

ECHOES OF THE EARTH



PRACTICING CONTEMPORARY ECOCINEMA

FILM SYMPOSIUM
SEPTEMBER 10-14, 2026
GUT SCHÖNWAG, GERMANY



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

ECHOES OF THE EARTH

PRACTICING CONTEMPORARY ECOCINEMA

Introduction

Amid intensifying ecological crises and critical engagement with the Anthropocene, ecological cinema has gained both urgency and visibility. More and more documentary films refuse to treat the environment as a mere backdrop to human existence, foregrounding it instead as an active, resistant, and “speaking” presence. Ecocinema is thus evolving into a dynamic interdisciplinary field at the intersection of the arts, anthropology, and environmental research.

With Echoes of the Earth, we are dedicating three days to this developing field. Conceived as both a symposium and a film festival, the event aims to bring together artistic practice, theoretical and methodological reflection, and collective exchange.

The symposium is organized by the Foraging Research Group at the Rachel Carson Center, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, in cooperation with the Studienhaus-Stiftung.

ABOUT THE VENUE

GUT SCHÖNWAG



Gut Schönwag is located in the municipality of Wessobrunn, between Munich and the Bavarian Alps. The surrounding region is shaped by rolling meadows, forests, orchards and glacial landscapes, with numerous lakes, peatlands and nature reserves nearby. Long known as a place of monastic life, Wessobrunn combines a rich cultural history with a distinctive natural environment.

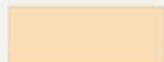
Gut Schönwag is the seminar house of the Studienhaus Foundation, which supports education, scholarship, the arts, culture and religion. Since the restoration of the historic Bavarian farmhouse in 2009, the house has hosted seminars, workshops and academic gatherings.

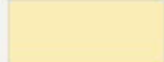
The house includes a spacious seminar room, a study library and a large communal kitchen with an open fireplace. It is set on a hillside, surrounded by extensive meadows, an orchard and a two-hectare garden, with a small chapel and several quiet places to sit, walk or gather outdoors. A pond and the surrounding landscape offer opportunities for discussion and reflection beyond the seminar room.

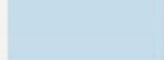
PROGRAMME

FILMSYMPOSIUM

ECHOES OF THE EARTH	THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER	FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER	SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER	SUNDAY 13 SEPTEMBER	MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER
TIME	Gut Schönwag, Altes Kino	Gut Schönwag, Altes Kino	Gut Schönwag	Gut Schönwag, Altes Kino	Gut Schönwag
08:00 – 09:30	Breakfast				
09:30 – 10:00		Invasive Kin Shenghan Gao 🌿 Workshop, 60 min	Ecocinema Ecosystems Foraging Team 💬 Roundtable	Land Left Fallow Huiying Ng 📺 WiP	Wrap Up & Goodbye
10:00 – 10:30		RENOUER Milena Desse 📺 WiP	Ecological AV Ethnography İşıl Karataş 🎤 Talk	VELUTINA IN EDEN Felix Remter 📺 WiP 10-20 min, Talk, 20 min	
10:30 – 11:00					
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break				
11:30 – 12:00		TO LIVE IN THE CRACKS Milena Desse 💬 Q&A	ARCHAFEM DIVINATIONS İşıl Karataş 💬 Q&A	Zeidlereiprojekt Felix Remter 🌿 Bee Walk	Departure
12:00 – 12:30		INVASIVE KIN Shenghan Gao 📺 WiP, 20-30 min	Mourning the Land Canan Balan 🎤 Talk, 20 min		
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch				
14:00 – 14:30					
14:30 – 15:00		Speculative Observations Josefina Buschmann 🎤 Talk, 20 min	Water, Mud and Memory David Groß, Fellipe Vergani 🎭 Performance, 30-45 min + Discussion	APROVACA Bora Rex 🖼️ Installation	
15:00 – 15:30		LAS NUBES CAÍDAS Josefina Buschmann 💬 Q&A		APROVACA Bora Rex 🎤 Talk, 20 min	
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee Break				
16:00 – 16:30	Arrival	Overburden Sarita West 🎤 Talk, 20 min	Listening to Territory Carolina Arias Ortiz 🌿 Workshop, 60 min	The Art of Community Storytelling Aaryan Chandra Prakash 🎤 Talk / Workshop, 45-60 min	
16:30 – 17:00		African Ecocinema Stephen Okpadah 🎤 Talk			
17:00 – 17:30					
17:30 – 19:00	Dinner				
19:00 – 19:30	Welcome	ARCHAFEM. DIVINATIONS İşıl Karataş 🎬 Film, 16 min EASTERN ANTHEMS Jean-Jacques Martinod 🎬 Film, 78 min EASTERN ANTHEMS Jean-Jacques Martinod 💬 Q&A	ORANGE TO BLUE SKIES Hedda Askland 🎬 Film, 29 min	AAJOR Aaryan Chandra Prakash 🎬 Film, 122 min AAJOR Aaryan Chandra Prakash 💬 Q&A	
19:30 – 20:00	LAS NUBES CAÍDAS Josefina Buschmann 🎬 Film, 16 min				
20:00 – 20:30	TO LIVE IN THE CRACKS Milena Desse 🎬 Film, 22 min		GESTURES OF CARE Aryo Danusiri 🎬 Film, 65 min		
20:30 – 21:00	THE LAST BAMBOO, HERALDS OF THE MONSOON Meera Krishnamurthy 🎬 Short Films, 6min and 9 min		GESTURES OF CARE Aryo Danusiri 💬 Q&A		
21:00 – 21:30			ORANGE TO BLUE SKIES Hedda Askland 💬 Q&A		
21:30 – 22:00	LAST BAMBOO & HERALDS Meera Krishnamurthy 💬 Q&A				

