenum in the mountains in the convergence of the eastern Andean cordillera and the northwestern Colombian amazon rainforest. Framed as part of the energy transition, this project is being pushed by the colombian government and met with strong resistance by a diverse fabric of indigenous and non-indigenous environmental defenders through a variety of hidden human-non human interactions. The project aims to disrupt the Yagé cultural complex, a pre-Hispanic network of exchange around shamanic knowledges and practices associated with entheogen plants that are foundational for the biocultural reproduction of local people. Existing research has extensively documented how extractivism erodes human–nature relations, ruptures socio-ecological bonds, and generates environmental, cultural, and affective loss. Building on these insights, this article advances the discussion by examining how human– more-than-human relations do not only become sites of harm, but also actively sustain, shape, and orient collective resistance and re-existence. Drawing on ethnographic research and Participatory Action Research, I engage with Indigenous cosmopolitics (de la Cadena, 2010) and Pluriversal Politics (Escobar, 2020) to discuss how mountains, rivers, plants, and spiritual beings are not merely symbolic references or passive victims of extractivism, but active participants in territorial defense, political strategy, and practices of collective care. By foregrounding the active role of more than humans as political actors embedded in relational ontologies, this presentation presents a call for epistemic justice in how violence, care, and socio-ecological transformations are conceptualized. It shows that defenders' experiences of harm—spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical—as well as their strategies of care and protection routinely exceed the ontological assumptions underpinning institutional frameworks for protection of territorial defenders.

Ferran Pons-Raga, Pau Sanosa-Cols, and Camila Del Mármol

From tame to wild... and back again? Fire governance in the context of climate emergency in the Catalan Pyrenees

Fears of large wildfires are growing in the Catalan Pyrenees, a region transformed since the 1960s by depopulation, the decline of agropastoralism, and the rise of amenity-based economies. As cultivated fields, hay meadows, and grazing lands have given way to scrublands and forests, wildfire risk has intensified. This trajectory reflects broader socioecological changes across southern Europe, where sustained forest expansion contrasts with global deforestation trends. In Catalonia, where forests now cover over 63% of the territory, fire suppression policies introduced during the twentieth century have increasingly shown their limits. Since the 1990s, fire governance in Catalonia has shifted toward strategies that seek to coexist with fire rather than simply suppress it. The Forest Action Support Group (GRAF) within the fire service and civil society actors from the agrarian and forestry sectors have promoted prescribed burning and active forest management, often drawing inspiration from pastoral fire practices while reworking them through scientific, technical, and bureaucratic frameworks. If depopulation and the shift toward amenity-based economies have facilitated the expansion of the wild (forest) over the tame (cultivated and grazed lands), then, in the context of the current climate emergency, renewed forms of active, anticipatory forest management are being advanced as the primary pathway for learning to coexist with fire. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in two districts of the Catalan High Pyrenees (Val d'Aran and Alt Urgell), this article examines how local and informal pastoral fire practices are mobilized through contemporary prescribed burning programs aimed at mitigating wildfire risk. We analyze how these practices are reconfigured through future-oriented, science-informed models in socioecological conditions that differ markedly from those they seek to emulate. In doing so, the article interrogates the temporal politics and knowledge practices through which "pastoral tradition" is decontextualized and reconstructed as a tool of environmental governance in allegedly upcoming fire-prone territories.

Robert Repka

Evasive and Unruly Chamois: Governing Endemic Species in Tatra Mountains, Slovakia

