

Doktorandentag
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4th floor Conference Room
Rachel Carson Center
Leopoldstrasse 11a
Munich



Organized by Martín Fonck, Eugenio Luciano,
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Photograph by Noemi Quagliati



Program

- 9:45 – 10:00 Welcome and Introduction
- 10:00 – 11:00 Session 1: Environmental Movements: Pasts and Futures
| Chair: Andreas Jünger
- Mariana Arjona Soberón
#ViralEnvironmentalism: Digital Landscapes of Environmental Activism, Fridays for Future and Beyond
- Andrei Vinogradov
The struggle with industrial pollution of the environment in the late Russian Empire (1870 – 1917)
- 11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break
- 11:15 – 12:15 Session 2: Stories of lost and revitalized Ecologies
| Chair: Daniel Dumas
- Anikó Elek Tálas
Ecocriticism of János Csokits: The Aesthetics of Material Nature, Ecological Nemesis, and Mysticism
- Sevgi Mutlu Sirakova
From connected food to the microbial rift: A qualitative inquiry into multispecies stories of food
- 12:15 – 13:00 Lunch
- 13:00 – 14:00 Session 3: Exploring the Anthropocene: Geology, Evidence and Narratives
| Chair: Fabienne Will
- Martín Fonck
“Underground Futures”: An Ethnographic Approach to the Construction of Geothermal Energy Futures in the Chilean Andes Mountains
- Jonatan Palmblad
The Prophet of Doom: Lewis Mumford’s Philosophy of Technology in the Age of Humankind
- 14:00 onward Final Comments & Toast

#ViralEnvironmentalism: Digital Landscapes of Environmental Activism, Fridays for Future and Beyond

Mariana Arjona Soberón

Digital media has been reshaping the politics of cultural representation and environmental activism in significant ways. This research will look at the Fridays for Future movement and its current articulation in the context of German and Mexican youth activism. It will explore digital culture and environmental activism. In particular, the role digital media plays in mediating, reimagining and redefining environmental understandings and realities, activist and educational communities and socio-political relations and narratives that connect Latin American and European narratives. This research is informed through multi-sited ethnographic approaches, both digital and classical. It will analyze how the articulations of the viral Fridays for Future movement, one which finds its origins in a European context, are expressed and transformed through the Latin American lens and specifically Mexico. Fridays for Future embodies a young, urban, middle-class environmental movement. This research argues that the explosiveness of it, has not only contributed to creating critical debate on environmental attitudes and the climate crisis, but also on shedding light on mainstream interactions with the well-established indigenous activists that have seldom received attention in

the digital spotlight. This movement raises issues surrounding intergenerational relationships, how youth activism is being shaped by virality and how Latin American understandings of environmental activism interact with this particular European discourse.

The struggle with industrial pollution of the environment in the late Russian Empire (1870–1917)

Andrei Vinogradov

Industrial pollution is one of the first and the most alarming environmental issues and in many ways promoted the formation of modern environmental policy. The struggle with contamination of air and water by industrial wastes created new forms of communication between citizens, experts, and officials and contributed to the development of comprehensive environmental legislation. In this regard, pollution – as “matter out of place” – was closely related to social order, class, and discrimination; early modern environmental policies were a product of political ideologies and civil culture. The history of early environmental movements therefore must be viewed from local perspectives: although many environmentalist ideas had undoubted global importance, they only could be understood and implemented in the regional context.

There are a wide range of studies in the history of the struggle with industrial pollution in Western European countries and the USA, but Russia remains almost unexplored from this point of view. Hardly any research has been done into the extent to which Russia participated in the global discussions on environmental pollution and protection in the 19th century. At the same time, the Russian Empire, an autocratic state

with well-developed science and industry and a vast territory, could be a rich source of examples for better understanding of the first anti-pollution policies. I will argue that environmental goals were a factor in Russia’s historical development long before the Soviet industrialization: anti-pollution protests created a legacy and institutions which proved strong enough to survive the political turmoil of 1917 and influenced the environmental policy of the USSR. By considering the environmental history of tsarist Russia from a transnational perspective, it becomes possible to situate it within the larger global history of struggle with industrial pollution of the environment.

Ecocriticism of János Csokits: The Aesthetics of Material Nature, Ecological Nemesis, and Mysticism

Anikó Elek Tálás

The comparative studies-oriented doctoral project in the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (LMU Munich) devotes research to ecocriticism of the Hungarian exiled author János Csokits (1928–2011). This topic unites various fields of comparative literary research: the analysis of Csokits' oeuvre (one desideratum of Hungarian philology), then the question of the relevance of Hungarian exile literature to German and English comparative studies, and ultimately new insights into environmental literary criticism. At the focal point of this investigation stands Csokits' complex worldview that crystallizes the following thematic fields: the experience of exile (the perception of different cultural environments and nature, as well as the modern Sprachkrise), cultural negotiation (translation work between Ted Hughes and János Pilinszky), and the poetical process on the frontiers between literature and geology. The research objects are Csokits' collections of poems published in Hungarian, English, and French in Hungary, Boston, and Munich; single newspaper articles; correspondences (first available in 2017) and his BBC

radio interviews. Prerequisites are the research of the primary sources and their editorial review. The project should be carried out within the methodological framework of reflected ecocriticism