 Film

 Q&A, Film Talk

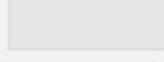
 Talk, Presentation

 Work-in-Progress

 Workshop

 Performance

 Installation

 Team, Other

CONTRIBUTORS

CAROLINA ARIAS ORTIZ

LISTENING TO TERRITORY: INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, ECOCINEMA, AND MORE-THAN-HUMAN FUTURES

Abstract

I propose a 60-minute participatory workshop exploring how Indigenous language revitalization can open other ways of imagining territory, care, and coexistence. In many Indigenous languages and oral traditions, territory is not only understood as land or property, but as a living network of relations between humans, animals, plants, rivers, mountains, ancestors, spirits, and forms of knowledge that exceed a strictly human perspective.

Grounded in Latin American contexts, the workshop asks how cinema can contribute to making visible and audible voices, memories, and perspectives that have historically been marginalized by colonial, extractive, and human-centered ways of seeing the world. How can film help us listen to territories differently? How can it create space for Indigenous languages, oral traditions, sounds, gestures, silences, and non-human presences to participate in the construction of meaning?

Rather than treating ecocinema only as environmental representation, this workshop proposes it as a practice of relation, translation, and care. The central question is: how can cinema help us imagine futures rooted in solidarity, empathy, and less extractive ways of relating to the environments we inhabit?

Short Bio

Carolina Arias Ortiz is a Costa Rican documentary filmmaker, anthropologist, and researcher. Her work explores memory, archives, territory, sound, and the poetic relations between personal and collective histories. Her first feature documentary, *Rebel Objects*, premiered at IDFA 2020 and received several awards, including the Costa Rican National Audiovisual Award for Best Production, a Special Jury Mention at Viña del Mar, the iila-Cinema Award in Italy, and the Basil Wright Film Prize in the UK. She is currently developing her second feature, *Like a Flame Lit on a Dark Night*, supported by the IDFA Bertha Fund and FAUNO. Her doctoral research focuses on documentary cinema, voice, sound, and family archives, with attention to Latin American women filmmakers. She also works in intercultural education and is interested in how cinema can contribute to ecological imagination and Indigenous language revitalization.

HEDDA ASKLAND

ORANGE TO BLUE SKIES

Abstract

This experimental film follows two young people from the Hunter Valley, Australia, as they journey into the world of mining. Using their mobile phones, they set out to discover what the future might hold for a vast void in the ground, and for the people of this mining country, whose lives have been built around it. Along the way, they encounter stories of both benefit and destruction, deepening their understanding of past decisions, community sentiment, and the forces that have shaped — and will continue to shape — this place. Through philosophical conversations, creative imaginings, and bold discoveries, the film weaves together the possibility of a different future, asking: what will fill the void left behind after mining?

