

At Risk in the Climate Crisis

Online symposium

25 February 2022, 9 am – 4:30 pm AEDT

Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University

Keynote speakers: [Prof. Katerina Teaiwa](#) (ANU)

[Prof. Juan Salazar](#) (WSU)



Symposium booklet

Abstracts and biographies

Convened by Josh Wodak and Jessica Weir

Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University (WSU)

Coordinated by Daniele Fulvi – d.fulvi@westernsydney.edu.au

The symposium is funded by [The Seed Box](#) – A Mistra-Formas Environmental Humanities Collaboratory and the [ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology](#), and supported by the [Institute for Culture and Society](#), WSU.

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture
and Society



In presentation order

Katerina Teaiwa (she/her) *Islands @Risk: The Future of Banaban Pasts*

Bio: Katerina is an interdisciplinary scholar and artist of Banaban, I-Kiribati and African American heritage born and raised in Fiji. She is Professor of Pacific Studies and Deputy Director – Higher Degree Research Training in the School of Culture, History and Language, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She was founder and convener of the Pacific Studies teaching program at ANU 2007-2015, Head of Gender, Media and Cultural Studies in CHL, founder of the ANU Pasifika Australia Outreach Program, and co-founder and co-chair of the ANU Family Friendly Committee. Katerina's commentary on Pacific issues has been published in the *Conversation*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Guardian*, *Inside Story*, *New York Times*, the *ABC*, *Foreign Affairs* and *Australian Outlook*. She has been a consultant with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNESCO & DFAT on cultural policy and sustainable development, and Austraining International and ANU Enterprise on cross cultural and development training for Australian Volunteers International. In 2020 she joined the Board of New Zealand's Pacific Cooperation Foundation. Katerina also has a background in contemporary Pacific dance and was a founding member of the Oceania Dance Theatre at the University of the South Pacific. She is currently a practising visual artist with an ongoing research-based exhibition "Project Banaba" originally commissioned by Carriageworks, Sydney, and curated by Yuki Kihara. Katerina was President of the [Australian Association for Pacific Studies](#) 2012-2017 and is currently Vice-President. She is Chair of the Oceania Working Party of the [Australian Dictionary of Biography](#), Art Editor for *The Contemporary Pacific: a journal of Island Affairs*, and editorial board member of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* and *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*. In 2019 Katerina was awarded the College of Asia and the Pacific's Teaching Excellence Award. The Pacific Women's Professional and Business Network of NSW awarded her "Educator 2020".

David R. Cole *Education, the Anthropocene, and Deleuze/Guattari*

Abstract: Human civilization stands at an unimaginable precipice. The human past, leading up to today, has seen society develop under the conditions of the Holocene since 10000 BC. However – we are now in the Anthropocene, what Deleuze/Guattari term as the future rupturing the present. This presentation analyses the Anthropocene given four dimensions: 'tool-enhancement'; 'carbon trail'; 'the phallocene'; and, 'atomic-time'. A mode of education and social change lies parallel to this mapping that tackles degrowth, changing consciousness, a Green Utopia, and building a critical-immanent model to realign current practices in the light of globalisation. This presentation puts the philosophy of Deleuze/Guattari to work for the future, and our collective existence as a differentiated educational practice in the Anthropocene.

Bio: David R. Cole, Ph.D. (2003), University of Warwick, UK, is Associate Professor of Education at WSU. He has published fifteen books in the field, and more than 100 other significant articles and book chapters. Latest book: Cole & Bradley (2018), *Principles of Transversality in Globalization and Education*, Springer. He has instigated an interdisciplinary research web site for the Anthropocene at: <https://iiraorg.com/>

Nanda Jarosz *Decolonising Environmental Ethics*

Abstract: As a scholar in environmental ethics, my work is bound up with Western philosophical paradigms that sustain antinomies between instrumental/intrinsic value, anthropocentrism/acentrism, science/culture. Emerging from the Cartesian dualism between mind and nature, the dynamics of this view have been attacked for sustaining the status quo of human ascendancy over nature. Paradoxically, then, the foundation of environmental ethics is at risk of its own pathological failure (White, 1967). As a consequence, theorists have attempted to consider alternative ways to conceive of the human/nature relationship (Carlson, 2018; Callicot, 2008; Saito, 2010). My work follows in this vein and calls for the need to emphasise Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) in applied environmental theory. However, this approach contains many risks – of appropriation, subordination to Western science, claims of ownership, and conflicts of interest (Moffa, 2016). Indeed, suggestions towards the “co-production” of knowledge, whilst indicative of a tendency towards change, still run “the risk of perpetuating the supremacy of Western knowledge systems” (Lam et al., 2020). In these cases, it is not enough to merely call upon the need for diverse knowledges to be incorporated into existing intellectual paradigms, instead, environmental knowledge itself needs to be decolonised (Smith, 2012)

Bio: Nanda is a multilingual researcher at the University of Sydney working in environmental values and theories of nature. She holds a PhD in International Comparative Studies from the University of Sydney with a specialisation in the cultural history of environmental aesthetics. Working with literature, nature writing, and philosophy at the intersection between science and culture in lived experiences of the natural world Nanda is passionate about communicating research to the broader public to consolidate a better imaginative understanding of climate change.

