

جامعة نيويورك أبوظبي



ARTS AND  
HUMANITIES

Rachel  
Carson  
Center

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

## Workshop:

### Transformations in Environment and Society

**Time** February 18-19, 2018

**Venue** New York University Abu Dhabi, Saadiyat Campus

**Abstract** The Rachel Carson Center and the Arts and Humanities at NYUAD are pleased to announce the organization of a joint workshop this February (2018) at NYU Abu Dhabi on “Transformations in Environment and Society.” This is an opportunity for RCC Fellows to discuss their works in progress with other faculty from NYUAD and the NYU Global Network.

## **Sunday, 18 February 2018 (A6, 010)**

8:15 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM Welcome by Robert Young, *Silver Professor, Dean of Arts and Humanities, NYUAD; Professor of English and Comparative Literature, NYUNY*

9:10 AM Welcome & Introductions

Sophia Kalantzakos, *Global Distinguished Professor, Environmental Studies and Public Policy, NYUNY/NYUAD*

Christof Mauch, *Director of the Rachel Carson Center / Chair in American Culture and Transatlantic Relations, LMU Munich*

9:15 AM *Climate Meditation*

Una Chaudhuri, *Professor of English, Drama, Environmental Studies, Program Head of Theater, NYUAD* and  
Marina Zurkow, *Teacher, Interactive Telecommunications Program, Tisch School of the Arts, NYUNY*

9:30 AM Session 1 – Moderated by Werner Sollors, *Global Professor of Literature, NYUAD*

*“Preserving and Remembering the Soundscape: The Case of the Sounds from Sir Bani Yas Island Website and Installation Project”*

Carlos Guedes, *Associate Arts Professor of Music, NYUAD*

*“Saving the Planet in Song - American Popular Music and Environmentalism”*

Arielle Helmick, *Managing Director, RCC*

*“Ecopoetics and Literary Ecosystems: An Overview and New Questions”*

Jill Magi, *Assistant Arts Professor, NYUAD*

- 10:50 AM Break with a tea presentation  
“*The Art of Chinese Tea*”  
Presentation by Tea SIG, Daniel Chirita
- 11:15 AM Session 2 – Moderated by Rana Tomaira, *Research Scientist and Lecturer, Social Research and Public Policy, NYUAD*
- “*Same as it Never Was: Enkejje, Haplochromines, or Just Trash*”  
Jennifer Lee Johnson, *Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Purdue University; RCC Fellow*
- “*Contested Urban Waterscapes in Medellín, Colombia*”  
Marcela Lopez, *Geographer, Technische Universität Berlin; RCC Fellow*
- “*Desert Transits and the Global Imaginary: Connecting African and U.S. Arid Landscapes*”  
Katherine G. Morrissey, *Associate Professor of History, University of Arizona; RCC Fellow*
- 12:30 PM Hors d'oeuvres (**Brooklyn Dining Hall, Torch Club**)
- “*The Anatomy of Empathy*”  
Talk by Charles Siebert, *Professor of Practice of Literature and Creative Writing, NYUAD*
- Followed by Lunch Buffet (**Torch Club**)
- 2:45 PM Film Screening (**A6, 010**): *When Animals Speak Back at Us*, followed by Q&A  
Alexis Gambis, *Assistant Professor of Biology, Film and New Media, NYUAD*  
*Guardian of the Mangroves* (9min, United Arab Emirates, 2015)  
*The Monarch Mimes* (14min, Mexico, 2017)  
*Insān* (13min, United Arab Emirates, 2017)



## **Robert JC Young**

Silver Professor, Dean of Arts and Humanities, New York University Abu Dhabi; Professor of English and Comparative Literature, New York University New York

Email: [rjy2@nyu.edu](mailto:rjy2@nyu.edu)

Robert Young is one of the early pioneers and most influential scholars in the rapidly growing field of Anglophone and postcolonial literature; this interdisciplinary literary field involves research that also crosses over into areas of history, theory, philosophy, anthropology and translation studies.

Young has always been concerned in his work with writing and knowledge that falls outside the mainstream of contemporary thinking, particularly in the context of the history of colonialism. His first book (*Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 1990) analyzed the extent to which the philosophy of history was based on the implicit premise that history was fundamentally European. Later books have been concerned with theories of race in the nineteenth century (*Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race*, 1995), the history of anti-colonial struggles (*Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001), and the relation of postcolonial theory to the everyday experience of people living in the Middle East (*Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2003).



He is currently writing a book on theories of cultural translation, with a particular focus on questions of languages and power. He is also editing, with Jean Khalfa, an edition of the uncollected writings of Frantz Fanon (Paris: Editions La Découverte).

Young is a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and a Fellow of Academia Europaea, the Academy of Europe. His work has been translated into over twenty languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish.



## **Sophia Kalantzakos**

Global Distinguished Professor, Environmental Studies and Public Policy,  
New York University New York

Email: [sk1392@nyu.edu](mailto:sk1392@nyu.edu)

Sophia Kalantzakos is Global Distinguished Professor in Environmental Studies and Public Policy at New York University and currently an affiliate at NYU Abu Dhabi. Her publications include *China and the Geopolitics of Rare Earths* (Oxford University Press, 2018), *The EU, US, and China Tackling Climate Change: Policies and Alliances for the Anthropocene* (Routledge, 2017).

Calling on her prior experience as a member of the Hellenic Parliament and Government Minister with substantial international experience in EU policies and NATO, she focuses on challenges that are reshaping international politics across the globe such as cross-border mobility and forced migration, resource competition, and global environmental governance.