ORANGE TO BLUE SKIES is a collaborative ethnographic film developed with young people from the Hunter Valley in Australia, a Norwegian-Australian anthropologist, and a Belgian filmmaker. Together, they spent almost two years exploring possible futures in the extracted landscape of one of Australia's largest thermal coal basins, while reflecting on the environmental legacy coal mining will leave behind as the world transitions away from coal-fired power.

Short Bio

Dr Hedda Haugen Askland is a Norwegian social and environmental anthropologist and Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her work explores how coal-dependent communities experience and respond to environmental change, with a focus on identity, place, and more-than-human futures. Combining ethnographic research with arts-based methods and collaborative filmmaking, she uses visual and sensory approaches to examine extractive landscapes and their social and ecological legacies.

CANAN BALAN

MOURNING THE LAND: KURDISH WOMEN'S ECOCINEMA, TEMPORALITY AND COUNTER-ARCHIVES

Abstract

This paper examines Rûken Tekeş's *Aether* (2019) as a work of decolonial ecocinema that refuses to treat the environment as backdrop, foregrounding the land itself as the primary subject of grief, memory, and political resistance. *Aether* documents Hasankeyf, one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in the world, spanning nine civilisations, in the period immediately before its submergence beneath the Ilisu Dam. The Ilisu Dam was a Turkish state infrastructure project that destroyed this irreplaceable Kurdish- Arabic and multi-ethnic heritage landscape of Mesopotamia in 2020.

I situate *Aether* within a broader body of documentary filmmaking by Kurdish and Zaza-Alevi women, arguing that these films collectively form a transgenerational feminist counter-archive organised around shared structures of loss. *Aether* extends this counter-archival practice into ecological and historical territory, posing a question that is both theoretical and urgent: what happens when the ancestor is not a person but a place and when that place is being drowned by colonialist developmentalism.

Short Bio

Canan Balan is a Visiting Fellow in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. She holds a PhD from the University of St Andrews and has over two decades of research and teaching experience at universities in Turkey and the UK. Her research spans early and transnational Yilm and media, minor cinemas and women's Yilm histories of the post-Ottoman world. Her monograph, *Torn Is the Curtain: Early Film Cultures in Istanbul*, was recently published by Berghahn Books in 2025. She is also the screenwriter of several documentary features and was an Assistant Professor at Istanbul Şehir University before the university was closed by the Turkish government in 2020.

JOSEFINA BUSCHMANN

LAS NUBES CAÍDAS | SPECULATIVE OBSERVATIONS: ECOLOGIZING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN CHILE

Abstract

Las nubes caídas is a journey from the Pacific Ocean to the Atacama Desert, tracing the ecologies of digital infrastructures in Chile through the speculative voice of an AI chatbot. Wondering about its digital memory, it speaks with a submarine fiber optic cable, follows a protest against a new data center in Santiago, and listens to the tears of a volcano in cellphone batteries.

The short is now expanding into a feature film, currently in editing, which forms the core of my ongoing doctoral research project on ecologizing digital infrastructures in Chile through an elemental and multispecies approach that takes into account the more-than-human entanglements and configurations in and around them. The talk introduces the methodological practices I have been exploring — field-making through film-making, characterized by a combination of documentary observation and speculative storytelling — to open more-than-human configurations of the digital; from the relationship between a mollusk, seafarmers, and an undersea cable, to the mineral-digital extractive histories in the desert. In doing so, this research offers avenues for exploring and reimagining the political economies and ecologies of the digital from a situated and relational perspective.

Short Bio

Researcher and filmmaker whose work explores the intersection of technology, ecology, and contemporary specters. Her practice combines collaborative and speculative methods from anthropology and media. Through Nubes Artificiales (in progress), Las Nubes Caídas (2022–2023), and Atmósferas Operativas (2019), she has investigated the infrastructures of artificial intelligence systems in Chile. With the documentary collective MAFI (Mapa Fílmico de un País), she co-created OASIS (2024) and DIOS (2019). Her work has been supported and exhibited at festivals and museums including Ars Electronica, Berlinale, Visions du Réel, and the Sundance Institute. She holds a master's in Media Studies from MIT, where she worked at the Open Documentary Lab and Co-Creation Studio. She previously studied Sociology and Filmmaking at the Universidad Católica de Chile, later coordinating the Visual Anthropology Lab and teaching Visual and Digital Anthropology and Expanded Media Research. She is currently a doctoral researcher in anthropology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

AARYAN CHANDRA PRAKASH

AĀJOOR | THE ART OF COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

Abstract

AĀJOOR is a community-driven feature film from rural Bihar, India, created entirely with non-professional actors. Emerging from a landscape where nature is a living presence, the film was shaped through a slow dialogue with the land, community, and everyday life, trees, soil, birds, and butterflies.

