



UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO  
EcoLit: Ecocritical Literary  
and Cultural Studies



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice

THE NEW  
INSTITUTE

Centre for Environmental  
Humanities (NICHE)  
at Ca' Foscari  
University of Venice



WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

## Deltas of Change: Keywords for Living Together

VENICE | June 16-18, 2025



# WORKSHOP Deltas of Change: Keywords for Living Together

Workshop organised by:  
EcoLit (University of Oslo) | NICHE (Ca'Foscari University of Venice) | MESH (University of Cologne)



## Deltas of Change: Keywords for Living Together

This workshop is a collaboration between environmental humanities networks in three different countries: the **Ecocritical Literary and Cultural Studies (EcoLit)** Research Group at the **University of Oslo, Norway**, funded by the Oslo Centre for Environmental Humanities (OCEH); **THE NEW INSTITUTE Centre for Environmental Humanities (NICHE)** at **Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy**; and **Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities (MESH)** at the **University of Cologne, Germany**. What brings researchers together in this project is the central focus on analyzing various ways of living together in contact zones identifiable as **deltas, or deltascapes**. The rhythms of humans, nonhuman beings, “inanimate” elements, and hydrological and geological forces, often at very different scales, can come together—or not—in ways that illustrate the profound relationality of more-than-human life, the vulnerability of often taken-for-granted landscapes, but also the surprising resilience of many beings. This invites **interdisciplinary analysis**. Whether we are exploring texts about deltas, deltas as texts themselves, the inter- and intra-actions among human and nonhuman actors, or all of the above, deltascapes can provide us with examples to think through comparatively. Individual researchers explore different keywords that can point toward either what produces or what disrupts better ways of living together, often including long and violent histories of imperialism, power, and destruction, but also the potential for more ethical and sustainable modes.




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**Monday 16.06.2025**

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Venue:

Aula Berengo, Ca'Foscari main building Dorsoduro 3246, Calle Larga Foscari, 30123 Venezia

**09:00 Welcome and introductions**

Francesca Tarocco, Franz Krause, Michael Lundblad

**09:30 Overview**

Michael Lundblad

(University of Oslo)

**10:00 Presentations**

Veronica Strang

(University of Oxford)

**Conviviality**

Gro Ween

(University of Oslo)

**Fluidity**

Rahul Ranjan

(University of Edinburgh)

**Entanglement**

**11:30 Making Connections**

Franz Krause, Nhung Lu Rots, Caterina Scaramell

**12:00 Lunch**

**13:00 Presentations**

Rinni Amran

(University of Oslo)

**Slow Violence**

Francesco Danesi della Sala

(Independent scholar)

**Rot**

Stefka G. Eriksen

(University of Oslo)

**Adaptation**

**14:30 Making Connections**

Owain Jones, Sandro Simon, Amalia Rossi

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15:00 **Coffee/tea break**

15:15 **Presentations**

Caterina Scaramelli  
(*Boston University*)  
**Edge**

Sandro Simon  
(*University of Cologne*)  
**Rhythm - Milieu**

Alessandro Brunazzo  
(*University of Oslo*)  
**Unmapping**

16:45 **Making Connections**

Stefka G. Eriksen, Rahul Ranjan, Francesca Tarocco

17:15 End

19:30 **Dinner** 🍴

Restaurant: [Muro Frari, San Polo, 2604 - 30125 Venezia VE](#)




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**Tuesday 17.06.2025**

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Venue:

Aula Berengo, Ca'Foscari main building, Dorsoduro 3246, Calle Larga Foscari, 30123 Venezia

**09:00 Presentations**

Owain Jones  
(Bath Spa University)  
**Hospitality**

Teresa Pepe  
(University of Oslo)  
**Rituality**

Franz Krause  
(University of Cologne)  
**Hydrosociality**

**10:30 Making Connections**

Gro Ween, Rinni Amran, Alessandro Brunazzo

**11:00 Coffee/tea break**

**11:15 Presentations**

Francesca Tarocco  
(Ca' Foscari University)  
**Karmic affinities**

Amalia Rossi  
(Ca' Foscari University)  
**Monstrosity**

Nhung Lu Rots  
(University of Oslo)  
**Interbeing**

**12:45 Making Connections**

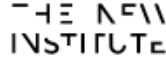
Francesco Danesi della Sala, Teresa Pepe, Veronica Strang

**13:15 Lunch**

**14:15 Excursion: *Song of the Cricket***

Gaggiandre, next to Italian Pavilion, Norman Foster bridge, Arsenale, Architecture Biennale

19:30 Dinner 🍴 Restaurant: [BIRRAIA La Corte Campo San Polo, 2168 - 30125 Venezia](#)



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**Wednesday 18.06.2025**

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Venue:

Aula A, Ca' Bottacin, Dorsoduro 3911, Calle Crosera, 30123 Venezia

09:00 **Eco-Tone | *Song of the Cricket* presentations and discussion**

10:30 **Coffee/tea break**

10:45 **Plenary discussion: plans for joint publication and future collaboration**