## **Christof Mauch**

Director, Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU Munich

Email: [mauch@lmu.de](mailto:mauch@lmu.de)

Christof Mauch is Director of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Chair in American Culture and Transatlantic Relations at LMU Munich, and an Honorary Professor at Renmin University, China. He is a past President of the European Society for Environmental History and a former Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. Mauch has held visiting professorships in Edmonton, Kolkata, Vienna, Washington, D.C., and Warsaw.

Mauch is a recipient of the Leadership in History Award of the Society for State and Local History in the U.S. the Henry-Russell-Hitchcock Book Award, the Carl-von-Carlowitz Prize of the German Government's Council for Sustainable Development, and the Planetary Award of the Institut für Zukunftskompetenzen. He has published widely in the environmental humanities.



## Una Chaudhuri

Professor of English, Drama, Environmental Studies, Program Head of Theater, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [uc1@nyu.edu](mailto:uc1@nyu.edu)

Una Chaudhuri is Collegiate Professor and Professor of English, Drama, and Environmental Studies at New York University. A pioneer in the field of “eco-theatre”— plays and performances that engage with the subjects of ecology and environment—as well as the inter-disciplinary field of Animal Studies, in 2014 she published books in both these fields: *Animal Acts: Performing Species Today* (co-edited with Holly Hughes) and *The Ecocide Project: Research Theatre and Climate Change* (co-authored with Shonni Enelow). Her monograph, *The Stage Lives of Animals: Zooësis and Performance*, was published in 2017 by Routledge Press. Professor Chaudhuri participates in collaborative creative projects, including the multi-platform intervention entitled [Dear Climate](#), which has been presented in New York, Santa Barbara, Troy, Dublin, Abu Dhabi, and the Netherlands. She is a founding member of the artist collective [CLIMATE LENS](#).



## **Marina Zurkow**

Teacher, Interactive Telecommunications Program, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University New York

Email: [marina.zurkow@nyu.edu](mailto:marina.zurkow@nyu.edu)

Marina Zurkow is a media artist focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections. She uses life science, materials, and technologies to foster intimate connections between people and non-human agents.

Zurkow is a 2011 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, and granted awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital. She is represented by bitforms gallery.



## **Werner Sollors**

Global Professor of Literature, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [wms2@nyu.edu](mailto:wms2@nyu.edu)

Werner Sollors, Henry B., and Anne M. Cabot Professor of English Literature and Professor of African American Studies at Harvard University, where he has taught for more than thirty years. He is co-editor with Greil Marcus of *A New Literary History of America* (2009). His major monographs include: *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Literature and Culture* (1986); *Neither Black nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997); *Ethnic Modernism* (2008); and *The Temptation of Despair: Tales of the 1940s* (2014).



## **Carlos Guedes**

Associate Arts Professor of Music, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [cag204@nyu.edu](mailto:cag204@nyu.edu)

Carlos Guedes has a multifaceted activity in composition and sound design, counting numerous commissioned projects for dance, theater, film, interactive installations, and conventional concert music presented internationally. His research interests lie in the creation of automatic music generation and interactive music systems to facilitate musical creation and expression by non-specialists. Since moving to the UAE he has developed an interest in analyzing soundscapes and the impact the environment has in their change over time. His project “Sounds of Sir Bani Yas Island” consists of a website and interactive installation where users can experience the soundscape of different locations on the largest wildlife reserve in the Arabian Gulf. He is the co-founder of the Sound and Music Cultures (MaSC) research group at NYUAD that oversees several projects on Sound and Music Computing, and musical and sonic heritage preservation. His creative work and research can be further explored at [www.carlosguedes.org](http://www.carlosguedes.org).

**Preserving and Remembering the Soundscape: The Case of the Sounds from Sir Bani Yas Island Website and Installation Project**  
by Carlos Guedes

**Abstract**

Sound as Heritage: Introducing the Sounds of Sir Bani Yas website and installation  
In this presentation I will discuss the ongoing project of Sounds of Sir Bani Yas, which consists in the collection sounds from different points of the island that is the largest wildlife reserve in the Arabian Gulf. The project started as location recording exercise with the class “Designing Sound for Scene and Screen” and has gradually evolved to a soundscape monitoring project. The current goals of the project are to record, analyze, and preserve the soundscape of this protected site while developing innovative methodologies for environmental monitoring and soundscape analysis using current web streaming technologies and inexpensive location devices. After briefly describing the two forms the project has assumed, both as a website and as interactive installation, I will discuss some ideas about what can be learned from the evolution of the soundscape at a location and if sound could/should be considered a form of heritage or not.





## **Arielle Helmick**

Managing Director, Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

Email: [arielle.helmick@lmu.de](mailto:arielle.helmick@lmu.de)

Arielle Helmick moved to Germany in 2003 after completing her Bachelor of Science in Women's Studies and Music at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tennessee). After several years learning the language and working as a freelance English teacher, she completed her Master's in American Cultural History, American Literary History, and Sociology at LMU Munich. While pursuing her doctorate in American cultural history, she began working at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, first in communications and since 2014, as the managing director. While her interests these days are primarily administrative, her dissertation was on the intersections between American popular music and environmentalism. She is currently working on a publication on this topic for the RCC Perspectives series.

## **Saving the Planet in Song—American Popular Music and Environmentalism**

**by Arielle Helmick**

### **Abstract**

Popular music artists have been singing about the planet since the late 1950s (and even before). These songs revolve between glorifying nature, protesting degradation, and advocating for change. But, can songs really save the planet? Does popular music even have a role to play in societal change? By using Jacques Attali's landmark treatise, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1978), this paper will take John Denver's music as a case study to demonstrate the ways that popular music can inspire, direct, and change behavior with regards to planetary protection. Yet, this paper is not an enthusiastic endorsement of green pop, but rather also analyzes potential pitfalls and backlashes inherent in an industry that is essentially anti-green. Jacques Attali famously claimed that the future of humanity can be found in music; this paper looks at green pop to see what it is in store for the planet.