Rather than imposing a narrative, the film grew organically from within its ecology. The presence of female subjectivity and lived rural realities deepens this relationship, where inner worlds and nature often mirror each other.

I propose a screening of the film followed by an interactive session exploring how cinema can emerge from spaces without a filmmaking tradition, and how working with communities, trust, and alignment with nature can shape an alternative filmmaking practice.

The discussion will reflect on how deeply rooted, marginal contexts can find resonance on a global platform, through process, surrender, and collective belief.

Short Bio

Aaryan Chandra Prakash is a filmmaker from rural Bihar, India. His work explores rural life, memory, and the inner worlds of people often unseen in mainstream cinema. His debut feature AĀJOOR has screened at over 15 international film festivals, receiving awards including Best Director. He is also the founder of [Shrirampur Samvad Foundation](#), working at the intersection of cinema, community, and nature-based learning.

ARYO DANUSIRI

GESTURES OF CARE

Abstract

The ecological destruction in Central Kalimantan was once again brought to light by El Niño 2023. This film chronicles the indigenous Dayak people's fight for survival in the face of devastation. First, Juni has been a part of a government program called a community-based fire brigade for a few years now. The program's stated goal is to change the Indigenous people's perception of themselves from being fire starters to fire mitigators. Meanwhile, Ipit and her family are determined to grow padi on their historic plot, which the government converted from peatland into a large food estate.

Short Bio

Aryo Danusiri, assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Indonesia, works on the keywords politics, technology, and ethics in multiple assemblages: religion, urbanity, and climate crisis. An affiliate of the Sensory Ethnography Lab, Danusiri holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology with Critical Media Practice from Harvard. Danusiri teaches courses on anthropological theories, technology and the public, and signs and politics, among others. Various international institutions have been supporting his projects, such as the Social Science Research Council (SSRC, USA) and the Wenner-Gren Foundation (USA), or Fulbright. He has been a co-principal investigator on "Fire Play: Understanding and Documenting Indigenous Fire Governance in Indonesia," funded by DFAT Australia. Danusiri also serves as one of the co-editors for the Knowhow in a Shifting World edited volume of the HAB Methodologies book series, originally brought about through his connection to IIAS as a former postdoctoral fellow. This edited volume discusses the question of knowhow, not only as an epistemic question of knowledge production but also, as overt, and or covert, process(es) of transmission and learning, in different contexts, and to address, methodologically, the prevailing binary between knowhow and knowledge.

MILENA DESSE

TO LIVE IN THE CRACKS | RENOUER

Abstract

TO LIVE IN THE CRACKS

In Brussels, a former factory bears witness to an intense and now bygone industrial era. Today, it is home to spontaneous flora that has found its way into the cracks in the bricks and concrete, as well as to the people who live there and create alternatives to what this city has to offer. Rhythmically shifting between the political and the poetic, the macroscopic and the microscopic, TO LIVE IN THE CRACKS unfolds by mixing 16mm images, stories from former workers and current occupants, and a sound composition inspired by the plants. A film as a place, a place for dialogue, a place for cohabitation._

New film project - working title: RENOUER

“Plant pest”, “dangerous invasive species” – Japanese knotweed is the most feared species in the plant kingdom. Originally introduced by settlers in the 19th century, it now grows wild along polluted waterways and on industrial wasteland, and is fiercely combated. Building on this documentary foundation, we leap forward to the Brussels of the future, in 2036, to the heart of the revolutionary movement that will put an end to property speculation. Within this movement, the knotweed becomes a valuable ally in the fight against gentrification.

Short Bio

Milena Desse is a Brussels-based artist and filmmaker. She makes films, multimedia installations and performances. Her artistic approach is characterised by an aesthetic of erasure and revelation, exploring the materiality of images and sounds using analogue film, optical devices and chemical experiments. The landscapes, places and plants that feature in her work play a crucial role. Not only do they bear witness to the history of our societies, but they are also veritable active agents in the narrative, offering a change of perspective on our human perceptions, revealing and questioning our cosmogonies, our interactions with our environment and non-humans, and our ways of inhabiting the world.