12:15 **Lunch**

13:15 **Individual excursions and further collaboration**

19:30 **Dinner** 🍴

Restaurant: [Muro Frari, San Polo, 2604 - 30125 Venezia VE](#)



## Abstracts

**MONDAY 10:00 – 11:30**

**Keyword: Conviviality**

### **Convivial Relations: Living Harmoniously with Riverine Environments**

*Veronica Strang*

The proposed essay focuses on the keyword 'conviviality'. It is founded on three key premises: that rivers and all of their inhabitants are co-creative actors in creating shared lifeworlds; that all living kinds have rights to flourish; and that harmonious co-existence requires collaborative relations in which these rights are equitably balanced. This poses practical questions as to how such balance might be achieved. In riverine relations, it is clear that major imbalances of power and agency have developed, and in this sense deltas are a culmination of all upstream efforts to find harmonious conviviality – or failures to do so.

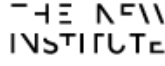
Many catchment areas have abundant scientific information about local landscapes and hydrology, the species that rivers and deltas support, and what is required to uphold their needs and interests. However, it is more challenging to articulate the social 'presence' of the non-human domain to the extent that this achieves meaningful influence in political debates and decisions. This essay explores a recently developed concept of 'eco-pilgrimages' (Strang and Luetz 2025), which proposes to link access to riverine ecological corridors with paths between the sacred and historic sites that are often clustered along these. By explicating the interdependence between biological and cultural diversity, eco-pilgrimages have the potential to highlight the partnership and mutual creativity through which human and non-human actors compose a shared bio-cultural heritage. The aim is to facilitate holistic engagements with rivers that increase the social presence of the non-human domain in decision-making, and thus foster more convivial human-environmental relations.

**Keyword: Fluidity**

### **Fluidity in Tanafjord Stories**

*Gro Ween*

My chosen keyword, fluidity, is so prevalent in approaches to water that the choice requires further specification of intellectual genealogy. My take on fluidity comes from Luce Irigaray, through Veronica Strang and Astrid Neimanis, to Sami philosophy, particularly through authors such as Britt Kramvig and Rauna Kuokkanen. I aim to develop further a project I have been calling 'Tanafjord Stories'. The site of analysis is a deltascape where a river meets a fjord in the far North of Sapmi, the land of the Indigenous Sami people, which cuts across what is otherwise known as the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The river I focus on runs through Finland and Norway before emptying into the Barents Sea. It is called Tana on the Norwegian side and Teno on the Finnish. Deatnu, the Sami name, includes both sides as well as the delta and the fjord. In Sapmi, Deatnu simply means big river, without distinguishing between what others might call the river and its banks. This is an Arctic watery world: Eadni is mother, Eanu is earth, Eatnu is river. Tanafjord stories speak of both river and fjord in a place where survival has always been dependent on fishing. This paper explores what characterizes Deatnu life in fluid relation with water, along with fluidities between human and non-human life. I explore Sami epistemology through the concept of fluidity,



illustrating both consistencies and the unknowable, particularly in relation to the animal that brings it all together, the salmon.

**Keyword: Entanglement**

### **River Tales: Cultural Politics of More-than-Human Entanglement in South Asia**

*Rahul Ranjan*

Rivers replete the socio-material, geopolitical and affective landscape of South Asia. Physical carvings that prompt cartographic representation, enabling rivers to emerge dividing lines between South Asian nation-states, also invariably fold riparian communities' cultural life. Changing forms, shapes, and meanings hold many lives in rivers. A range of literary sources and archival material explicate how rivers have historically become flashpoints for not only conflicts but also shaped notions of belonging, nostalgia and, crucially, ways of being with the river.

Increased rate of anthropogenic interventions is now intimately tied, if not already, to defining the contours of rivers. These changes are not incidental but form the basis of understanding how and what we know about rivers now. Various environmental conflicts, movements and litigation reveal how rivers are fraught. Specifically, rivers in India are repositories of *fluvialities* – harvesting the rich legacy of environmental ethics that reveals the complicated relationship between humans/no-humans.

By focusing on rivers as a 'legal person', an emergent framework of nature's right that seeks to treat rivers as rights-bearing entities, this paper uses 'entanglement' to interrogate the significance and implication of this non-human turn in India. It offers an account of how non-human advocacy, in turn, implicates the cultural lives of riparian, minority and indigenous communities – revealing the absence of nature/culture. The paper argues that a non-human turn, whether through nature's rights advocacy or river's rights, demands ethical considerations of structural inequality, longstanding caste ecologies and environmental justice concerns. Indeed, a proto-nationalist legacy in South Asia can mobilise the non-human as yet another iteration of othering, suspending their rights as fugitives for nature's sake.

**MONDAY, 13:00 – 14:30**

**Keyword: Slow Violence**

### **Losing the Bakut: Slow Violence in Brunei's Age of Oil**

*Rinni Haji Amran*

This paper examines the slow violence against the Bruneian environment, history and cultural practices enacted by the shift to an oil-based economy. I look particularly at the erasure of the bakut in the historic water village of Kampong Ayer. A bakut is a natural formation of land (that is often reinforced with materials such as soil and debris) usually found in rivers or embankments. Bakuts were culturally significant as communal places for those living on the stilted houses to congregate for business and pleasure. Historically, they were also the first commercial centres in Brunei where Chinese merchants would stopover, leading to the greater development of Kampong Ayer. However, they eventually became neglected and fell into obscurity as more residents moved on land in line with the (petro-)modernization of Brunei.