## **Jill Magi**

Assistant Arts Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [jill.magi@nyu.edu](mailto:jill.magi@nyu.edu)

Jill Magi works in text, image, and textile. She is the author of *Threads* (Futurepoem 2007), *Torchwood* (Shearsman 2008), *SLOT* (Ugly Duckling Presse 2011), *Cadastral Map* (Shearsman 2011), *LABOR* (Nightboat 2014), *SIGN CLIMACTERIC* (Hostile Books 2017), and a scholarly monograph on textimage hybridity, *Pageviews/Innervations* (Rattapallax/Moving Furniture Press 2014). In the spring of 2015 Jill wrote weekly commentaries for Jacket2 on “a textile poetics,” and other essays have appeared in *The Edinburgh University Press Critical Medical Humanities Reader*, *The Force of What’s Possible: Accessibility and the Avant-garde*, *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, and *The Eco Language Reader*. Jill has had solo exhibits of visual work at Tashkeel in Dubai and The Project Space at NYU Abu Dhabi. Currently she teaches in the literature/creative writing and visual arts programs at NYUAD where she joined the faculty in 2013.

## **Ecopoetics and Literary Ecosystems: An Overview and New Questions**

**by Jill Magi**

### **Abstract**

This essay-poem hybrid explores the term “ecopoetics,” positing that as a discourse it has mostly operated in five modes, the most interesting of which is the idea that poems themselves are “eco-logical,” to quote experimental poet and publisher Leslie Scalapino. Tracing my own involvement with the discourse and communities that may be called “ecopoetical,” I reveal my ambivalence around the term for two reasons: its tendency to revert back to literature that is concerned, overtly, with “nature,” and for its tendency to generalize the “we” of its discourse, failing to recognize vastly different socialities even within communities that appear to be homogenous. Thinking with Elizabeth Povinelli, Faisal Devji, and Tim Ingold, I argue that truly ecopoetical work and works recognize poetry’s capacity to problematize the life/nonlife split, to hold space for death and dying, and to spotlight the importance of craft—poetry as a practice where words and writer are co-creators in the making of something new that is between animate and inanimate.



## **Rana Tomaira**

Lecturer, Social Science, Social Research and Public Policy, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [rvt2@nyu.edu](mailto:rvt2@nyu.edu)

Rana Tomaira is a research scientist and lecturer in the Social Science division at NYU Abu Dhabi. She holds a PhD in City and Regional Planning and a Master's degree in Architecture, both from the University of California at Berkeley. Rana's academic interest lies in the area of development and public policy. Her current research explores philanthropy practices in the context of conflict. She is particularly interested in grassroots philanthropy and solidarity efforts and their potential role in social change. Rana is also working on a comparative study of the social effects of a dual system of schooling in Arab countries.



## **Jennifer Lee Johnson**

Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Purdue University

Email: [john1768@purdue.edu](mailto:john1768@purdue.edu)

Jennifer Lee Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Purdue University and a current fellow with the Rachel Carson Center. Her research is historically rooted, ethnographically engaged, and focused at the confluence of gender, illegality, and the ontological politics of sustainability. Johnson's current book project, based on long-term research in and around Africa's largest body of freshwater, examines how stories about the past shape and are shaped by contemporary environmental policy debates, and how alternative – but no less accurate – accounts of linked transformations in social and ecological life may inspire more livable futures. Her most recent publications have appeared in the journals [Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East](#) and [Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management](#), and in the edited volumes [Subsistence under Capitalism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives \(Mc-Gill-Queen's, 2016\)](#) and [Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa \(Routledge, 2012\)](#).

## **Same as it Never Was: Enkejje, Haplochromines, or Just Trash**

**by Jennifer Lee Johnson**

### **Abstract**

The following is a chapter from a book I'm working on provisionally entitled: *Littoral Politics: Submerged Histories of an Inland African Sea*. *Littoral Politics* is a book about the work that fish and fishing do to structure and fuel human culture and how vernacular, managerial, and scientific materials and methods of working with fish generate ontologically distinct fisheries, bodies of water, and concepts of wellbeing along these shores over time. By foregrounding women's work with diverse species and forms of fish – both indigenous and introduced – alongside linked social and ecological transformations, *Littoral Politics* seeks to retheorize the intersection of gender, social history, and natural resource governance around Africa's largest body of water.

Known to English speakers as Lake Victoria, but to many who live along its shores as Nyanja, Nyanza, or Nam, this body of water has long been a crucible for transformative social dynamics characterized by the littoral. It is a place of heightened prospects for physical and economic mobility mediated by alternative moralities of sexual and economic exchange and competing valuations of space and the material and metaphorical stuff of life, including fish. Lake Victoria is represented in popular culture as an ecosystem in constant crisis – a “sick giant” still “in the heart of darkness.” By focusing on the gendered movements, meanings, and material forms of fish that circulated and still circulate within and beyond the littoral, I offer a very different account.

*Littoral Politics* demonstrates that a seemingly singular body – Lake Victoria – is ontologically multiple, that is, there are at least four bodies of water brought into being over time through the everyday and eventful practices of working with fish there. Only one of these bodies of water is strictly a lake – Lake Victoria – the so-called modern lake contained and tamed by technology and managed by a transnational cadre of fisheries and development experts towards the intercontinental export of the Nile perch,

a large invasive species introduced into Lake Victoria just as the three countries of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania were gaining independence from Colonial rule. The other three bodies of water elaborated in Littoral Politics retain the uncontrollable nature of these expansive inland seas embodied in the vernacular terms Nyanja, Nyanza, and Nam. Victoria Nyanza, named in honor of Imperial England's Queen Victoria, associated with littoral resistance to the establishment of colonial rule and the dangers of recalcitrant nature; Ennyanja Nnalubaale, the "water of the women who speak for the ancestors" who were widely considered to influence wellbeing along the northern littorals of this "Pre-Victorian" body of water and Nyanja, the contemporary body of water as its residents know and experience it, where concepts, preferences, and species from Ennyanja Nalubaale, Victoria Nyanza, and Lake Victoria converge.