SHENGHAN GAO

INVASIVE KIN

Abstract

INVASIVE KIN is a hybrid documentary film-in-progress that entangles the subjectivities of an immigrant filmmaker and mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) — a plant labeled “invasive” in New York City yet long cherished in Chinese households for ritual and healing. The film asks: what does it mean to be invasive? And what can a so-called weed teach us about belonging, borders, and the colonial logics that define both?

Formally, the film refuses to merely represent mugwort — it invites the plant to co-author. Through phytograms (plant matter pressed directly onto film emulsion) and film developed in mugwort infusions, each frame becomes a chemical trace of the plant’s presence, carrying the specific geography — soil, pollution, water — of its origin site.

In addition to screening the work-in-progress, I propose a 60-minute participatory workshop: a foraging walk and collective memory-sharing session, in which participants are invited to bring or discover local plants and the cultural memories they carry. This workshop format has been developed through community programming with first- and second-generation East

Short Bio

Shenghan Gao (b. Chengdu, China) is a filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist working across 16mm film, cyanotype, animation, participatory performance, and walking practice. Foraging from disciplines including dance, history, and documentary, her work unlearns the systems — settler colonial and capitalist — embedded in the most mundane textures of life: the names we carry, the food we cook, the weeds we pass without looking. She is the founder of UnLearning, an educational nonprofit active in China for five years. Her work has been supported by the Flaherty Film Seminar Fellowship and the Asian American Arts Alliance. She holds a BA in History and Arts from Minerva University and is pursuing an MA in Media Studies with a Documentary Certificate at The New School, New York. She is a 2026 Culture Push Fellow for Utopian Practice.

DAVID-SIMON GROSS, FELLIPE VERGANI

WATER, MUD AND MEMORY

Abstract

David-Simon Groß and Fellipe Vergani will present an experimental live performance based on film-recordings made during the major floods in the south of Brazil in 2024, especially around the german settlement São Vendelino.

While staying there during and after the floods, David documented the environment through film recordings and diary writings made directly in the middle of the situation. These materials became the starting point for a documentary film in production, but also now for a presentation bringing together testimony, atmosphere, memory, and sound. Our idea combines fragments of text, environmental recordings, live sound processing, sound effects, and improvised textures. The performance also draws from the cosmology of the Kaingang people, who inhabited the region before German colonization. We will approach the flood as an unstable sensory landscape - where water, infrastructure, fear, waiting, silence, mud, and everyday routines start blending together. Fellipe's contribution is connected to his ongoing experimental music practice as hashtagdifferent, where through his emotional states, atmospheres, noise, repetition, and meditative tension are woven together.

Short Bio

David-Simon Groß is a cinematographer and visual artist working between Leipzig, Berlin, and Saarland. He studied cinematography at Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, with a focus on feature-length documentary film projects, including works such as The Homes We Carry and Little Syria.

Fellipe Vergani is a Brazilian artist working between sound, performance, moving image, and experimental composition. Emerging from São Paulo's underground music scene, his practice developed through music and photography before expanding into filmmaking, sound composition, and live performance over the last decade.

JEAN MARTINOD

EASTERN ANTHEMS

Abstract

EASTERN ANTHEMS is a hybrid feature film I co-directed with Matthew Wolkow. The project began as an attempt to document the emergence of the Brood X cicadas in the eastern United States, but was reshaped by pandemic border closures into a transnational collaboration. Working from within these constraints, the film engages ecological experience as both subject and method, attending to conditions of distance, fragility, and interdependence across human and more-than-human worlds.

The cicadas' periodic emergence becomes a point of encounter rather than spectacle, a sonic and material presence that reorients perception. Their dense acoustic environment, alongside our use of analog image-making, fosters a mode of attention grounded in limitation and care, resisting extractive approaches to the living. Accidents, breakdowns, and logistical constraints are integrated into the film's form, proposing an ecological practice of cinema shaped by contingency and collaboration. Blurring documentary, essay, and speculative modes, EASTERN ANTHEMS reflects on a moment marked by political unrest and ecological instability, while opening space for non-human agency and shared, if uneasy, futures.