The study of the bakut will be done through a critical reading of local writer A.R. Romzi's Malay-language novel, *Bakut* (2007), which tells the story of Amin and his attachment to his local bakut. He is eventually persuaded by his parents to move on land for more educational and career opportunities. The novel zooms in on the daily rhythms of Amin's life on the bakut and life on the river, giving insight on how imperceptible economic, historic and environmental changes are on the individual level. *Bakut* also shows how petronarratives of economic and national progress help disguise slow violences (such as the gradual devaluing of a place's history, culture and practices) enacted against vulnerable communities and ecosystems that do not keep pace with the rhythms of petro-modernity. Living together thus requires consideration for the diversity in rhythms and timescales of the various human and nonhuman communities and ecosystems.

**Keyword: Adaptation**

### **Deltas, Settlements, and Old Norse Cognitive Ecologies**

*Stefka G. Eriksen*

In this paper, I will explore the topic of the workshop/publication 'Living Together in Deltascapes' by deploying the keyword/concept 'cognitive ecology', developed by cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins. I will use this concept to study human settlements by deltas/rivers in Iceland and Norway as described in Old Norse literature and archaeology.

Briefly defined, 'cognitive ecology explores the interactive relationship between organism-environment interactions and its impact on cognitive phenomena'. The first settlements in Iceland (at the end of the ninth century and onwards) and the first urban centers in Norway, such as Nidaros and Oslo (end of the tenth/ beginning of the eleventh century) are described in various Old Norse sources, such as *Landnámabók*, various Icelandic family sagas, as well as King's sagas, among others. Not only are these settlements most often in the proximity to deltas/rivers, but also, some of these sources include numerous details about the ecological context of the settlement (plants, animals, fish). Archaeological excavations of these settlements confirm that the sites were indeed rich cognitive ecologies, which offered bountiful resources to the settlers. Moreover, the archaeology reveals that the delta-landscape also demanded new forms of collaborations between the settlers (compared to the social patterns and structures back in Norway). These settlements may thus be seen as contributing to new rhythms of entanglement between humans and nature, and thus to changes in the cognitive ecology.

As the literary sources about these settlements were written down by Christian writers and scribes in the thirteenth century and onwards, i.e. centuries after the events they retell about, a strict source-critical discussion is necessary when comparing literary and archaeological sources. The interdisciplinary comparison reveals, however, several levels or aspects of these cognitive ecologies, and thus contributes to a better understanding of how human settlements interplayed and were symbiotically constitutive of delta-ecologies in medieval Norway and Iceland.

**Keyword: Rot**

### **A Rot Vivace: Eutrophication and the Rhythms of Decay in the Po River Delta**

*Francesco Danesi della Sala*



This contribution explores *rot* as a keyword to understand the more-than-human rhythms shaping a lagoonal extension of the Po River Delta in northern Italy. In the Sacca di Goro, the interplay of agricultural runoff, industrial pollutants, and intensive clam farming has produced a hyper-nutriented ecosystem, marked by a *crescendo* of algal blooms, oxygen depletion events, and mass die-offs. In recent years, due to climate-induced environmental changes, cycles of eutrophication, dystrophy, and collapse have spiralled out of control, interacting with unexpected species migrations that have severely undermined the industrial exploitation of the lagoon. In the Goro Lagoon, *rot* becomes a refrain where multispecies frequencies and relations converge.

However, rather than treating *rot* solely as a marker of ecological breakdown, this contribution traces its ambivalent enactment: both as an expression of anthropogenic disruption and as a creative process through which matter, species, and energies are displaced and recombined. Inspired by Linnea Sterte's visionary work *Stages of Rot* (2019), I reflect on the Goro Lagoon as a living composition patterned by the *vivace* tempo of nutrient excess, ecological collapse, and multispecies reconfiguration—where decay becomes not an endpoint, but a line of entanglement between human rhythms and the erratic temporalities of nonhuman correspondences.

In this sense, my analysis asks what it means to “live together” in a brackish environment where rhythms of *rot* continuously challenge and reconfigure human systems, ecological relations, and the very possibilities of life in the lagoon—rendering its multispecies futures ever more volatile.