## **Marcela López**

Geographer, Technische Universität Berlin; Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

Email: [ml@contestedurbanwaterscapes.net](mailto:ml@contestedurbanwaterscapes.net)

Marcela López is a geographer with an interdisciplinary background in urban and environmental studies. Situated at the nexus between urban political ecology and urban geography, her research explores the intersections between access to water, citizenship and infrastructure networks within cities. She received her PhD in Geography at the Freie Universität Berlin for research on conflicts around access to water in Medellín, Colombia.

She is the founder of the platform Contested Urban Waterscapes ([contestedurbanwaterscapes.net](http://contestedurbanwaterscapes.net)), which promotes dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange between scholars, social movements and public service providers to search for alternatives to reduce inequalities in access to water.

**From continuous flow to prepaid drops: Assembling ‘the Medellín Model’ of  
Prepaid Water Meters  
by Marcela López**

**Abstract**

The implementation of prepaid water systems has been a subject of contentious political debate in many parts of the world. Proponents of prepaid water systems suggest that this technology enhances cost-recovery by reducing the rate of non-payment of bills, illegal connections and levels of unaccountable for water. In contrast, opponent claim that prepaid technologies violate the fundamental right to water; they are considered unlawful and unconstitutional, and they are associated with widening and reinforcing inequalities as they are exclusively installed in poor urban areas. However, little academic research has been conducted to understand how prepaid water systems are adapted, appropriated and politicized by water utility companies and how they form the grounds for introducing these systems particularly in low-income areas. This article aims to address this gap by focusing on the implementation of prepaid water systems in Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, as a strategy to solve disconnection for non-payment. I argue that it is the material agency of the meter itself, which conveys a set of technical, commercial and pedagogical interventions and embeds new forms of disciplined customers, that makes it possible the ‘successful’ implementation of prepaid water technologies.



## **Katherine Morrissey**

Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Arizona

Email: [kmorriss@email.arizona.edu](mailto:kmorriss@email.arizona.edu)

Katherine G. Morrissey is associate professor of history at the University of Arizona, where she is also a faculty affiliate of Arid Lands Resources Sciences; Global Change; the Institute of the Environment; and the Southwest Land, Culture, and Society Program. Her recent publications include: *Border Spaces: Visualizing the US-Mexico Frontera*, with John-Michael Warner (University of Arizona Press, 2018); "Traces and Representations of the US-Mexico Frontera," *Pacific Historical Review* 87 (February 2018); and "Los impactos ambientales de la minería del cobre durante el Momento de Swansea en el siglo XIX" *Revista de Historia Social y de las Metalidades* 21 (June 2017).

# **Desert Transits and the Global Imaginary: Connecting African and U.S. Arid Lands**

**By Katherine G. Morrissey**

## **Abstract**

This paper, using historical case studies, explores the efforts of scientists to connect African and north American arid lands. Envisioning a global imaginary, Sonoran Desert botanists, who sojourned in Africa (1890s-1930s), worked to tie world desert regions together through their ideas, collections and bodies. What were the impacts and possibilities of this global environmental reach?



## **Charles Siebert**

Professor of Practice of Literature and Creative Writing, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [cs4635@nyu.edu](mailto:cs4635@nyu.edu)

Charles Siebert is the author of three critically acclaimed memoirs, *The Wauchula Woods Accord: Toward A New Understanding of Animals* (2009), *A Man After His Own Heart* (2004), and *Wickerby: An Urban Pastoral* (1998), a *New York Times* Notable Book of 1998, as well as a novel, *Angus*; an e-book, *Rough Beasts: The Zanesville Zoo Massacre One Year Later*; and a children's book, *The Secret World of Whales*. A poet, journalist, essayist, and contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, he has written for *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, *National Geographic*, and numerous other publications.



## Alexis Gambis

Assistant Professor of Biology, Film and New Media

Email: [arg391@nyu.edu](mailto:arg391@nyu.edu)

Alexis Gambis is a filmmaker and a biologist whose interdisciplinary work aims at transforming the way science is communicated to the public through film and visual arts. His first feature film [The Fly Room](#) has toured festivals and academic institutions worldwide ending with a theatrical release in New York, Paris, and Berlin in the fall of 2017. He has been featured in The New York Times, Forbes, Nature, Cell, TED, and WNYC. At NYUAD, he teaches in both the Biology and Film departments. His courses combine scientific research and storytelling often featuring animals as actors and blurring the lines between fact and fiction. He is also the founder and executive director of the [Imagine Science Films](#), an annual science film festival now celebrating its 10th anniversary. He also recently launched [labocine.com](#), a science film platform, and magazine coined by reviewers as the "science new wave." He is currently working on his second feature *The Water Maze*, an exploration of the science of memory and its reliance on animals and experimental design.