Tema Milstein (she/her) *Transforming Ecocultural Identity for Paradigm-shifting Action*

Abstract: The risks we and the more-than-human world now face emanate from dominant/dominating anthropocentric orientations and practices toward the world. Though these orientations are embedded in destructive institutions and policy, they also are firmly entwined in Western/ized and/or industrial/ized identities. I'm interested in tracing the boundaries of these anthropocentric ecocultural identities by charting ways individuals' errant ecocentrism is patrolled and disciplined in everyday interactions – and the risks one must take to stray beyond anthropocentric boundaries. I've researched ways people in Western/ized places express connection with the more-than-human world, ranging from worms to whales, and ways these expressions are marked and

disciplined with ridicule or labeling (in settings ranging from city sidewalks to ecotours to postgraduate seminars). I've also researched ways individuals mitigate their own expressions of ecocentric identity via self-labeling, self-censoring, and marking their own boundary-crossing. I argue the wickedest risk lies in ways everyday ecocultural interactions predominantly function in Western/ized and/or industrial/ized settings to restrict both individuals and societies to ecologically distanced positions and to mask climatic and biospheric connection and immersion, halting transformative action. There are those, however, who venture beyond the boundaries and there are spaces within which regenerative ways of being are co-constructed, validated, and strengthened. Based on patterns in these moments of boundary crossing, I also identify methods for transforming ecocultural identity in these times.

Bio: Tema Milstein's work tends to ways communication and culture inform – and are informed by – environmental relations. Her recent edited books are the Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity (2020) and Environmental Communication Pedagogy and Practice (2017). She is an associate professor of Environment & Society at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and convenor of the Master of Environmental Management program.

Julie Vulcan (she/her) *Living in a Post-fire Terrain: Curious Attentions and Intimate Lessons with Nonhumans*

Abstract: Alongside the urgent requirement to respond to a warming planet the differing temporalities of humans and nonhumans still need to be appreciated and taken into account. Offering personal insights into what it means to live-with a post-bushfire terrain I question what I risk when I pay close attention to the slow practices of nonhumans rather than the immediate demands of humans? More broadly what might post-bushfire terrains be like if the desired action after bushfire had the future needs of both humans and nonhumans in view? Proceeding after a bushfire event is complicated. Beyond government resilience strategies, where the human dwelling takes priority over the nonhuman equivalent, differently complex and longview strategies exist. These strategies are woven in with the slow, intimate, and grounded everyday practices of living-on and living-with a post-fire terrain and come with their own set of risks. They can be viewed as risky behaviour and a risk factor to others. A boundary is a construction unequally assumed by humans with nonhumans in the contact zones between the bush and the fence-line. While between the human occupiers and their contained properties various interpretations of the bush and its value create degrees of un/ease. By directing closer attention to differing multispecies responses post-fire it might be possible to bind more longview strategies based on care-full relationships between humans and nonhumans alike.

Bio: Julie Vulcan is an interdisciplinary artist and PhD candidate at Western Sydney University. Her research draws on a range of theory and practice across the humanities, sciences and the creative arts. Her current research investigates notions of the dark, multispecies worldings, and speculative imaginings for futures here and now. www.julievulcan.net

Maud Quinzin *Weaving Knowledge Systems to Guide Innovation in Sustainability and Dismantle Structural Inequalities*

Abstract: Rethinking technological design is rethinking our societies. Specifically, in this presentation I focus on how and whose science and wisdom should guide the design of technologies that seek to support ecosystem resilience and environmental justice. It is evident that ecosystem resilience and the work to allow environmental healing cannot be achieved only by – nor rely exclusively on – transformative sustainable technologies and the exclusion of human occupancy. Systemic changes will be key and it will be crucial that they get guidance from holistic traditional knowledge and practices that have sustained indigenous communities for millennia. Such changes demand a practice of decolonizing the current system which has been dominated by western paradigm and sciences. This path could also play a vital role in dismantling structural inequalities. What if the current environmental crisis was an opportunity to undo inequalities and empower indigenous communities who lived more sustainably for generations before being displaced, oppressed or even massacred? Efforts to tackle the environmental crisis could use biotechnologies aimed to restore ecosystems by impacting the shared environment, encompassing cultural and geopolitical borders, and challenging socio-economic dynamics. Could a pluralistic design of such biotechnologies remediate the environmental crisis, actively address intractable environmental conflicts and threats, and reconcile inclusive and fair governance if guided by reciprocal livelihood-research partnerships?