#### **MONDAY, 15:15 – 16:45**

**Keyword:** *Edge*

#### **Rhythms of Drought, Speculation and Pollution: Remaking the Gediz Delta as a Site of Crisis** *Caterina Scaramelli*

As the Gediz River flows into the Gulf of Izmir, in Turkey's Aegean Region, it forms a large river delta. This mosaic of agricultural fields, industrial zones, and rapidly expanding urban areas gives way, closer to the coast, to fresh and saltwater marshes in a wetland conservation area. This paper engages with the most recent transformations of the delta's wetlands to explore the concept of the edge, by which I mean not only the shifting boundary of wetlands, but also the limits of democratic and just ecological visions, the frays of distinct visions of the delta's futures, as well as gradual (but sometimes sudden) edging of long-term processes of sedimentation, erosion, ecological change, and pollutant accumulation. The lower delta was one of Turkey's first wetlands protected under the country's participation in the Ramsar convention—the delta was added in 1998— a denomination which overlapped with natural and archaeological protection statuses. This paper examines recent environmental changes intersecting with the delta's longer hydrological and environmental histories and recent climate change impacts. As environmental advocates debate a new and contested wetland restoration scheme which would irrigate the marshes with treated wastewater within the protected area, just outside its boundaries, construction speculators have converted large swaths of agricultural land into residential high-rises. Middle-class residents cannot afford the rapidly skyrocketing rents, and wonder who the empty apartments and the luxury restaurants lining the new neighborhoods are and will be for. Meanwhile, climate change and increased periods of drought have rendered the cotton agricultural boom unprofitable, as there is simply not enough water available. Delta farmers

are asked to convert their fields to onions and sunflowers, but agricultural credit lines and debt tie them to cotton production. While in my previous research I had engaged the concept of “moral ecologies” to illuminate people’s various ethical commitments to the delta’s wetlands, entangled with infrastructures and multispecies relationships, this paper considers how the deltaic rhythms at the edges of the conservation areas continued to be shaped by political ecologies and economies, and how delta residents, across class and political affiliation, make sense and respond to these changed deltaic rhythms and its multiple, overlapping edges.

**Keyword: Rhythm - Rhythm - Milieu**

### From Rhythms to Milieus

*Sandro Simon*

Deltas and deltaic lives have been described not only in recourse to the trope of rhythm, but also to the tropes of the hybrid, the amphibious (from *amphi/ambi*, ‘on both sides’ or ‘around’), the in-between, the assemblage, or the liminal (from *limes/limen*, ‘boundary’, ‘threshold’). This paper seeks to disentangle the conceptual paradoxes of these notions and problematizes them in regard to the delta’s unclear relations between state and process, immanence and transcendence. It inquires how we can grasp deltaic forms of living together neither as a radically different Other, nor as an ‘everything is everything’ abundance of flow and, following Deleuze and Guattari, introduces the conceptual arc of rhythm and milieu for deltaic research. It thereby draws from my dissertation on the Sine-Saloum Delta, Senegal. Milieu means ‘medium’, but also ‘surroundings’ and at the same time ‘middle’. Milieus can be thought of as having a membrane-like character, both unifying and excluding entities and facilitating exchange beyond the fixities of territorialization. Rhythms bring forth and stabilize milieus: if the milieu is primarily concerned with (spatial) choreographies and the configuration of components (the what happens where), rhythm is a particular temporal form that preserves and perpetuates a certain constancy and coherence and that mediates how and when things within and between milieus happen. In this vein, this paper will demonstrate, deltas can be understood as phenomena of rhythmic ‘middling’ that are simultaneously ‘in-between’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of different matters, forms, geographies, regimes of governance, economies, or cultural practices in always situated graduations.

**Keyword: Unmapping**

### Figures of Immobility in the Po Delta

*Alessandro Brunazzo*

“Below sea levels, time creases its land with deep furrows of groves and smirks. / But when time hides – who dares to move, who dares to seek... Not I, Not me.” These are the final lines of a recent campaign for the Italian fashion brand Magliano, set in the Po Delta, Italy. The Magliano campaign and its romanticized vision of the “provincial ennui” (Showstudio 2024) is only the latest in a series of cultural products that depict the daily lives of Po Delta inhabitants through figures of immobility. Recent scholarships on river deltas have emphasized the importance of analyzing the interplay of different rhythms such as stability and change, (Krause and Harris 2021), stagnation and transformation (Camargo 2021).



In contrast, the keyword “out of time” explores the reasons behind the proliferation of discourses that reduce the Po Delta to images of stasis. It draws on Anna Tsing’s concept of ‘unmapping,’ defined as the suppression of an environment’s natural dynamism to make it “inert”, “ready to be dismembered and packaged for export” (Tsing 2004). Considering documentaries like Florestano Vancini’s *Delta Padano* (1951), I argue that the portrayals of the Po Delta’s inhabitants as being stuck in a condition of stasis served to impose a rigid concept of economic progress. I then analyze contemporary works including Andrea Tagliaferri’s *Blue Kids* (2017) and Michele Vannucci’s *Delta* (2022). The noir aesthetic and fatalistic themes of these films illustrate how the previous narratives of the delta’s immobility have gradually lost their historical roots, evolving into a near-existential, atmospheric state.