Short Bio

Jean-Jacques Martinod is a filmmaker, media artist, film curator, abyssological researcher, and clandestine anarchist whose practice unfolds through a cinema grounded in extended modes of noetic and intersubjective experience. His work engages human and more-than-human worlds, folk mythology, anemic memory, sur-regional biomes, and technological hydras, exploring ways of relating to living worlds through poetic mediation and shared cohabitation. Through this singular approach, Martinod constructs immersive and exploratory cinematic forms that blur boundaries between perception, knowledge, and environment. His work has been showcased at leading festivals, museums, and cinemathèques. He received his MFA from Concordia University, where he was affiliated with the Centre for Expanded Poetics, the Global Emergent Media Lab, and the Fabrique-mondes Research Group, and is currently a PhD candidate in Critical Media Practices at the University of Colorado where he is an affiliate of the Center for Documentary Media.

IŞIL KARATAŞ

ANARCHAFEMINIST DIVINATIONS | ECOLOGICAL AUDIO-VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY AS METHOD

Abstract

ANARCHAFEMINIST DIVINATIONS is an experimental audio-visual work emerging from artistic and ethnographic research. The project reworks the Anatolian practice of coffee-ground fortune-telling (fal), traditionally oriented toward heteronormative narratives of love, family, and individual destiny, into a collective and speculative method for imagining shared futures. Combining divination sessions with photochemical processes—specifically chemigrams produced through direct chemical intervention on light-sensitive material—the work foregrounds material agency, chance, and entanglement as central research elements. The project aims to create a space for collective interpretation of desirable futures.

ECOLOGICAL AUDIO-VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY AS METHOD

This talk argues that ethnographic audio-visual material should not only be considered in terms of representation, but also in terms of how images and sounds are materially produced, sustained, and circulated. With which cameras, formats, and technologies are images and sounds made? How much space do they occupy, materially and infrastructurally? And how might audio-visual ethnography develop a methodology that resists the extractive or resource-intensive practices embedded in audio-visual technologies?

Short Bio

Işıl Karataş is a filmmaker, audiovisual artist, and researcher working at the intersection of ethnography, audio-vision, and artistic research. She holds a PhD in European Ethnology from the University of Vienna and is currently based at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at LMU Munich, where she leads the Audiovisual Ethnography programme. Her work combines ethnographic fieldwork with experimental film and sound practices, with a focus on ecological, sensory, and multimodal approaches to audiovisual cultural research.

MEERA KRISHNAMURTHY

THE LAST BAMBOO | HERALDS OF THE MONSOON

Abstract

THE LAST BAMBOO

Lantana camara, an invasive shrub and its allies Uppilu (Mistletoe), Bilirojiga (Siam Weed), and Karikaddi (Mexican Devil) scheme to take over the BR Hills, located in the Western Ghats in India. With Bhumi Tayi (Land) as witness, the film explores the history of the landscape that led to its current state.

In a world where indigenous knowledge and sensibilities are often sidelined, the film foregrounds the Soliga community's worldview and wisdom. Bhumi Tayi is confronted by Lantana, as the disappearance of the native bamboo in the region is visualized by stop-motion sequences, hand-drawn animations, and use of archival images from the region.

HERALDS OF THE MONSOON

A peaceful dawn in the BR Hills in the Western Ghats is broken by the discovery of a dead elephant. A wise old Maththi Tree (Crocodile bark tree) and a visiting Sitte (Blue tiger butterfly) sift through the clues together to uncover the truth.

Short Bio

Meera Krishnamurthy is an animation filmmaker from Bangalore, Karnataka, with a focus on mixed-media stop-motion animation. She has directed and animated narrative shorts and non-fiction films. Her films have screened at festivals such as Animafest Zagreb, Animela Mumbai, and Sci560, among others. Her work explores the real and the imagined through the use of found objects, archives, and frame-by-frame drawings. She teaches experimental animation as a visiting faculty at Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

HUIYING NG

LAND LEFT FALLOW

Abstract

Land Left Fallow is a participatory mixed-reality documentary game about land use, forest stewardship, and the commons in a village in Northern Thailand. Around a shared physical game board, participants encounter fragments of lived experience: testimonies, photographs, memories, and traces embedded in the landscape. Digital layers reveal what the land means to different people, while each role offers distinct knowledge, responsibilities, and constraints.

Across seasons, players make decisions about the same area of land. What appears fallow to one person may remain active for another, as ecological, agricultural, bureaucratic, and remembered temporalities overlap. Players do not begin with the same information, and their interests do not carry equal institutional power. Every decision reshapes the landscape and affects what becomes possible for others.

