

## **Everyday Affects of Ecological Globalization**

1-3 June 2022

Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

### **Organized by:**

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### **Confirmed Keynotes:**

Kath Weston, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, USA,  
and British Academy Global Professor, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Kregg Hetherington, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,  
Concordia University, Canada

Thom van Dooren, Deputy Director, Sydney Environment Institute, and Associate  
Professor, Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia

### **Call for Papers:**

This conference will explore the place of everyday affects in processes of large-scale and long-range ecological transformation, what we call *ecological globalization*. It asks: What are the world-making ecological effects of seemingly intimate affects? How are ostensibly everyday sensibilities bound up with radical changes in more-than-human landscapes? We invite contributions from scholars exploring the planetary impacts of affective practices from a range of disciplinary and analytical perspectives. Our focus is on theoretical insights grounded in empirical case studies.

Recent events have forced us to rethink the place of affects in environmental politics. From eco-anxiety and climate grief to public cultures of outrage and fatigue, there is a growing recognition of the importance of embodied capacities and emotional dispositions for the politics of ecological change. In this context, a small number of signature affects have dominated public and scholarly concerns, including hope and despair, optimism and pessimism, joy and grief, care and apathy. Such affects are widely felt and so clearly important. Yet the ecologies of everyday life are constituted through a wider and more diverse range of affective structures, practices, experiences, and politics.

This conference seeks to better understand the relationship between structures of feeling and ecological globalization by broadening the range of affects under consideration. We invite contributions that focus in particular on *everyday*, *ordinary*, or *minor* affects: the senses, sentiments, and material encounters that lie outside of dominant master narratives. These terms (the everyday, ordinary, and minor) each carry with them a distinct theoretical and

political tradition. Yet they overlap insofar as they understand the everyday as a site of social and political significance. It also has significant environmental implications. Everyday affects can work their way into material ecologies, reshaping them in the process, even as particular landscape formations give rise to particular configurations of emotion and affect. This reciprocal, recursive relation—between everyday affects and processes of environmental transformation—is still only poorly understood.

While some scholars see the everyday as a site of creativity, resistance, and emancipatory potential, others identify the ordinary as a site of cruelty and disorder. We invite considerations of how minor affects might either stabilize or undermine existing structures of environmental injustice. Doing so requires paying close attention to the grounded specificity of particular affective worlds as they unfold in space and over time. A given affect is “everyday” only in relation to a particular context. What appears as “ordinary” in one time-space might appear as extraordinary in another. The “minor” can over time gather momentum—in effect *turning major*—even as the major might at times dissipate into a multiplicity of minors. These dynamics have a politics. They also have an ecology. Especially sought after are papers that approach everyday affects as historically, socially, and ecologically situated.

The affective turn has been, in reality, many different turns, with different scholars arguing for different understandings of the term and concept. Taking place within this context, our goal is not to synthesize the literature, resolve its contradictions, nor determine once and for all what affect is or is not. We instead hope together to make use of diverse analytical orientations in order to explore how ecological globalizations take place. To this end, we invite considerations of affect in a broad and capacious sense as a domain or realm that includes but is not necessarily reducible to senses, sensibilities, sentiments, and material encounters—as long as these are understood not as individualized phenomena but as spatially and subjectively diffuse processes. Our goal is to make space for papers that focus in particular on the planetary impacts of affective practices, including the ways in which affects are activated, cultivated, and curated as part of projects of infrastructural development, resource extraction, and landscape change.

Ecologies, as we use the term, are *lively, multispecies arrangements*. Grounded in more-than-human scholarship – with its commitments to observation and material worlds – this conference seeks to explore how human social and political processes, understood as inherently affective, shape the lives, interactions, and configurations of animals, plants, rivers, and other entities. Alert to reciprocal but unequal dynamics, we ask how affects are themselves more-than-human at the same time that we consider how affect-imbued practices remake multispecies worlds. By foregrounding *ecological assemblages*, this conference hopes to forge a renewed relationship between more-than-human scholarship and cultural studies: the latter has tended to focus on discursive critique rather than empirical attention to landscape assemblages, and yet we see its conversations around affect as a set of essential tools for better understanding and intervening in material processes of ecological damage and repair. While recognizing that significant affects are cultivated through major genres such as national romantic painting, which have been the focus of earlier research at the juncture of landscape and sensibilities, we seek not only to probe the structures of human feelings, but also to trace them outward to consider how they become manifest within multispecies assemblages.

Influenced by the work of geographers, such as Doreen Massey, this conference also takes up questions of geography, scale, and globals/locals. Yet it does so not only to interrogate questions of political economy and human belonging, but also to ask about the relations between structures of feeling and *the spatialities of ecological effects*. The conference seeks to explore how seemingly intimate affects connect and transform more-than-human worlds across long spatial distances and wide swaths of terrain in non-contiguous and “patchy” ways. In the genre of Anna Tsing’s *Friction*, it asks how affect-laden “packages” or “projects” come to travel, while also following those projects into the fibers of the world in a new and explicitly material way. The conference is especially interested in traveling senses, sentiments, and sensibilities, as well as affects of connection and comparison, with a focus on specificity. For example, rather than focus on the general ecological footprints of middle-class familiarity, we seek to probe how the infrastructures and institutions of diverse domesticities, modes of kinship, and social life are entangled with particular ecological assemblages near and far. Overall, we are interested in the combined and uneven worlds that arise as geographies of affect and ecologies intersect.

Overall, this conference takes seriously the vitality and spontaneity of everyday emotional life, on the one hand, and the patterning of political and ecological history, on the other, with the aim of exploring how each works powerfully through the other. We warmly invite scholars of all career stages to submit abstracts, that consider this conjuncture in various temporal and geographical contexts with a focus on grounded ethnographic and/or historical approaches.

We offer a handful of examples not to limit contributions but in the spirit of sparking innovative takes on the topics above:

- The role of ‘friendship’ in extractive business projects
- The comparative sensibilities of brokers, merchants, and/or development officials
- Fatigue and frustration among workers in new eco-industries
- Irritation and irritability within national and transnational environmental bureaucracies
- The ambivalent affects of environmental in/justice
- The place of love and rivalry in processes of private property inheritance

### **Submission information and conference information:**

The conference will be held at Aarhus University from *1-3 June 2022* by the Aarhus University Ecological Globalizations Research Group (funded by Carlsberg Foundation’s Distinguished Associate Professor Fellowship program, Grant CF17–0872) in partnership with the Center for Environmental Humanities at Aarhus University ([ceh.au.dk](http://ceh.au.dk)).

Participation in the conference is free and includes lunches. We regret that we do not have funding for travel subsidies.

### **Paper proposals and submission details:**

Paper proposals must include a title, an abstract (max 500 words excluding references), a short bio (max 150 words) of the presenter including institutional affiliation, if applicable, as well as the contact details of the presenter.

Please email proposals/abstracts to: [ceh@cas.au.dk](mailto:ceh@cas.au.dk)

Deadline for submission of paper proposals/abstracts: 1 April 2022

Notification of acceptance: 15 April 2022

If you would like to attend the conference *without a paper*, please send an email to [ceh@cas.au.dk](mailto:ceh@cas.au.dk), and we will send you the link to the conference registration page when it opens in early April.