**TUESDAY, 9:00 – 10:30**

**Keyword: Hydrosociality**

### **Relating with and through Water in the Mackenzie Delta**

*Franz Krause*

Water takes on many forms in the Mackenzie Delta, located in the Inuvialuit and Gwich’in Settlement Areas in the Canadian Arctic. Between snow, ice, permafrost, mud, drinking water, sewage and open water in rivers, channels and lakes, it widely varies across different parts of the delta and the year. One of the things that unites these manifestations of water and their rhythmic transformations – in freezing, thawing, flooding, seeping, waterlogging, drying up, polluting and dispersing – is that they are deeply implicated in, and constitutive of, social relations among the Gwich’in and Inuvialuit inhabitants of the delta, as well as between them and the delta’s non-human inhabitants. Especially by enabling, inspiring or disabling ways of more-than-human movement across the landscape, they shape sociality and encounters. The mutual implication of social relations and water flows has been called “hydrosociality”, a term that may prove particularly useful for thinking about the way multiple more-than-human rhythms unfold and entrain in river deltas. This contribution will report how living together in the Mackenzie Delta is a hydrosocial affair.

**Keyword: Hospitality**

### **Tidal Estuary Pasts, Presents and Futures: Old and New Demands of Hospitality**

*Owain Jones*

Hospitality demands us to welcome, attend and care. It is a key feature in many world cultures, perhaps a trait innate to human nature; an aesthetic and even moral demand. It can be an underpinning force of flourishing shared human / non-human life. Estuaries (deltas) are some of the most ecologically and culturally complex, rich and thus important landscapes on earth. They are key habitats for migrating birds and also fish nurseries. The estuaries of the UK and Western Europe are uniquely placed to receive migrating birds from the north in the winter, and from the south in the summer, and to be staging-ways for birds whose seasonal habits see them circumnavigate the entire world. We thus have responsibilities as hosts in the way these places are imagined and managed. But estuaries are also used in a huge diversity of other conflicting ways, including (nuclear) power generation, resource extraction, tourism, coastal and flood defence developments, and big questions of tidal energy generation. In the past estuaries have moved up and down river valleys/coastal plains as sea levels have risen and fallen. Now, with climate change and swiftly rising seas, many estuaries

have nowhere to go, as coastlines are developed and defended. In some places, sea walls are going to be abandoned, or even opened up, and new saltmarsh and intertidal areas form, so this is about some places / communities being hospitable to novel arrivals of the sea-tides, and all that they bring!

**Keyword: Rituality**

## **Life-Writing at the Water's Edge. Growing up in the Nile Delta Region**

Teresa Pepe

The Egyptian Delta, that spreads out in northern Egypt, from the northern district of Cairo to the Mediterranean shore, is the largest delta in the Mediterranean and it provides most of Egypt's arable land. It is considered an extremely vulnerable geographical area, susceptible to erosion and climate changes, as shown by the growing number of sea floods that Alexandria and other coastal settlements have experienced in the last years (*al-Ahram*, October 2015).<sup>1</sup> While this region has been studied mostly with focus on its rich cultural history (Blouin 2014), and the impact of anthropogenic changes to its landscape (Derr 2019, Mitchell 2011), I want to investigate what it means to grow up at the water's edge, in a "landscape of crisis", to borrow Serenella Iacovino's definition, that is "a landscape of social fragmentation, of struggles and contradictions, often articulating political, cultural, ecological crises" (2016: 3). My primary sources consist of (literary) autobiographies by authors who have grown up in this region during the XX century, namely: *The Education of Salama Musa* (Tarbiyyat Salama Musa, 1961) by the modernist intellectual Salama Musa, *And the Train Comes* (Wa-ya'ti al-qitar), by Muhammad al-Bisati, (1999), *The Seven Days of a Man* (Ayyam al-Insan al-Saba') by Abd al-Hakim Qasim (1969), *Wonders of Childhood* (Awa'il ziyarat al-dahsha, 1997) by the poet Muhammad 'Afifi Matar and *The Cotton Plantation Remembered* (2013) by the sociologist Mona Abaza. In these texts, human and non-human elements coexist in a society whose rhythm is set by floods, rituals, pilgrimages, and the ecological disruptions brought by colonial modernity, such as the introduction of the railways and the building of the High Dam.

The lens of 'eco-autobiography', as defined by Peter F. Perreten (2003) seems particularly enlightening, not a genre per se, but rather as a way of reading that pays attention to the symbiotic relationship between the place portrait – the textures and histories of the landscape – and the "literary self-portrait," of the author.

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<sup>1</sup>Current projections estimate that a substantial portion of Alexandria will likely be underwater by 2050 and that 13% of the Nile Delta could be submerged by the end of the century (IPCC 2007).



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## **TUESDAY 11:15 – 12:45**

**Keyword: Karmic affinities**

### **Karmic affinities and ritual technologies of the Yangtze River Delta**

*Francesca Tarocco*

The Yangtze River Delta region is a megalopolis comprising the Wu-speaking areas of Shanghai, southern Jiangsu, northern Zhejiang, southern Anhui. It lies in the heart of the Jiangnan region, historically a major center of Buddhist practice, where the Yangtze River drains into the East China Sea. In this paper I explore the intertwined concepts of karma and compassion within the context of Yangtze's bustling river delta region, emphasizing how these religious tenets and the ritual technologies that actualize them influence contemporary societal dynamics and interpersonal relationships. In particular, I examine the ways in which people navigate the complexities of urban life through *fangsheng* or "animal release" practices as a way towards the re-enchantment of its waterways. The study contributes to broader discussions on cultural identity and the role of ritual technologies in contemporary urban settings, offering insights into the potential for ethical living in one of China's most dynamic regions.