## Monday, 19 February 2018 (A6, 010)

8:30 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM Opening remarks, Christof Mauch

9:15 AM Session 3 – Moderated by Christopher Paik, *Assistant Professor of Political Science, NYUAD*

*“China’s Belt and Road: In or out of step with the Anthropocene?”*

*Sophia Kalantzakos, Global Distinguished Professor, Environmental Studies and Public Policy, NYUAD*

*“Placemaking and the ordering of tourism in Daocheng County, Sichuan”*

*Travis Klingberg, RCC Fellow*

*“Durable Impact of Disaster Relief on Civil Society in China: Case of Sichuan 2008 Earthquake”*

*Yifei Li, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU Shanghai; Global Network Assistant Professor, NYUNY*

*“The Green Wall of China”*

*Mark Swislocki, History Program Head, Associate Professor of History, NYUAD*

10:45 AM Coffee break in the **Majlis**

*“How Global Education at NYU ties in with our Environment Humanities”*

*Carol Brandt, Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Education and Outreach, NYUAD*

**Session 4 on next page**

- 11:15 AM      Session 4 – Moderated by David Cook-Martin, *Professor and Program Head, Social Research and Public Policy, NYUAD*
- “*Commodifying the Desert in Late Ottoman Syria*”  
                  Nora Barakat, *Assistant Professor of History, Arab Crossroads Studies, NYUAD*
- “*Migration, Intensification, and Diversification as Adaptive Strategies (MIDAS)*”  
                  Andrew Bell, *Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYUNY*
- “*Harvesting Violence: El Niño and the Environmental Recast of Rural Insurrections, Peru 1983-1986*”  
                  Javier Puente, *Assistant Professor, Instituto de Historia, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; RCC Fellow*
- 12:15 PM      “*Dear Climate*” presentation  
                  Una Chaudhuri, *Professor of English, Drama, Environmental Studies, Program Head of Theater, NYUAD* and  
                  Marina Zurkow, *Teacher, Interactive Telecommunications Program, Tisch School of the Arts, NYUNY*
- 1:10 PM      Reading of a play “*Oh How We Loved Our Tuna!*”, written by Amahl Houry
- Followed by lunch at the **Torch Club**
- 3:00 PM      Visit of *Markazi* Exhibition (**A6 Lobby**)





## **Christof Mauch**

Director, Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU Munich

Email: [mauch@lmu.de](mailto:mauch@lmu.de)

Christof Mauch is Director of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Chair in American Culture and Transatlantic Relations at LMU Munich, and an Honorary Professor at Renmin University, China. He is a past President of the European Society for Environmental History and a former Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. Mauch has held visiting professorships in Edmonton, Kolkata, Vienna, Washington, D.C., and Warsaw.

Mauch is a recipient of the Leadership in History Award of the Society for State and Local History in the U.S. the Henry-Russell-Hitchcock Book Award, the Carl-von-Carlowitz Prize of the German Government's Council for Sustainable Development, and the Planetary Award of the Institut für Zukunftskompetenzen. He has published widely in the environmental humanities.



## **Christopher Paik**

Assistant Professor of Political Science, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [cp92@nyu.edu](mailto:cp92@nyu.edu)

Christopher Paik specializes in the study of diverging sociopolitical and economic processes from both spatial and historical perspectives. His current research involves various topics including long-run determinants of development and growth, sources of enduring cultural differences, and legacies of colonization.



## **Sophia Kalantzakos**

Global Distinguished Professor, Environmental Studies and Public Policy,  
New York University New York

Email: [sk1392@nyu.edu](mailto:sk1392@nyu.edu)

Sophia Kalantzakos is Global Distinguished Professor in Environmental Studies and Public Policy at New York University and currently an affiliate at NYU Abu Dhabi. Her publications include *China and the Geopolitics of Rare Earths* (Oxford University Press, 2018), *The EU, US, and China Tackling Climate Change: Policies and Alliances for the Anthropocene* (Routledge, 2017).

Calling on her prior experience as a member of the Hellenic Parliament and Government Minister with substantial international experience in EU policies and NATO, she focuses on challenges that are reshaping international politics across the globe such as cross-border mobility and forced migration, resource competition, and global environmental governance.

## **China's Belt and Road: In or Out of Step with the Anthropocene**

**by Sophia Kalantzakos**

### **Abstract**

China's ascent to superpower status has given rise to questions about the nature of its leadership. There are currently two storylines emanating the PRC. The one is that of a maturing political power willing to lead in the fight to tackle the climate crisis. The other is the design and launch of the belt and road project primarily uniting Eurasia and Africa in a conveyor belt of connectivity to boost trade and economic growth. The belt and road initiative (BRI) is now China's flagship global endeavor driven by the overarching ambition of Xi Jinping, a Chinese President seeking to place himself on equal footing as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. While the belt and road project ushers in a whole range of new geopolitical challenges and transformations, it more importantly gives rise to questions of other types of transformation that may be wholly misguided in light of the Anthropocene. This paper examines whether the BRI, as it is currently being deployed, constitutes an outdated vision of the past and a lost opportunity for China to usher in and champion a paradigm shift in the Anthropocene.



## **Travis Klingberg**

Visiting Scholar, Research Fellow, Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

Email: [travis.klingberg@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:travis.klingberg@rcc.lmu.de)

Travis Klingberg is a human geographer specializing in the culture and politics of geographic knowledge in contemporary China. His research has focused on the relationship between domestic independent tourism and new knowledge of China's places, regions, and national geobody. He has worked primarily in Sichuan Province, between the Chengdu metropolitan area and the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Travis is a lecturer at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he received his PhD, and was an NSF Graduate Research fellow and Fulbright-Hays fellow. While at the Rachel Carson Center, Travis will be working on a book manuscript titled *Exploring Place: Domestic Tourism and the Politics of Geographic Knowledge in Post-reform China*, which will examine how new desires to experience rural, remote, and natural places by urban Chinese over the past 20 years have become an integral part of the politics of territory in China.

