

Climate change is a social issue!

Reframing and shaping Climate's narratives, geographies, histories, and politics

*Research Symposium Cambridge Zero, Centre for
Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
(CRASSH), and Climate and Sustainability Education
Series (CASES)*

Climate change and sustainability are social issues, to a large extent perpetuated by social, political, and economic systems that shape and govern our access to resources, livelihood possibilities, and capacity to change, as well as to utilise old and new technologies and livelihood practices in order to mitigate and adapt to new realities. Furthermore, the way we talk about and frame these issues also shapes how we conceive of solutions and our abilities as individuals and communities to act.

The symposium will bring into focus the impact and contributions the social sciences, arts, and humanities have had on climate and sustainability-related discussions, ranging from engaging communities and practitioners to instigate climate action; (re-)framing climate and environmental narratives, solutions, and technologies; allaying emotions of anxieties, grief and loss; contextualising the 'place', geographies, and politics of green transitions and climate-related negotiations; to creating usable and applied histories and archaeologies. Changing our understanding of climate change and sustainability issues, how they arose, and how they can exacerbate unjust transitions is a huge endeavour that is hard to quantify and hardly recognised, but has potentially huge social impacts. The symposium aims is to highlight the necessity of social science, humanities, and arts in order to make social, policy, economic, and technological advances more impactful at local and national scales.

Date and time: 7th May 2024, 13.00-17.00

Venue: Room SG1, Alison Richards Building, CB3 9DP

Sessions consist of 10-min presentations (15 or 25-min for keynotes) followed by 5-min Q&A.

13.00 LUNCH

13.30 WELCOME AND OPENING OF CASES SEMINAR SERIES

Dr Nik Petek-Sargeant, Cambridge Zero and McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, and Nidhi Singal, Faculty of Education

13.35 Keynote: Climate change education: From Topography to Reimagining

Prof Tristan McCowan, Professor of International Education, Institute of Education, UCL

Inert and coercive forms of climate change education fall far short of the transformative, agentic experience needed for meaningful change in individuals and societies. This presentation instead proposes a topography approach, in which the role of the university is not to teach climate change, but to curate a diverse environment of learning experiences. The proposed framework sees learning as being distributed across three spaces (classroom, campus, and community) and characterised by features of access, ownership and connection

14.05 Unveiling the Intersectionality of IT Use, Climate Change, and Geopolitical Dynamics in Occupied Palestinian Territories

We'am Hamdan, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education

This presentation delves into the intricate relationship between IT use, climate change, and geopolitical dynamics in occupied Palestinian territories, an area often overlooked in scholarly discourse. As systems borrowed from the West permeate the region, there is a critical need to understand their long-term effects within a colonial context. Furthermore, the recent war on Gaza has exacerbated climate distortions, highlighting the urgent need for advocacy from a geopolitical perspective to address the harm inflicted upon indigenous communities.

As educators, it is incumbent upon us to bridge the gap between climate issues and lived experiences, particularly for young people who are deeply rooted in their context. Through my PhD research, I explore the lived experiences of digital workers in the Palestinian context, revealing their resilience and desire for tangible changes despite their limited agency. By bringing these narratives to the forefront, we can empower communities to advocate for environmental justice and foster meaningful dialogue on climate action within conflict-affected regions.

14.20 Relational Pedagogies: Re-orienting learning for an epistemology of entanglement

Sarah Sharp, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education

To imagine ways we might live through the current environmental crisis, we could consider ourselves as 'entangled' within the world in its affective state of

becoming - knowing that our actions and futures are constantly engaged in relation with all else. My research contributes to the body of work that approaches this mindset shift through Environmental Education (EE). I explore ways we can apply concepts of 'entanglement' and 'relationality' to the process of learning through embodied creative activities, suggesting that an understanding of the world through these concepts could encourage mindset shifts towards sustainability. The goal of my research is to explore a pedagogy for an onto-epistemology of relationality, with the hope of helping schools nurture mindsets capable of learning to live sustainably in a changing climate.

14.40 BREAK

14.50 Keynote: The Green Transition's Extractivist Legal Underbelly

Prof Christine Schwöbel-Patel, Director of the Centre for Critical Legal Studies, Warwick Law School, and CRASSH Visiting Fellow

The contemporary legal debate on climate justice and the green transition is principally framed around heroic attempts of legal activists, Indigenous groups, and communities seeking justice through the courts. This is underscored by recent legislation aimed at building green industrial programmes, including in the US with its Inflation Reduction Act and in the EU with its Green Deal Industrial Plan. From this perspective, law offers a powerful tool for decarbonisation, and an overall 'just' transition. However, what this story omits to tell is how legal instruments are mobilised to support extractivism, to disempower Indigenous peoples in so-called 'sacrifice zones', and to facilitate the smooth transit and accumulation of capital to the capitalist centre. It is this latter side of the green transition that I wish to explore and that offers the basis for my call for more internationalism, less law in the climate catastrophe.

15.10 Walking backwards into a sustainable future? Historicising the science and policy of climate change mitigation

Emma Wordsworth, PhD Candidate, Faculty of History

'Shut down a coal plant, and you can slow global warming for a day; shut down the relations that made the coal plant, and you can stop it for good'. This idiom reflects the underappreciated truism that the ways in which we frame the climate crisis directly shape how we respond to it. Similarly, this paper advocates an historical approach to the climate crisis and the power structures that underpin climate policy. I historicise the development of paradigmatic net-zero strategies (VCMs and CDR) and, in doing so, reflect on the value of history in approaching the climate crisis more generally.