**Keyword: Monstrosity**

### **Amphibian Monsters**

*Amalia Rossi*

In the delta areas, humans have learned to coexist with amphibian monsters, hybrid creatures, prodigious entities covered in scales. Cyclically – like refrains of ancient songs – the stories and legends about these scaly creatures – fish-men, crocodile-men, snake-men, naga-men, sirens, tritons – re-emerge from the deep waters of ancient religions, reawakening the apparently dormant fear of the arrogance of the forces of nature. These entities also in contemporary times embody the frontier between human and non-human and mark the disturbing boundary between parallel, incommensurable worlds. The reappearance of amphibian monsters in the supermodern imagination, in literature, cinema and the arts, in profane and sacred spaces, in urban and rural settings, leads to a reflection on the ecological, moral and political limits of the anthropic manipulation of deltaic areas. Transformed by massive concreting and agricultural exploitation of reclaimed areas, in the face of rapid climate change, deltaic environments forcefully show their ambivalent nature: terrestrial and aquatic. This ambivalence is now perceived as a threat by human communities in many areas of the globe, even in regions very distant from each other, such as the Po delta in Italy and the Chao Phraya delta in Thailand, similarly affected by pressing climatic and hydrogeological crises.

Taking inspiration from the analytical lens provided by ecocriticism and from the reflection on water beings conducted by anthropologist Veronica Strang, this contribution will discuss

the role of amphibian monsters in some recent works in the literary, artistic and cinematographic fields in Italy and Thailand. These works allow the public to overcome the limitations of a purely technocratic and anthropocentric view of deltaic territories, and lead to imagine amphibian monsters as more than human agents capable of influencing the relationship between humans and watery environments in times of rapid climatic changes.

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### Keyword: *Interbeing*

## Khmer's sacred time and sacred space in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam

*Nhung Lu Rots*

In studying a Khmer Buddhist community in Vietnam, I reflect on the Mekong Delta as a space for interconnection, and on the interbeing nature of the Mekong River, the ocean, and the local people's environment. I suggest *interbeing*, which is a philosophical insight from the Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh, as a keyword for living together. In Khmer worldview, indeed, the Delta is an interspace where more-than-human entities coexist and cohabit; their environment is inhabited not only by humans, but also by gods, spirits, plants, and animals. For many Khmer Buddhists, the Mekong River is sacred, embodying rhythms of nature, enacting cosmological potency, and forging dwelling places for humans and mythical creatures. Periodic circulation of monsoon affects rainfall as well as the river's ebbs and floods. Regularity in rain patterns and the river's water levels has also influenced Khmer conceptions of time. Time is flooding as heavy monsoon rains pour down nearly non-stop in Mid-August. Floods bring river sediments, regenerate the soil, and bless the plants with regular nutrition. Time is exhausting as the soil is dry and cracked under the scorching sun in Mid-April. It is during this period that Buddhists' rain rituals and New Year festivals take place and bring hope to a new farming season. Local people here observe the Mekong's water levels and rain regularly for signs to sow their first seeds of the season, to care for their elderly in the communities on occasions of festivals and celebrations, and to consult their ancestors' and the Buddha's wisdom through rituals and rites.

### **WEDNESDAY 09:00**

#### **Eco-Tone | Song of the Cricket presentations and discussion**

As part of the 19th International Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia curated by Carlo Ratti, **Song of the Cricket** comprises a cross disciplinary team that is reintroducing an endangered cricket into the biennale and back into the Venice Lagoon. The cricket once inhabited the intertidal zone, or **ECO-TONE**, of the lagoon. The exhibition provides an opportunity to explore the term ECO-TONE on multiple levels. By creating a cricket sound garden, and displaying mobile habitat life rafts with breeding populations, the installation explores the cricket's



inhabitation of the land-water interface while signalling a broader conservation agenda. The project presents habitat enclosures and mobile life rafts designed as floating habitat islands with integrated Designed Experiments illustrating experimental prototyping and future research directions. The islands and enclosures are created using the cricket sounds for amplifying the message. Through listening and demonstration, visitors will learn about the crickets, how they serve as food web catalysts, and how the cricket song can be used as a bioindicator of wetland health, a novel approach to biodiversity and ecosystem awareness.

Speakers include **Alexander Felson**, an ecologist and landscape architect, as well as **Miriama Young**, the composer of the sound garden and **Michael-Shawn Fletcher**, a geographer and earth scientist involved in Indigenous knowledge, moderated by **Natalie King**, curatorial advisor. The project includes an international cross-disciplinary team including the University of Melbourne's Landscape Architecture, Biosciences, Engineering, Geography, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, Fine Arts & Music, and Computing and Information Sciences partnered with the Fondazione Museo Civico di Rovereto in Italy and working closely with Esapolis leading a group of experts across Italy, Europe and Australia to generate a long lasting conservation program for rehabilitating the Venice Lagoon.