Chamois is not only a symbol of high mountains; it has also become a sentinel of anthropogenic change in vulnerable mountain ecosystems. In the Tatra Mountains, Slovakia, an endemic and endangered subspecies of Tatra Chamois circulates as a charismatic and symbolic being. As a result, it is subject to strict environmental governance and biopolitical regimes of conservation and production by the Tatra National Park. However, despite years of research, conservation practices and production, the park and its employees cannot figure out why its population numbers fluctuate and whether the genetic purity of the native species could be preserved. They struggle to intercept, analyse and address these questions and adopt adequate measures. Based on an ongoing ethnographic fieldwork since 2025 among zoologists, conservationists and rangers, I propose an argument that Tatra chamois evade biopolitical regimes of the park. Drawing on the concept of more-than-human unruliness, I further conceptually specify it as evasion-as-unruliness. Contextualising unruliness within the more-than-human resistance framework, I position it as an example of weaker resistance unraveled in the vein of multispecies studies. However, I don't perceive unruliness as chamois' inherent quality but as an emerging quality taking shape in relational movement to the alpine terrain and vis-à-vis the materiality of the conservation apparatus. I further advance the notion of evasion toward environmental governance and generating knowledge production - both grounded in modernist epistemologies. As a result, chamois evades being a governable environmental object of conservation biology. Not only do I contribute to debates on more-than-human unruliness but also on biopolitics, which has usually been focused on analysis of power while neglecting the role of resistance. The paper concludes that Tatra chamois might pose as a non-human being, providing for creating new and unintentional landscapes and natures of co-existence, as opposed to exclusion.

Carolyn Maertens

Beyond right-wing populism: Emerging more-than-human politics in the energy transition

Renewable energy has emerged as a prominent technological response to climate change, generating increased political pressure to expand energy infrastructure. The paper asks how forests become political and politicised within conflicts over renewable energy infrastructure. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a rural community in eastern Germany and an analysis of legal and bureaucratic documents, I discuss how recent German legislation aimed at accelerating the renewable energy transition, via wind energy in particular, translates into contested changes in spatial planning that affect local politics and more-than-human livelihoods in profound ways. Situated within debates on green extractivism, I trace how these laws enact economic incentives as key drivers of implementation, prioritising wind energy expansion over other forms of local land use. With the analytical framework of sacrifice zones as a point of departure, I demonstrate how forests in particular are made expendable through a politics of denial that, by disregarding existing socio-ecological relations, frames forests as degraded and thus not even a "sacrifice." Turning to a citizens movement against the appropriation of forests for wind energy, I then show how the politics of denial, I argue, prompts residents to actively re-make their relationships with forest as a socio-ecological formation, and in new, politicised ways. They do so by mobilising a more-than-human history of pollution and environmental destruction, political rupture, and socio-ecological transformation. Against rising disenfranchisement with institutionalised political actors and practices that is further fostered by right-wing populist opposition to the energy transition, this paper reflects on the possibilities and tensions of these emerging protest politics that evolve as locally grounded practice rooted in more-than-human relationships and shared history.

**“The Political Biogeomorphology Of...”: Roundtable discussion Matias Menalled
Hydro-Pyro-Social Politics in the Iberá Wetlands (Corrientes, Argentina)**

Drawing on my ethnographic research in the Iberá Wetlands, this talk explores how water scarcity and combustion reconfigure socio-environmental relationships. The central question guiding this talk is: how are the bonds among humans, fire, and water transformed in a wetland during a water crisis? To address this question, I focus on the experiences, practices, and narratives of local firefighters living in an affected region. I propose the notion of hydro-pyro-social politics as an anthropological framework for understanding opposing elements in wetlands affected by a prolonged drought.

Gabriel Ulrich Lennon

Title: A Politics of Herbivory: Interpreting Feral Ungulates in Aotearoa

Large herbivores were introduced to Aotearoa (New Zealand) by colonists a few hundred years ago, radically altering the composition of the islands. These deer, goats, and pigs have both created a 'hunting utopia' of largely unrestricted big game hunts as well as major pest problem for farmers and foresters. In this talk, I consider how these animals' presences and effects in landscapes are interpreted as political and how they are bound up in post-colonial debates of place.

Emma Cyr

The Political Hydrogeomorphology of Intervention and Invasivity in Italian Lagoonscapes

The lagoons of Venice and the Po Delta in northeastern Italy are simultaneously deeply anthropogenic, owing their current form to centuries of hydromorphological intervention, and constantly in flux, shifting with sediments, waves, and winds. Alongside the intensification of extractive industries and changing species assemblages, these lagoons are pervaded by contestations over what belongs. In this talk, I examine how hydrogeomorphological form is read and mobilized to make political claims around who and what is invasive, as well as who has the emplaced knowledge and authority to decide.