From connected food to the microbial rift: A qualitative inquiry into multispecies stories of food

Sevgi Mutlu Sirakova

The findings from recent microbiome research reveal the importance of traditional foodstuffs for our microbial diversity and urge us to rethink food practices with respect to the “companion species” living within us. This “probiotic turn” has also captured the public imagination with increasing interest on prebiotics and probiotics with the promise of “rewilding” our bodies. Drawing inspiration from the emerging field of Multispecies Studies this Ph.D. project is set to explore interdependent multispecies worlds of food while embracing the essential role of microbial agency in this connectivity. In doing so, it concerns itself with traditional food practices, with a specific focus on fermented products (such as yogurt, wine, and *tarhana*). Thus, it makes a timely intervention to microbiome discussions by engaging with hitherto under-represented traditional practitioners.

Through an ethnographic inquiry, both the multispecies and sensory approaches will be employed to explore how traditional practitioners perceive and interact with multispecies assemblages in the fermentation practices in Bulgaria and Turkey. In this context, this research project will be a unique contribution to the limited ethnographic research on microbiome studies

by focusing on being and doing with and learning from traditional practitioners. While tracing multispecies stories of food, I adapt the concept of “ecological rift” to evaluate the consequences of our lost multispecies relations. I propose the concept of ‘microbial rift’, created by our industrial food practices, to a) reflect on our degrading microbial diversity; and to b) address our increasing alienation from our ancient microbial relations. Ultimately, I believe this political ecology approach along with insights from traditional practices will help us to think about how we can revitalize our lost multispecies relations.

“Underground Futures”: An Ethnographic Approach to the Construction of Geothermal Energy Futures in the Chilean Andes Mountains

Martín Fonck

Andes Mountains represents one of the largest potential geothermal areas in the world, and geothermal energy projects are understood as a clean and sustainable future energy source, in contrast with many other energy sources, such as hydroelectricity and imported fossil fuels. Geothermal energy is the energy contained as heat in the Earth's interior. Nevertheless, social and political dimensions of energy are being recognized as a central challenge. In Latinamerica, scientific expeditions have been part of a broader historical process, crucial for the development of mapping in the name of science, contributing to a better organization of space and the possibility of having a single and centralized view to support the goals of the state (Simonezzi, 2018). This narrative has been reproduced by scientific perspectives that establish a potential resource to develop in these remote areas. Mountains are a place without life while, on the other side, are identified with potential for future animation through the deployment of the right extractive practices, knowledge, and devices (Ureta, 2018). Specifically, in this project, I want to focus on the negotiation for the evidence of geothermal futures. Evidence, rather than a static fact hold by a determined group, is some-

thing made by practices and respond to specific matters of concern and standards of proof (Brown, 1992). As a consequence, I attempt to move beyond a simplistic dichotomy of local and expert knowledge, to uncover the various intersections around the way that evidence of geothermal energy futures emerges. The research was based on the Liquiñe-Ofqui fault in southern Chile and the geyser field located in “El tatio” in northern Chile. Our ethnographic approach, following scientific explorations, proposes to analyze how futures are constantly redefined through practical encounters with the earth (through rocks, water and heat), in the process of creating evidence and knowledge to use the potential that Andes mountain contains. This work is based on seven months of ethnographic work with scientific groups studying geothermal potentials. Also, through archival work and observations of material traces of expeditions, I explored how the futures of this energy have been constructed during the twentieth century.

The Prophet of Doom: Lewis Mumford's Philosophy of Technology in the Age of Humankind

Jonatan Palmblad

When the term “Anthropocene” was presented by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000, the two scientists began their presentation not with hard science but with history. Several precursors of the theory were mentioned and the very solution to humanity’s predicament was presented as the older notion of the “noosphere.” Since 2000, the term has been developed and its different interpretations are now legion, but what remains is the idea that humanity, somehow, has gained an earth-transforming agency it does not know how to handle. From this standpoint, I am rereading the critical philosophy of American polymath Lewis Mumford (1895 – 1990)—an Anthropocene trailblazer who has still not been referred to as such. According to Mumford, humanity was damaging itself and its environment as a result of its own technological progress, an idea close to the so-called Technocene of today, and the only way to understand this detrimental human-environment interaction was to study the history of technology. Combining a contextualizing history-of-ideas approach with ecocritical readings, I make three cross sections through Mumford’s

oeuvre, studying his conception of *environment*, *technology*, and *humanity* in order to assess the relation between his philosophy and the discourse on human agency in the Anthropocene.