Co-created with village community through participatory scenario-building and visual ethnographic practices, Land Left Fallow invites players into a world where the forest can be read as both an eco-system and a social, storied archive. The challenge is not to win or reach consensus, but to piece together competing claims and negotiate a future without erasing histories already rooted in the land.

Short Bio

Huiying Ng (she/they) is a researcher-practitioner and writer. They work towards critical and empathic rural-urban agricultural learning networks, agroecology, and community-led action research in Southeast Asia. Huiying's doctoral research followed coffee trees, seed, and soil, as growth media in agroecological learning assemblages in Thailand. Huiying is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oulu (Finland) for the FORbEST project, which this project sits within. For the symposium, Huiying presents work undertaken with Areeya Tivasuradej, Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, Pongchai Dumrongrojwatthana, Jean-Christophe Castella and Matjaž Pinter.

STEPHEN OKPADAH

THE WESTROPOCENE AND PLANETARY CRISIS IN AFRICAN ECO-CINEMA

Abstract

Critical studies on the planetary crisis, and especially on climate change, have often been examined within the purview of what Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer refer to as the Anthropocene and what Jason Moore calls the Capitalocene. These concepts, which have dominated the field of environmental and cultural studies for more than two decades, are based on the notion that humans' quest for more resources and the pursuit of capital have altered Earth's systems. Hence, these factors are largely responsible for the global climate crisis. In this study, I challenge the dominant concepts and narratives of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, which seek to explain the tragedy of the Earth system's push beyond planetary boundaries. I argue that these narratives (the Anthropocene and Capitalocene) are attempts to shield the dominant role of the West in the planetary crisis. I use the concept of the Westropocene to objectively locate the genesis and progression of the new ecological turn and to better understand the planetary crisis. This research uses content analysis method to reflect on the indices of the Westropocene in Jeta Amata's film *Black November* (2012) and Lancelot Imasuen's *Invasion 1897* (2014). I emphasise that imperialism and empire are indices of the Westropocene, and contend that rethinking the planetary crisis through the Westropocene would be more germane to understanding it.

Short Bio

Dr Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah holds a PhD in Applied Theatre from the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom. He also has a PhD in Performing Arts from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Okpadah has published over 37 articles in international journals and 25 chapters in books. He is the editor of over four book volumes and a guest editor of reputable journals. His most recent edited volume, *Performances and Sustainable Climate: Planet, People and Practices*, will be published by Vernon Press in 2026. He won the 2021 Janusz Korczak/UNESCO Prize for Global South in the emerging scholar category.

FELIX REMTER

VELUTINA IN EDEN

Abstract

Who gets to stay in today's environments of disruption? Whose life must be protected and cared for? Whose life may be taken as an act of care?

Velutina in Eden follows the careful relocation of a European hornet colony (*Vespa crabro*) into a private garden – a gesture of unexpected tenderness toward an animal most people experience as threat. In a second movement, it turns to the removal of an Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*), an “invasive” species currently arriving in Bavaria: the same genus, a radically different human response. Campaigns, traps, public kill-counts of queens, bounties of up to 350 euros per colony eliminated.

The film refrains from explanation or judgment. Detailed, intimate, observational scenes. Macro images of larvae in their cells, of mandibles working through paper, of hands caring and killing. No voice-over. No resolution. The relocation and removal procedures themselves determine the film's dramaturgy – the hornet colony not as backdrop to human expertise, but as actor within the fraying modernist regimes of control.

Short Bio

Felix Remter works at the intersection of art, science, and ecological practice. As a filmmaker, installation artist, and environmental anthropologist, he explores human and nonhuman entanglements through ethnographic film, participatory formats, and multisensory installations. He is co-founder of Primate Visions Film and Media Production and the citizen science platform BeeTree Monitor.

Remter has taught visual anthropology and sensory ethnographic methods at LMU, TU, and KSH München. He holds a Magister in Cultural and Social Anthropology from LMU and is completing a media dissertation at the Rachel Carson. His publications include contributions to Cultural Anthropology, Routledge, and Ecology and Evolution.

BORA REX

APROVACA

Abstract

APROVACA is a single-channel video installation edited in real time by artificial intelligence in dialogue with live weather data from the cloud forest ecosystem surrounding El Valle de Antón, Panamá. The expanded docufiction centres on an orchid conservation NGO and a fictional tourist who arrives ahead of the organisation's annual expedition to replant endangered orchid species.