Kaitlyn C. Sisco

Scorched Earth: Arboreal Soldiers in Patagonian Forests

Argentine Patagonia is in flames, its evergreen forests turned red. In national parks like Nahuel Huapi, locals blame invasive pine trees for increasing wildfires. Like soldiers, pine trees ignite firebombs, contaminate water resources, and make multispecies war. To defend native forests, environmental activists and park rangers respond with species eradication campaigns. But pines resist governance through fire. Orchestrated within a settler colonial politic, Patagonia's pines invade, bloom, and burn despite human combat. Donna Haraway (2001) suggests that "the Earth itself is in revolt [...] rising against its destroyers," but what does ascribing violent agency do in practice? This paper examines scorched earth as a material reality and military tactic across multispecies worlds. Drawing on preliminary fieldwork in northern Patagonia, I consider invasive pines political agents and the wildfires they produce political tools. I employ scholarship in environmental anthropology and Critical Plant Studies to ask: What does it mean to read forests as political texts? How might we theorize warfare as a non/human phenomenon? And, reading pines more generously, how do we further complicate (counter)violence, militarization, and resistance? This paper holds these questions in productive tension, arguing that nonhuman agency exists both within and beyond human logics. By recognizing pines as arboreal soldiers that militarize forests in violent ways, I speculate: What does nonhuman soldiering entail, and who does it serve (Man 2018)? At the same time, I leave room for other vitalities, feralities, and resistances beyond capture (Bhan 2018; Khayyat 2022; Mehtta 2022; Tsing et al. 2021). Ecologies of war are ever-occluded (Guarasci and Kim 2022; Kaplan et al. 2020; Lutz 2006). I consider these thorny issues in Argentine Patagonia's protected forests, where histories of indigenous genocide and settler colonialism meet contemporary conservation regimes.

David A. Solís Aguilar

Water Rights: Q'eqchi' Maya Communities Defend the San Román River Against Palm Oil Companies

In the border zone between Verapaz and Petén (Guatemala) and Chiapas (Mexico), the San Román River flows from the slopes of Mount Rubelsanto and the Sierra de Chinajá through the plains of Tierra Blanca until it meets the Salinas River or Usumacinta River, in the region of Guatemala known as the Northern Lowlands, which corresponds to the Historical Territory or Territory of Mobility of the Q'eqchi' Maya People. In the worldview of these indigenous people, bodies of water—including river sources, river courses, and groundwater—are sacred places where Q'eqchi' territorial relationships are interwoven. Beginning in the 2000s, the Q'eqchi' territory of indigenous farming communities such as Esperancita del Río, Tierra Blanca, Tierra Negra, and Las Mercedes has been subject to land grabs by African palm oil production companies, which have built industrial processing plants and expanded palm oil plantations by hundreds of hectares to supply the food and cosmetics industries of North America and Europe. Faced with the expansion of the ontological territorial occupation by oil palm monocultures and industry on Q'eqchi' lands, the communities have resisted by partially preserving their lands, denouncing environmental impacts and the pollution of the San Román River, and collaborating with academic actors to document the violations of the rights of both the indigenous population, but especially of the river as rights-holders, through the voice of the more-than-human, particularly freshwater macroinvertebrates, which reflect the state of life of the San Román River. Based on the interaction between the river and the Q'eqchi' communities, they are filing a complaint with the Inter-American Human Rights System seeking recognition of the San Román River as a rights-bearing entity, along with all the other-than-humans that inhabit and give life to it.