Bio: Maud is a troublemaker aspiring to be a peacebuilder and a caregiver for Earthians (humans too!). Her work centers on sustainability and proactively addresses the biological biodiversity crisis, while she explores approaches that support social and environmental justice. Evolutionary and conservation biologist trained in western science, she is learning about traditional knowledge and practices with local and indigenous knowledge holders to collaboratively propose holistic remediation against environmental conflicts and threats. She is notably looking at how technologies developed for the exploration and healing of the living world can influence our societies and how diverse societies influence those technologies. Her work with indigenous communities to support and weave traditional knowledge with scientific developments seeks to fully understand local ecosystems and guide the development of transformative technologies and practices that encourage systemic changes essential for human and non-human lives to thrive on our unique canoe, Earth.

Jessica K Weir (she/her) *Naming and Knowing Evidence, Nature and Risk*

Abstract: Whose evidence matters in Western liberal understandings of what is at risk is critiqued by many including Indigenous leaders, ‘soft sciences’, and, as this presentation shares, the public servants responding to bushfire risk, as escalating with climate crisis. Research documents that these fireys have natural science facts (fuel loads, weather, etc) but rarely evidence about values, including in relation to facts. Nonetheless, they make

and defend life and death decisions about what to protect (insured holiday home, uninsured farm shed, ecological communities, community hall, etc), and how to protect it (better prescribed burning, earlier evacuations, tackling carbon emissions, etc). The result is more stressful work, less effective risk mitigation, and less effective use of scarce research monies (Weir et al. 2021). Significantly, the natural hazard sector does not divide nature and society, is (largely) partisan, motivated by the high stakes context, and revealing pathways to address knowledge discrimination. Yet, access to better evidence is challenged by the material re-distribution needed to the academic status quo, and because most disciplines are invested in separating nature and society. Declining research budgets and amplifying risks is still embedding the climate crisis as a natural science issue and problem (Overland and Sovacool 2020). Throughout, Indigenous leaders have always demanded and demonstrated differently (Nakata 2007). I argue that Indigenous peoples' authority is critical to all this, albeit with non-Indigenous people required to do most of the work.

Bio: Dr Jessica K Weir is a Senior Research Fellow at ICS, WSU and a Visiting Fellow at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, The Australian National University. She investigates human-environment relations, justice, societal norms and public sector governance, as fundamentally informed by over two decades of collaboration with Indigenous peoples, especially in southeast and western Australia. Jessica seeks to work as an ally within a decolonial ethic. Her research is in dialogue with human geography, Indigenous studies, decolonial studies, the environmental humanities, and science and technology studies. Her natural hazard research was funded by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC).

Christopher Lean *Synthetic Biology and the Goals of Conservation*

Abstract: Ethically informed decision-making frameworks are essential for deciding when radical interventions on the germline DNA of wild species is justified. New DNA editing tools (i.e. CRISPR) allow efficient alteration of species' germlines, and scientists are considering this technology to achieve conservation aims. Introducing new genetic material to wild populations provides the potential to fortify populations against existential threats, and, controversially, creates wild, genetically modified populations. For example, the introduction of heat shock proteins into coral to mitigate the effects of climate change. While the rapid response to climate change is critical and technical progress has been rapid, a moral framework for these interventions is underdeveloped. Environmental ethicists, particularly Eric Katz, have argued that permitting genetic interventions in nature will create a 'moral hazard' and has an inherent risk. I discuss why moral hazard is created by genetic intervention on wild species. This risk is born from actions that lie outside of our standard ethical frameworks for conservation. I will discuss and problematize, in light of genetic intervention, what I consider the three core aims of conservation: biodiversity, ecosystem services, and wilderness. This uneasy relationship does not however forgo the use of such interventions, it just means there is serious intellectual work to be done for us to reconsider our ethical duties to nature at times of global change.

Bio: Christopher Lean is currently working as a Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology, working out of the Institute of Society and Culture at Western Sydney University. His primary areas of research are philosophy of the life sciences (biology, ecology, medicine) and ethics (bioethics, environment, technology). He wrote his PhD in philosophy of science at ANU, he has researched and taught in four countries, working in both scientific labs and philosophy departments..