## **Placemaking and the ordering of tourism in Daocheng County, Sichuan**

**by Travis Klingberg**

### **Abstract**

From imperial times to today, China's periphery has been important to national knowledge and identity, so much so that the ways the periphery is imagined, defined, and engaged give rise to particular governing systems (Cartier and Oakes 2010). Over the past 25 years, China's tourism desires have migrated to a new set of peripheral places outside the traditional tourism geography. With new tourist interest in rural and remote experiences, placemaking strategies that have transformed urban China (Wu 2009) have extended into areas previously not imagined as tourism destinations (Klingberg 2014). Daocheng County, a Tibetan area on the southwestern edge of Sichuan Province, is one of many peripheral places across China where tourism placemaking has swiftly remade the experience of place for visitors, and materially transformed the lives of local residents. In Daocheng, the close ties between nature (as beautiful scenery, ecosystem, and sacred geography), economic development, and political stability are visible along the county roads that link a new airport in the north to the nationally-symbolic mountains and alpine ecosystem of the Yading Nature Reserve in the south. This article approaches tourism placemaking strategies at work in the county as a particular kind of ordering (Franklin 2010), one as closely tied to the geology and ecology of the area as to the political realities of development and control in China's Tibetan areas. The development of new tourist sites in Daocheng is not simply a smooth extension of central interests into the periphery; it also shows how the projects and concerns of the periphery shape and define central responses. One outcome of this particular history is that the once local-level Yading Nature Reserve has been taken up as a provincial development priority and targeted with a revised development plan befitting a national-level protected area. It is in this context that this article takes up the question of the politics of placemaking, and the implicit challenges in what has been called "socio-ecological governance" (Hirons, Comberti, and Dunford 2016). In particular, this article argues that while the formulation of new models of

assessing and valuing peripheral tourism destinations, such as the cultural ecosystem services (CES) rubric (Smith and Ram 2017), are valuable in the face of the continued dominance of economic models in China, the situation facing these areas requires that politics be a core concern, both within the criteria of models such as CES, and reflexively for those employing these models in research.



## **Yifei Li**

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, New York University Shanghai; Global Network Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Studies, New York University New York

Email: [yifei.li@nyu.edu](mailto:yifei.li@nyu.edu)

Yifei Li is Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at NYU Shanghai, and Global Network Assistant Professor at NYU. His research examines environmental governance in China, focusing on questions of bureaucracy, urban sustainability, and disaster resilience. He has received research support from the U.S. National Science Foundation, the University of Chicago Center in Beijing, the China Times Cultural Foundation, and the Shanghai Municipal Government, among other extramural sources. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Durable Impact of Disaster Relief on Civil Society in China: Case of Sichuan 2008 Earthquake**  
by Yifei Li

**Abstract**

Earthquakes jolt socio-politically, as much as geo-physically. Sociologists have long recognized the social consequences of natural disasters. The disruptions brought by disasters create otherwise unthinkable conditions for social action. How durable can these conditions be? More importantly, even in the absence of such conditions, can particular kinds of social action persist over time? We address these questions through extensive interviews with residents, social workers, volunteers, government officials, and aid professionals in the city of Dujiangyan in Sichuan, China – an area hard hit by an earthquake on May 12, 2008. We find that some of the crisis “exception” modes of governmentality continue to thrive nearly a decade after the earthquake. Many of these “exception” measures, ranging from public participation in urban planning to non-governmental provision of social services, represented major deviations from the political norm in contemporary China. Their observed durability provides a unique opportunity to examine stability and change under party-state rule. Interviews provide insights into how different actors make sense of ruptures brought by the earthquake. We conclude that an enhanced sense of community, which traverses ethnic, class, political, and spatial boundaries, was fostered in the aftermath of the earthquake. This sense of community gave rise to a robust civic space for participation, consultation, engagement, and deliberation – a nascent Tocquevillian space in contemporary China.



## **Mark Swislocki**

History Program Head, Associate Professor of History, New York University  
Abu Dhabi

Email: [ms6027@nyu.edu](mailto:ms6027@nyu.edu)

Mark Swislocki specializes in the history of China. His current research focuses on the environmental history of southwest China.

He is the author of *Culinary Nostalgia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Stanford, 2009) and articles on the history of nutrition, critical animal studies, and the environment, including “Seeing the Forest for the Village, Nation, and Province: Forestry Policy and Environmental Management in Early-Twentieth-Century Yunnan.” *Twentieth-Century China* 39.3 (October 2014): 195–215.

He is co-PI of "Diverse Cities: A Digitally Networked Urban Food Lab for North-South Collaboration on Sustainable Urban Food Policy, Advocacy, and Representation (with Krishnendu Ray, NYU New York and Anna Greenspan, NYU Shanghai), awarded an NYU Global Seed Grant for 2016-2018.

## **The Green Wall of China**

**by Mark Swislocki**

### **Abstract**

Does environmental conservation issue forth from some special set of circumstances? Focusing on what, with no insult intended, might be described as somewhat of a “non-place,” Zhennan Prefecture (today’s Nanhua District) in Yunnan Province, this paper attempts to answer “no.” It also suggests that by answering “no,” China’s environmental history looks less like a long looming disaster that becomes fully formed in the twentieth century, awaiting solutions from a new scientific or technocratic elite, and more like something that everyday people undertook as a matter of course, and which they learned how to do in the course of their everyday lives. The focus is on forest protecting stone inscriptions (beike) during the mid-late Qing period, which contained guidelines for forest protection ranging from managed use to outright enclosure.