Tatyjana Szafonova

Blooming Populism: More-Than-Human Politics in the Populismocene

This paper draws on my forthcoming book, *Blooming Populism: An Ethnography of Rural Hungary under Viktor Orbán*, based on long-term ethnographic research conducted in a Hungarian village between 2014 and 2026. I propose the concept of the Populismocene to describe a variant of the Anthropocene shaped by populist regimes and their specific modes of capturing human and nonhuman life. The paper examines how populism becomes embedded in more-than-human worlds through what I call „populist projects“: orchards, flowerbeds, pest-control campaigns, kitchen gardens, greenhouses, and soil cultivation measures. These projects redistribute resources to loyal networks while simultaneously producing tacit and explicit propaganda. Flowers conceal rural abandonment while generating an image of vitality; tree-planting ceremonies privilege symbolic gestures over long-term care; pest metaphors collapse ecological and political categories into sovereign binaries of exclusion. I argue that populism does not simply instrumentalise nature as symbolism. Rather, it creates specific ecological niches and unstable symbioses between political authority, capitalist commodity chains, and nonhuman life. Yet these relations remain fragile because plants, soils, pests, and climatic processes impose temporalities and material demands that exceed populist presentism. Dead orchards, exhausted soils, and decaying beautification projects expose the limits of governance organised around spectacle rather than maintenance. The paper asks how more-than-human relations become political under populism and how nonhuman processes quietly destabilise the regimes that attempt to appropriate them.

Laura Vassileva

The politics of testifying environmentally: Epistemic agency from/before the field

This paper draws on notes from preliminary fieldwork in the Armenian-Kurdish region of Turkey and on current preparations for re-entry. The research sits at the intersection of two concerns: political violence studied through its aftermath, and present-day local opposition to extractivism. Its focus is the politics of witnessing and testimony. What happens when war-torn ecologies are the only continuous witnesses to protracted violence, and are now themselves being remade – ungrounded – by state-led infrastructural projects? Building on E. Çaylı's work on extractivism and visibility, I ask what politics is expected to follow from testifying to violence environmentally. Since the forensic and environmental turns in memory studies, it has become a working consensus that environments register and convey violent histories. Yet, as Çaylı argues, knowing violence more palpably does not by itself yield politics. Rather than remaining with the question of epistemics, I argue, we must focus on the collective political work carried out on the ground in relation to the violence that is the subject of testimony. The ecological collective I worked with during preliminary fieldwork embodies such collective practice. Not only does it translate the Kurdish liberation movement's ecological paradigm and the knowledge of a particular valley's political violence to people who live there, but it also plants trees, bringing back the forest that stood before the massacres of Kurds in 1930 and was later cleared as part of counterinsurgency warfare. This campaign continues today in what people here call special warfare politics, now in the form of remaking the valley into an extractive frontier of small-scale hydropower plants (HES) and sand quarries. The river itself, drying because of the damming, has meanwhile exposed remains of that violence – against the very logic of the extraction that caused it. This presentation aims to extend the epistemic agency of environmental testimony beyond producing better or different knowledge – outside the categories complicit in violence – to include questions of reparation, reconciliation and resubjectivation. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing debates in Anthropocene literature on how to stay attentive to the myriad agencies of ecologies without dissolving political violence.

Rafique Wassan

Anti-Extractive Political Subjectivity for Other-than-Human Worlds: A Research Agenda for Post-Humanist Anthropology

Corporate capitalist production has been at the core of fuelling extractivism, which exploits a wide range of commons and the more-than-human world, including land, mountains, forests, rivers, and oceans. This exploitative relationship between humans and the environment, intensified by industrial development and the phenomenon known as the Great Acceleration, is critically examined within the context of the Anthropocene era. The dominant force of humans, manifested through capitalist-driven extractive actions, state capitalist systems, military-industrial complexes, and various wars and conflicts, is recognized as a significant driver of the planetary ecological catastrophe. In recent years, the Pakistani state's growing involvement and alignment with regional and global capitalist power dynamics—including militarized masculinity—has increasingly affected various aspects of life. This influence extends to the control over resources such as land and rivers for corporate farming, as well as the extraction of coal and granite from the Granite Mountains and the exploitation of marine life. My research study focuses on how dominant interventions in the commons and the more-than-human worlds have led to the development of political subjectivity, particularly through civil society's resistance. In this paper, I will discuss two specific cases that exemplify the cultivation of political subjectivity and resistance against the state's mega-corporate projects: the Anti-Canal Demonstration and the Save Karoonjhar Mountain Movement. Both cases highlight the significant role that the Indus River and Karoonjhar Mountain played in shaping a post-humanist political imagination. I will explore the artistic and musical expressions that emerged during this process, which contributed to the formation of political subjectivity and social agency for the River Indus and Karoonjhar landscape and mountain. The Anti-Canal Movement produced a Sindhi language song titled 'Sindhu Wahando Rahando – River Indus Will Keep Flowing,' performed by a female singer. The song received a warm reception and has been viewed over 3.6 million times on YouTube. This creative cultural production intersects with political subjectivity and the resistance movement aimed at protecting the other-than human worlds of river and land by challenging the corporate capitalist relations of the state. This paper aims to contribute to post-humanist anthropology by exploring how political subjectivity and social agency can be centered on the protection of ecology, the commons and more-than-human worlds, such as rivers, mountains, and land in the current Anthropocene crisis.