## Participants

**Rinni Haji Amran** is MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oslo based in the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies. Her research project, 'Petro-Ambiguity', explores the entanglements of oil, environment and culture in Brunei. She has written articles and chapters related to Bruneian and Southeast Asian petrocultures and eco-fictions. She is also a Lecturer in English Studies at Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

**Alessandro Brunazzo** is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages (ILOS) conducting the two-year project *"That Sinking Feeling": Ecocritical Approach to Land Subsidence in Italy's Po Delta Region*. He received his PhD in Comparative Literature from Yale University and was previously adjunct professor at Vanderbilt University (Florence) and at the University of Virginia (Siena). He has published for *The Italianist*, the *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies*, and *Science Fiction Film and Television*.

**Francesco Danesi della Sala** is an anthropologist studying the socio-environmental issues of the Anthropocene. He obtained his PhD in Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy. In his doctoral research, he addressed the climate crisis and the accelerated environmental changes of the Po River Delta (Italy) wetlands. Based on extensive fieldwork in the Goro lagoon, his dissertation examined the multispecies arrangements of the local ecology.

**Stefka G. Eriksen** is an Associate Professor of Old Norse Philology at the University of Oslo. Her research interest

and publications focus on Old Norse literary and manuscript culture in Norway and Iceland, c. 1200-1500; and more specifically on Old Norse translations, on intellectual culture and pedagogy; and on cognitive and eco-critical perspectives on Old Norse literature. She is the PI of the Eco-emotions research initiative at UiO and the Director of the Center for Literature, Cognition and Emotions.

**Owain Jones** is Emeritus Professor of Environmental Humanities at Bath Spa University. A cultural geographer, he was deputy director of the Research Centre for the Environmental Humanities at Bath Spa 2016 - 2019. He has published over 90 scholarly articles on various aspects of nature-society relations, and five books (co-edited/authored): *Art and Creativity in an Era of Ecocide: Embodiment, performance, practice*. Bloomsbury (2023). *Visual Culture in the Northern British Archipelago: Imagining Islands; Participatory Research in More-Than-Human Worlds; Geography and Memory: Identity, Place and Becoming; Tree Cultures: Places of Trees*. He led a £1.5 million Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities project with eight UK universities, community partners and artists in four UK case study areas (2014 – 2018), seeking to creatively explore and transform connections within and between communities and nature in relation to water issues. Within the above he has specialised in writing about 'tidal cultures' and the Severn Estuary. He has supervised five Environmental Humanities PhDs with art practice and examined many others.

**Franz Krause** is Professor of Environmental Anthropology at the University of Cologne. His research and teaching revolve around water, social and



ecological transformation, and climate change in the Circumpolar North and elsewhere. Franz is Co-Director of Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities (MESH). He is the author of *Thinking Like a River: An Anthropology of Water and its Uses Along the Kemi River, Northern Finland* (Transcript, 2023) and co-author of *Environmental Anthropology: Current Issues and Fields of Engagement* (Haupt/UTB, 2023).

**Michael Lundblad** is a Professor of English-Language Literature at the University of Oslo. He is the leader of the “Deltas of Change” project through the EcoLit (Ecocritical Literary and Cultural Studies) Research Group, which is funded by the Oslo Centre for Environmental Humanities (OCEH) from 2024 to 2026. He is the author of *The Birth of a Jungle: Animality in Progressive-Era U.S. Literature and Culture* (Oxford UP, 2013), editor of *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human* (Edinburgh UP, 2017), co-editor with Marianne DeKoven of *Species Matters: Humane Advocacy and Cultural Theory* (Columbia UP, 2012) and with Gro Ween of *Control: Attempting to Tame the World* (Pax, 2022), as well as editor of special issues of *New Literary History* on “Animality/ Posthumanism/ Disability” (2020) and *Tamkang Review* on “Cetacean Nations” (2012).

**Nhung Lu Rots** is a Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Oslo (Norway). She is working on her PhD project “Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Buddhist Practices and Environmental Change in the Mekong Delta”. She was awarded the Environmental Humanities 2024 Best Article Prize for her co-authored article “When Gods Drown in Plastic: Vietnamese Whale Worship, Environmental Crises, and the Problem of Animism”. Her broader area of research is environmental humanities, seafood consumption, environmental pollution, and traditional medicine.

**Teresa Pepe** is a scholar of Arabic literature and digital culture, with research interests spanning media history, popular culture, sociolinguistics, ecocriticism, and the intersections of aesthetics and politics. Her current work explores Arab Futurism and its engagement with social, political, and environmental transformations in the region. She is the author of *Blogging from Egypt: Digital Literature (2005–2016)* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), which examines Egyptian blogs as a new literary form emerging alongside the political unrest of the Arab Spring, combining close readings with interviews of blog authors. Teresa is also co-editor of *Arabic Literature in the Posthuman Age* (with Stephan Guth, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), a volume investigating dystopia, necropolitics, satire, and the monstrous in contemporary Arabic writing. In addition, she is co-founder of the Arab Media Transitions research network (with Barbara Winckler, University of Münster), which examines the historical impact of media on Arabic literature and culture.