## David Cook-Martin

Professor and Program Head, Social Research and Public Policy, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [dcm14@nyu.edu](mailto:dcm14@nyu.edu)

David Cook-Martin is a political sociologist. His work focuses on understanding migration, race, ethnicity, law, and citizenship in an international field of power. He is author of *The Scramble for Citizens: Dual Nationality and State Competition for Immigrants* (Stanford University Press 2013: ASA's Thomas & Znaniecki Best Book on International Migration Award 2014), and co-author with David FitzGerald of *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Harvard University Press 2014: ASA's 2017 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award, MSS Distinguished Book Award, APSA's Best Book on Migration and Citizenship 2015, ASA's Thomas and Znaniecki Best Book on International Migration 2015, ASA's Best Scholarly Contribution to Political Sociology). David has taught courses on research methods, the sociology of law and migration, migration, and refuge, introduction to sociology, and on the relationship between states, race, and science.



## **Nora Barakat**

Assistant Professor of History, Arab Crossroads Studies, New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [neb3@nyu.edu](mailto:neb3@nyu.edu)

Nora Barakat is a historian of the Ottoman Empire and the modern Middle East. Her research interests focus on the legal, economic, social, and environmental histories of the Ottoman Arab world. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Bedouin Bureaucrats: Property, Law, and Nomads in Ottoman Syria*, which examines late nineteenth-century Ottoman modernization projects from the perspective of pastoral nomads. She is also working on a project on the history of credit relations and mortgage in the Ottoman Empire. She has published articles in *The Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* and *The Journal of Ottoman and Turkish Studies*.

Barakat's research has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, Fulbright Hays, the Council of Overseas American Research Centers, the American Center for Oriental Research, the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Middle East Studies and Department of History, the Foreign Language and Area Scholarships, and the Center for Arabic Study Abroad. Before coming to NYUAD, she taught at Qatar University as an Assistant Professor of History for one year.

# **Commodifying the Desert in Late Ottoman Syria**

**by Nora Barakat**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores changing Ottoman official perceptions of arid and steppe landscapes. Using the fringe of the Syrian and Arabian deserts as a case study, the paper argues that Ottoman land officials in concert with local investors became increasingly interested in enclosing and selling off arid and steppe lands that they argued were “empty” and unused in the late nineteenth century. This interest created debates over how to treat lands previously deemed marginal, with some Ottoman officials concerned that privatizing desert land would open the vulnerable Empire to foreign infiltration, as well as a new imperative to survey empty lands that did not appear in Ottoman property registers. The paper examines changing approaches to the idea of "empty land" in Ottoman law from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. It then details the Ottoman land administration's attempts to survey empty land in Syria and the challenges they met from local inhabitants, especially nomads, who used this land for grazing and part-time cultivation. The paper argues that a combination of unresolved imperial debates about empty land and local contestations of survey attempts produced limited enclosures on the desert fringe in the late Ottoman context.



## **Andrew R. Bell**

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, New York University New York

Email: [andrew.reid.bell@nyu.edu](mailto:andrew.reid.bell@nyu.edu)

Andrew Bell (Ph.D. 2010, Michigan) was a Research Fellow in the Environment and Production Technology Division at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington, DC. His current research portfolio focuses on the use of field instruments – such as discrete choice experiments, framed field experiments, randomized control trials – to inform behavior in agent-based models of coupled human-natural systems. Prior to this post, Andrew was a post-doctoral research fellow at The Earth Institute at Columbia University, where he focused on developing applications for paleo-climate histories.

## **Migration, Intensification, and Diversification as Adaptive Strategies (MIDAS)**

**by Andrew Bell**

### **Abstract**

Mathematical models of migration date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the 'gravity model' of labor movement shaped by distances to large cities. Far more recently, growth in computing power has allowed a shift in migration modeling, from places as the unit of analysis to individuals. Agent-based models of migration allow patterns and waves in migration to emerge out of the decisions by individuals to stay in one place or move on, informed by knowledge of opportunities available near and far, or by the needs of their social or family networks. I present the recently developed MIDAS (Migration, Intensification, and Diversification as Adaptive Strategies) modeling framework, in which migration emerges as a strategy for members of households to meet their needs. With appropriate data, MIDAS can be calibrated to simulate commuting, seasonal migration, or permanent moves; rural exodus to cities or escape from urban decline; search for opportunity, forced moves, or trapped households. Moves can strain households, or reunite them; social connections can evolve as new migrants seed or join diaspora in a new place.

Of course, these are only meaningful in so far as they can be validated against observation. In this workshop I present the challenge of collecting the kinds of data that can inform models like MIDAS, and the challenge of interpreting life histories that mirror patterns observed in other disciplinary studies of migration.





## **Javier Puente**

Assistant Professor, Instituto de Historia, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Email: [japuentev@uc.cl](mailto:japuentev@uc.cl)

Javier Puente serves as Assistant Professor at the Instituto de Historia of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, where he is also a founding member of the Grupo de Estudios Medioambientales. He received his Ph.D. from Georgetown University and is currently appointed as a Carson Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. His previous research has been published on the Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research, the Revista Argumentos of the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History, and a number of edited volumes.

Thanks to the support of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the Rachel Carson Center, and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, Professor Puente is conducting a research project on the 1982-1983 El Niño, the militarization of the Internal Armed Conflict, and the production of a socioenvironmental crisis in Andean Peru.

## **Harvesting Violence:**

### **El Niño and the Environmental Recast of Rural Insurrections, Peru 1983-1986**

**by Javier Puente**

#### **Abstract**

This presentation proposes to recast narratives of rural insurrection based on the environmental transformations that framed everyday lives of campesinos in the global countryside. Discussing the Peruvian experience of the militarization of the Internal Armed Conflict (1983-1986), this research sheds light upon agrarian livelihoods as a neglected aspect in recounting the history of violence and recasts environmental suffering as another layer of the daunting experience of political violence. Focusing on the convergence of the 1982-1983 El Niño and the radicalization of sociopolitical conflict in the southern Andean region, Harvesting Violence explains how environmental uncertainties facilitated the escalation of political violence and, at the same time, how conflict dynamics built upon campesino appraisals of time and space.