Rachel Ankeny (she/her) *Publics' Views on Risk in Relation to Emerging Genetic Technologies*

Bio: Professor Rachel A. Ankeny is an interdisciplinary teacher and scholar whose areas of expertise cross three fields: history/philosophy of science, bioethics and science policy, and food studies. She is an Honorary Visiting Professor in the College of Social Science and International Studies (Philosophy) at the University of Exeter (UK). Her research is considered highly interdisciplinary, scholarly, and generally accessible, evidenced by the fact that her talks are typically attended not only by academics but also members of the general public. She also is well-recognized as a scholar who can translate academic findings in ways that are relevant for stakeholders in a range of sectors and the broader community. Rachel has a BA in Liberal Arts (Philosophy/Maths, St John's College, Santa Fe, NM), and MA degrees in Philosophy and in Bioethics, and a PhD in the History and Philosophy of Science (all from the University of Pittsburgh, PA). In 2006 she graduated with the degree of Master of Arts in Gastronomy (University of Adelaide) after completing a dissertation on celebratory food habits among Italo-Australian and Italian-American immigrants. She also holds a Graduate Certificate in Online Learning (Higher Education) from the University of Adelaide. Prior to joining the University of Adelaide in 2006, she was director and lecturer/senior lecturer in the Unit for History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Sydney from 2000. Rachel previously served as Deputy Dean Research (former Associate Dean Research, 2011-19 and Deputy Executive Dean, 2015-21) for the Faculty of Arts, and coordinated the Faculty's ARC ERA and Engagement and Impact submissions during this period. She formerly served as the Faculty's Associate Dean (International) (2009-10).

Josh Wodak @RISK: *The Race Between Negative Emission Technologies, Global Heating, and Runaway Climate Change*

Abstract: At the advent of the Anthropocene, life is being pushed to its limits the world over; we are currently living through the Sixth Mass Extinction to occur since multicellular life first emerged on the planet 570 million years ago. In light of the abject failure of global environmental governance to have averted runaway climate change, what environmental action could possibly become commensurate with anything actually efficacious against this unfolding extinction event? Any such action would not only require time-critical interventions into both ecosystems and evolution itself, for these interventions would also require domains of risk and ethics that shatter normative understandings of same. That is – averting runaway climate change is now contingent on inventing and implementing Negative Emissions Technologies at scale, and in time.

Radical and promissory technofixes of synthetic biology and climate engineering are thus increasingly being researched beyond the scope of STEM disciplines, to critically analyse the social, cultural and political dimensions of environmental action that is now restricted to the abhorrent options available within an all-too-real Dr Strangelove scenario. And yet, the impasse between the dream of technofix salvation and the nightmare comedy of cultural critique remains entrenched. In the context of this rapidly diminishing prospect for any efficacious environmental action, the presentation contemplates the unthinkable questions that our current situation demands we ask, and perhaps even try to answer.

Bio: Dr Josh Wodak works at the intersection of the Environmental Humanities and Science & Technology Studies. He is a Senior Research Fellow at ICS, WSU; a Chief Investigator at the ARC Centre for Excellence in Synthetic Biology; and an Adjunct Senior Lecturer, School of Biological, Earth, and Environmental Sciences, UNSW. Originally trained in Anthropology (University of Sydney, 2002, and Australian National University, 2011) his publications have appeared in *Humanities*; *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*; *Environmental Communication*; *Transformations: Journal of Media, Culture and Technology*; *Music and Arts in Action*; *Unlikely: Journal for Creative Arts*; and *Futures*; and in edited volumes on the rhetoric of climate communication; the aesthetics of the undersea; transformative pedagogies about the environment; and environmental history. Before joining ICS in 2020 he was a Lecturer at UNSW Art & Design; a Chief Investigator on the ARC Discovery Project 'Understanding Australia in The Age of Humans: Localising the Anthropocene'; and a Key Researcher of the Andrew Mellon Australia-Pacific Observatory in Environmental Humanities, Sydney Environment Institute, University of Sydney.

Juan Salazar *Risks, Hopes and Prospects of an Ecological Political Constitution in Chile*

Bio: Juan Francisco Salazar (Santiago, 1971) is an anthropologist and documentary filmmaker with a PhD in Communication and Media from Western Sydney University (2005) and a Bachelor of Anthropology from the University of Chile (1994). He is Professor of media studies at the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and Fellow of ICS, WSU. From 2016 he has been a WSU Research Theme Champion (Environment and Sustainability) and from 2020 an Australian Research Council Future Fellow. His work on Indigenous media in Latin America was widely recognised for its novel focus on the poetics of Indigenous video practices and for bringing together Latin American film theory and communication theory, with media anthropology. His current research interests are on social ecological change, anthropology of futures, scientific practices in extreme environments, and environmental justice in community based adaptation to climate change. His current work has focused on cultural research on Antarctica where he has developed pioneering ethnographic work since 2011. His latest work is on social studies of outer space. Among his most known films as director are *De la Tierra a la Pantalla* (2004); *Nightfall on Gaia* (2015) and *The Bamboo Bridge* (2019).