**Rahul Ranjan** is a Lecturer in Environmental and Climate Justice at the Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh. His research focuses on the intersections of Indigenous politics, environmental justice, and extractive industries, with a particular emphasis on South Asia. Over the past decade, he has conducted ethnographic fieldwork on Indigenous resistance movements in India, as well as research in the western Himalayas and Aotearoa New Zealand, exploring river rights and community mobilisations. From 2020 to 2023, Rahul was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Oslo Metropolitan University, where he worked on *Riverine Rights*, a Norwegian Research Council-funded project examining the legal personhood of rivers through interdisciplinary and international collaboration. His recent monograph, *The*



*Political Life of Memory: Birsa Munda in Contemporary India* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), investigates memory and Indigenous identity in contemporary India. He is the editor of *Governing the Crisis* (Routledge, forthcoming 2025), and previously edited *At the Crossroads of Rights* (Routledge). Rahul holds a PhD in Political Anthropology from the School of Advanced Study, University of London, and degrees in Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University and the University of Delhi.

**Amalia Rossi** is a Fellow Researcher at [THE NEW INSTITUTE – Center for Environmental Humanities \(NICHE\)](#) - Ca' Foscari University of Venice and is a member of the working team of the Venice UNESCO Chair on Water, Heritage and Sustainable Development (2023–25). She teaches Cultural Anthropology and Visual Anthropology at the New Academy of Fine Arts (NABA) in Milan and Rome. PhD in Contemporary Anthropology (University of Milan Bicocca), she specialized in environmental anthropology and Buddhist studies. In the past, she has conducted research on tree ordinations and eco-Buddhist practices in Northern Thailand, while her current research project investigates Bangkok's Buddhist waterways, with a focus on the anthropological description of the city's canal-temple system as a more-than-human ecosystem. In 2025 she has been awarded with a MSCA Global Fellowship Grant.

**Caterina Scaramelli** is a Senior Lecturer at Boston University, in the Department of Earth and Environment and is the author of *How to Make a Wetland: Water and Moral Ecology in Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2021). She holds a PhD from MIT's History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society Program, and has been a postdoctoral fellow in Amherst College's Center for Humanistic Inquiry, and Yale University Agrarian Studies Program. Currently,

she is working on an ethnography of agro-biodiversity in Turkey and the Mediterranean.

**Sandro Simon** is a multimodal anthropologist currently based at the Global South Studies Center (GSSC) and affiliated with the Centre for Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities (MESH) and the CRC Future Rural Africa at the University of Cologne. His research investigates marginalised economic practices, mobilities, and multispecies relations across watery environments in West, East, and Central Africa. His work sits at the intersection of environmental, economic, and legal anthropology, engaging with the anthropology of work and migration, political ecology and economy, science and technology studies, sensory and visual anthropology, postcolonial theory, poststructuralism, and phenomenology. Committed to multimodal methodologies, Sandro combines film, sound, photography, academic writing, and creative non-fiction to explore and represent anthropological knowledge in diverse and accessible ways. Venice, with its layered ecologies and fluid histories, remains one of his favourite cities.

**Veronica Strang** is an environmental anthropologist with over thirty years of experience studying human-environment relationships, especially societies' engagements with water. Beginning her career as a freelance writer on environmental issues, her work has taken her across the UK, the Caribbean, Canada, and Australia. Seeking to understand why some societies live more sustainably with the natural world, she pursued cultural anthropology, completing a Master's and PhD at Oxford University, where she is now affiliated with the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography. Her ethnographic research has focused primarily on the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, exploring diverse water-related



challenges faced by communities. Veronica has worked extensively with Indigenous peoples, farmers, miners, urban water users, conservation organizations, museums, and artists. She regularly consults on Indigenous land and water rights, for example addressing sea country issues in Australia's Tiwi Islands. Her research collaborations extend to the water sector and international bodies including UNESCO, the UN, the World Bank, and the International Water Association.

**Francesca Tarocco** is Professor of Buddhist Studies and Chinese Religions and is Director of THE NEW INSTITUTE Centre for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) at Ca' Foscari University, where she leads interdisciplinary initiatives at the intersection of environmental studies and the humanities. Her current projects include a book on Buddhism and technology in China, a collaborative multi-sited study of urbanism.

**Gro Ween** is a Professor of Anthropology at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway. At the museum she is Keeper of the Arctic, North American and Australian Collections. She has published extensively on issues of cultural and natural heritage, repatriation, the politics of exhibitions, human-animal relations in the Arctic, histories of domestication, and Indigenous rights. Working together with Indigenous Peoples living on the Yukon River, Alaska, and the Deatnu River in Sápmi, she has focused on salmon as a companion species, the changing influences of the river and the fjord in local multispecies relations, and how these complex relations have been influenced by long histories of bureaucratic and scientific interventions. Among Ween's recent publications are *Control: Attempting to Tame the World* (Pax, co-edited with Michael Lundblad, 2022), and *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations* (Duke UP, co-edited with Heather Swanson and Marianne Lien, 2018).