The project explores how ecological cinema might move beyond representation and become methodologically ecological: a responsive system shaped by the same environmental forces it depicts. A custom-built live-editing architecture coordinates multiple language-model agents to continuously re-sequence the film in response to fluctuations in temperature, humidity, precipitation, and windspeed. As climate change destabilises ecological synchronies, the film's timeline becomes increasingly unstable, transforming the work into a living document of an ecosystem in flux.

The accompanying talk will reflect on the project as a case study in ecocinema that treats environment not as subject but as collaborator.

Short Bio

Bora Rex is a multidisciplinary artist incorporating experimental technologies across moving image, sound, and large-scale multimedia installation. Drawing on his experiences of Turkish-British dual heritage, his works often dissect formal relations between image and sound to examine language's double-edged power — both fantastic and alarming — to transform the world while disclosing it.

Named an inaugural Fellow of the Amazon MGM Studios and Prime Video Innovative Storytellers Initiative in 2025, he is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Hollywood Foreign Press Association Cinematography and Directing Fellowship, 2025; a Tarkovski Grant, 2026; and two consecutive Francesco Film Production Fund awards, 2024 and 2025. He is a 2026 graduate of the MFA program at the University of California, Los Angeles, having completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Oxford.

SARITA WEST

OVERBURDEN

Abstract

I propose a 20-minute talk and presentation of selected clips from OVERBURDEN, a 75-minute feature documentary set in the Nimba Mountains on the Liberia-Guinea border, where wildlife and local communities reclaim a landscape transformed by iron ore mining. The film unfolds during a fragile moment of ecological return increasingly overshadowed by a new wave of industrial extraction.

The project emerged through collaboration with local communities and engagement with scientific and conservation researchers working in this unique West African location. Long-term relationships between researchers and local people created a depth of trust and access that informed both filming and discussions about the film's structure.

Although we initially explored a storyline comparing extractive landscapes in both Liberia and Guinea, before ideas from ecofeminist literature and multispecies ethnography guided us toward a more focused exploration of Nimba County, where intimate lived experience and larger structural forces actively shape a particular place over time.

Short Bio

Biography Sarita West (Director) is a New Zealand-born documentary filmmaker who founded Alchemy Films in 1994. After early experiences in feature films, music videos and producing and directing short fiction films, Sarita was drawn to documentary as a way of exploring social and environmental justice in an era of rapid planetary transformation. Frequently collaborating with educators and local film crews, Sarita crafts films that are both impactful and rooted in community and place, inviting audiences toward deeper social engagement. Sarita's previous titles include *The Disenchanted Forest*, *Fire Burn Babylon*, *In the Shadow of Ebola*, *The Waste Commons*, and *The Land Beneath Our Feet*. Her work has been broadcast internationally on National Geographic Channels, PBS Independent Lens, Discovery Canada, Canal+ and ARTE.

THE HOST TEAM

FORAGING AT THE EDGE OF CAPITALISM | ENTANGLED FILMS

FORAGING AT THE EDGE OF CAPITALISM is a 5-year research project at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.

Our starting point is simple: broadly understood as practices of collecting, scavenging and gleaning, foraging is not something humanity left behind in the neolithic revolution. It is very much a global phenomenon of our times. It takes place in the fuzzy fringes of a global capitalist economic system. Foraging practices feed on capitalism. And they feed it.

To understand and to render visible the resulting layers of ambition, promise, concern and practice is our goal. We use collaborative documentary media not primarily as medium of communication or a way of reaching out to an audience, but as a method, a way of reaching in. In the context of this research, we founded the production company ENTANGLED FILMS.

ENTANGLED FILMS

We are a documentary and media arts collective entangled with the world around us. By actively involving protagonists and their environments in the creative process, we seek a form of collaborative storytelling. On the edges of the everyday, we produce sensory work grounded in anthropology and political ecology to understand experiences, cultures and environments.

Who are we?

Sina Mareen Reiss: foraging.work/team/sw

Pauline Prückner: foraging.work/team/pp

Marlen Eckstein: foraging.work/team/me

Martin Saxer: foraging.work/team/sx

Emilia Tsutsumi: foraging.work/team/et

Matjaz Pinter: foraging.work/team/mp

Toma Peiu: foraging.work/team/tp

foraging.work/team