Throughout the twentieth century, rural insurrections and civil warfare became tragic definitional features of state and nation making in Latin America and the larger global south. The transnational forces of modernization, fueled by industrialization and mediated by state powers, exacerbated enduring socioeconomic inequalities that shaped the historical experiences of unrest, rebellion, and revolution in the global countryside. The “campesino question” thus emerged as a matter of survival, deeply rooted in divergent and conflicting appraisals of land and resources – the foundational means of life and death.

In Peru, land-based rural conflict underscored a century-long relationship between state, rural peoples, and their environments. Clashing ideas of production and power confronted capital dynamics, centralizing state governmentalities, and communal appraisals of land. Every mounting tension ultimately contributed to the making of the Internal Armed Conflict (1980-2000), a major period of unrest that

produced approximately 70,000 casualties. In the aftermath of the conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Informe Final placed the rural, indigenous, Quechua-speaking campesino as the primary victim of insurrection and state repression. Also, the same report considered the 1983-1986 period as the deepening stage of militarization and violence escalation that turned the conflict into a widespread civil conflagration. Ultimately, the Informe Final also identified rural villages and agrarian livelihoods as the focal domains where political violence materialized. However, western epistemologies of post-conflict accountability have failed to consider the environmental frameworks of human conflict and campesino, often indigenous appraisals of their societal collapse.

A growing literature on the Internal Armed Conflict has explained the social, political, and economic causes and consequences of a liminal sociopolitical age. Still, we are left with an incomplete image in which conflict unfolds following Western conventions of time and within seemingly empty spaces. Employing a combination of archival resources and ethnographic information recollected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this presentation contributes to the development of our understanding through three interrelated goals. First, by highlighting the importance of the 1982-1983 El Niño and localized droughts in aggravating material scarcities and deepening uncertainties, which converged with the militarization of the conflict and produced a scenario of state and societal meltdown. Second, by showcasing the importance of transcending current understandings of conflict dynamics based on internal geopolitical divisions through the use of climate mapping and campesino appraisals of space. Finally, by problematizing our conventional periodization of the conflict through an agrarian re-calendarization of violence based on communal and campesino assessments of time.



**Una Chaudhuri**

Professor of English, Drama,  
Environmental Studies, Program Head  
of Theater

New York University Abu Dhabi

Email: [uc1@nyu.edu](mailto:uc1@nyu.edu)

Una Chaudhuri is Collegiate Professor and Professor of English, Drama, and Environmental Studies at New York University. A pioneer in the field of “eco-theatre”—plays and performances that engage with the subjects of ecology and environment—as well as the inter-disciplinary field of Animal Studies, in 2014 she published books in both these fields: *Animal Acts: Performing Species Today* (co-edited with Holly Hughes) and *The Ecocide Project: Research Theatre and Climate Change* (co-authored with Shonni Enelow). Her monograph, *The Stage Lives of Animals: Zooësis and Performance*, was published in 2017 by Routledge Press. Professor Chaudhuri participates in collaborative creative projects, including the multi-platform intervention entitled [Dear Climate](#), which has been presented in New York, Santa Barbara, Troy, Dublin, Abu Dhabi, and the Netherlands. She is a founding member of the artist collective [CLIMATE LENS](#).

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**Marina Zurkow**

Teacher, Interactive Telecommunications Program,  
Tisch School of the Arts

New York University New York

Email: [marina.zurkow@nyu.edu](mailto:marina.zurkow@nyu.edu)

Marina Zurkow is a media artist focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections. She uses life science, materials, and technologies to foster intimate connections between people and non-human agents.

Zurkow is a 2011 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, and granted awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital. She is represented by bitforms gallery.

## **“Dear Climate” presentation**

**Una Chaudhuri**, *Professor of English, Drama, Environmental Studies,  
Program Head of Theater, NYUAD*

And

**Marina Zurkow**, *Teacher, Interactive Telecommunications Program, Tisch  
School of the Arts, NYUNY*

In lieu of a formal paper, we would like to present and discuss our creative/research project [Dear Climate](#), a multi-platform program which we have been working on for the past five years, and which has been featured and presented in art galleries, conferences, journals, books, and college courses around the world.

*Dear Climate* is both an art project as well as a platform for inquiry into and discovery about "the cultural imaginary" of climate change. Successive presentations are tailored to engage with various local and emerging dimensions of the topic, both through temporary partnerships with specific presenters, sites, and audiences, but also through our own research and creative processes. For example, an installation in the Netherlands led us to a more literary-performative dimension (letters to the climate), while an installation in Houston, Texas, allowed us to challenge (gently) prevailing assumptions about government assistance and responsibility.

A commission to create a poster for *the Tisch Climate Change Action Conference* in May 2017 propelled us towards more explicitly activist forms of address than before. We will soon be presenting a very large scale outdoor version of *Dear Climate* at Storm King Art Center in upstate New York, and a "historicized" version as part of a conference on "Premodern Weather" at the Folger Library in Washington D.C.

Premised on the conviction that the current environmental crisis is on a scale and of a kind that demands profound, unprecedented personal, emotional, and conceptual transformation on the part of human beings-- both as individuals and a communities--Dear Climate elaborates a model of "art activation"--rather than "art activism"--- that favors indirection and

suggestion over assertion, and whose goal is to clear imaginative and conceptual space for new modes of multi-species thriving.

We believe the *eARTHumanities* Workshop will be a valuable opportunity for us to test out our art-activation ideas with scholars from the academic fields that our project engages with most closely. We also hope our experimental perspective will be useful to discussions about climate publics and policy.