15.25 The interrelation of urban sustainability projects and spatial inequalities
Nurzada Abdivalieva, MPhil student, Department of Sociology

Being a home for so many people, cities will be the most affected due to environmental change. Therefore, the great emphasis of governments is made on the construction of sustainable cities. Particularly, urban sustainability projects aim to make cities greener and healthier by mitigating climate change consequences, encouraging more efficient and effective ways of energy consumption, and increasing the overall quality of life of its inhabitants. However, despite the good intentions of such initiatives, they significantly contribute to the rise of spatial inequalities. This happens due to skyrocketed property prices in the district that has undergone construction of such urban green projects.

15.40 How Might a 'Queer Climate Justice' Be Conceptualised?
Katherine Daisy-Gard, MPhil Student, Centre for Gender Studies

Climate justice is an interdisciplinary global discourse which has gained prominence by exploring the injustice of disproportionate climate impact. However, normative inquiry is often regarded insufficient at addressing the diverse array of injustices that climate change will evoke. While scholarship has long called for more discussion on the intersection between queerness and climate change, it nonetheless remains undertheorized. I argue that a conceptual framework for 'queer climate justice' would help redress this. To execute my argument, I synthesise queer epistemologies with climate justice inquiry, to conceptualise principles of climate justice which extend beyond its existing focus on distribution, equity, recognition, and participation.

15.55 BREAK

16.05 Keynote: Beyond 'Sinking Islands': Resisting Climate Change in the South Pacific
Dr Liam Saddington, Teaching Associate in Human Geography, Department of Geography

Alongside the lonely polar bear, low-lying island states have become synonymous with the climate crisis. Commonly understood as "sinking islands" atolls are widely understood as having a finite future and face inundation due to rising sea levels. However, these narratives have been widely resisted by Pacific Islanders as disempowering and closing down alternative futures. Moreover, contemporary research in coastal geomorphology suggests that atolls may be more resilient to sea level rise than previously thought potentially

providing alternative adaptation pathways. Within this talk, I will outline how Pacific Islanders have used adaptation and diplomacy to present alternative visions of their future statehood. Focusing on the Pacific small island state of Tuvalu, I will explore how land reclamation is being implemented as a means to adapt to climate change and reframe narratives on island futures. Secondly, I will explore how this land reclamation serves a geopolitical purpose and is being utilised within Tuvaluan diplomacy to advocate for greater international support on climate action. Finally, I suggest the importance of drawing on science, geopolitics and emotion when considering how climate narratives can be reframed to build hope for island communities.

16.25 Nuclear energy, communication frames and political orientation

Zeynep Clulow, Research Associate, Energy Policy Research Group, Judge Business School

The UK Government has pledged to significantly upscale nuclear energy to meet national climate commitments. Despite its mitigative potential, however, nuclear energy has proven controversial among the British public. We investigate the influence of communication frames over nuclear attitudes by analysing the results of an online survey that we launched on a nationally representative sample of the UK public. We find that assurances of nuclear safety have a significant support-boosting effect on left-leaning individuals, in contrast to individuals on the centre and right of the political spectrum, who do not appear to be affected by safety frames.

16.40 Geoengineering, climate intervention, or climate repair? Analysing some of the framing of technologies to artificially intervene in the climate of the Polar Regions

Albert van Wijngaarden, PhD candidate, Polar studies

In an already warming world, the Polar Regions are warming at an even greater rate. Given the catastrophic effects this might have for local ecosystems and communities, and the world as a whole, proposals to artificially intervene in the climate system have been moving steadily into the political mainstream. In my presentation, I will briefly explore some of the ways such technologies have been framed, and what underlying assumptions come with different approaches.

16.55 Discourses on Low Carbon Inhalers in the UK

Aly Shaaban, Emma Johnson, and Shazia Absar, Medical students, School of Clinical Medicine

Inhaler emissions contribute around 3% of the entire NHS's carbon footprint. There is a nuanced discourse surrounding the transition to use of low-carbon dry powder inhalers which is influenced by pharmaceutical companies, professional bodies, and patient groups. In light of NHS England's net zero strategy, we are performing a discourse analysis to investigate these narratives.

By identifying and analysing relevant literature from these groups, our study will shed light on the complex social dialogue surrounding this critical aspect of sustainable healthcare. This will underscore the importance of understanding diverse stakeholder narratives in shaping environmental practices in respiratory care.

17.10 LIGHTNING ROUND – 2 MINUTE TALKS

Speculative Pathways: Translating Climate Futures from Data to Artwork

Emily Goniea, MPhil student, Department of Geography

While scientific institutions like the IPCC produce data-driven projections of possible climate futures, artists have been imagining what this data might mean culturally in communities around the world. The translation of climate knowledge between scientific, civic, and artistic epistemologies represents a crucial aspect of how communities imagine and enact possible futures. My dissertation explores cross-epistemological translation by examining three speculative artworks that imagine future climate events and situate them spatially and culturally within coastal communities. By analysing how these projects interpret and represent scientific data, I aim to understand how climate knowledge is reshaped in the translation between epistemologies.

17.15 RECEPTION