Sabrina Zajak

When the Forest Resists: Wilderness Camps as More-Than-Human Laboratories of Hope

At first glance, wilderness camps — recurring gatherings in which groups of people live, decide, and organize their lives together over days or weeks in nature — appear as apolitical refuges from the crises of the present. This paper argues otherwise: wilderness camps are laboratories of resistant world-making, where humans and non-humans jointly rehearse the affective and practical foundations that render a post-anthropocentric future imaginable — and, crucially, livable. Through sharing and exploring different forms of ancient and tribal knowledge, and through learning from nature, these camps radically reshape human-nature relations. In wilderness camps, we can explore how non-humans also carry forms of political knowledge, understood as ways of organizing life that cannot be reduced to human categories, yet which are precisely what the present crisis demands we learn. This is engagement in a process of collective healing and human-nature regeneration, in which alienation from other humans, from nature, and from oneself is collectively processed, while rebuilding the capacity for agency that authoritarianism and far-right politics seeks to foreclose. Drawing on participatory action research within these networks, I examine how trust, gratitude, and hope emerge as more-than-human practices. When participants learn to follow animal tracks, encounter plants as bearers of knowledge, or make decisions in circles shaped by wind, rain, and the rhythms of the land, it is not only human subjectivities that are transformed. Relations come into being in which non-humans act as disruptors, teachers, and allies — politically consequential presences that exceed their roles as resources, objects, or symbols. Whether such relations count as political remains contested. Inspired by Jane Bennett and others, I envision to develop a political sociology of hope, suggesting that hope is not a property of human consciousness, as it is usually conceived, but a quality of certain relations: relations that cut across species, materials, and temporalities. Following the symposium's invitation, I trace empirically how participants, animals, plants, and landscapes together generate moments that unsettle existing boundaries of the political, moments in which the authority to define what counts as political action is itself at stake. Hope, I argue, plays a crucial role in this process as a collective, more-than-human practice of resistance that prefigures post-anthropocentric social relations and contests dominant conceptions of agency and social change by decentering their human monopoly.

Kristína Žilinčárová

Co-domestication And Labour in Horse-Logging in Slovakia

This paper explores the dynamics of co-domestication between humans and horses involved in horse-logging labour. The relationship between humans and horses is typically asymmetrical (McGreevy et al., 2018), with humans occupying the position of power. This working and at the same time intimate relationship is, however, shaped by various contradictory dynamics and unfolds within the interplay of exploitation and care. Conceptually, the paper relies on co-domestication (Fijn, 2011) in order to dismantle the notion of domesticated animals „as economic commodities, purely under human control“ (Fijn, 2011: 19), and to emphasize that the association between domestic animals and human beings is also based on mutuality, shared sociality. The paper operates from the assumption that horse-logging requires a functional, personal relationship between humans and horses, realized through interspecies communication and co-existence. This framework attends to the relational and affective dimensions of working multispecies partnerships — and to how these dimensions can resist the reduction of horses to technical objects or economic resources alone. The first part of the paper focuses on the theoretical points of departure of horse-human relationships and labour, situating horse-logging within broader debates in more-than-human anthropology, animal studies, and multispecies ethnography. The second part delves into findings from original fieldwork conducted at horse-logging sites in Slovakia, mapping the everyday negotiations, embodied knowledge, and interspecies attunements that characterize this practice. In conclusion, the paper reports on the implicit political needs of horse-loggers and their horses, tracing the conditions under which their shared struggles over welfare and working conditions might cross the threshold from mere endurance into something recognizably political. In doing so, it calls for anthropological attention to labouring animals not as passive objects of human will, but as active participants in shared, if unequal, lifeworlds.