

Ecology and Belonging: Inspiring Environmentalism in an Age of Extremes

Department: Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development

Research group: Urban Futures Studio

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Project description

Climate change has become the defining issue of the 21st century. Present predictions are stark for the socio-ecological future: entire countries sink below sea level; entire regions become infertile; mass migration; rampant inequality of life chances. While many hold out hope for a brighter future, recent elections in the around the world show what the political reality might be like: nativism, climate denial, the closing of borders.

We need to face up to what is happening: those best equipped to envisage a just and sustainable future are proving least capable of speaking convincingly about meaning and belonging. Meanwhile, nativists are surging to power by putting belonging front and centre and denouncing the environmental policies that threaten what they frame as “traditional” ways of life.

In this context, this project asks, is it possible to offer a meaningful vision of belonging to a just environmental future that is simultaneously deep enough to mobilise action, appealing enough to inspire wider publics, and open enough to accommodate new arrivals?

We ask the student assistant to start small. Working with their supervisor, Dr. Timothy Stacey, they will begin collating a literature review of work touching on the intersection of ecology and belonging. If the work is carried out successfully and the timescale allows, it may lead to a further assignment and/or a co-authored paper. Particular attention will be paid to the connections between indigenous philosophies, deep ecology, conservatism, and eco-fascism.

This work represents the first phase of a much larger project involving multiple researchers and ultimately hosted by the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Job requirements

Particular job requirements (i.e. lab experience, background knowledge and/or computer skills)

- It is essential that the student has an advanced ability to read and categorise complex theoretical material into a well-structured review of the literature.
- A preference will be shown for students who have some understanding of cultural approaches as outlined in courses from members of the Urban Futures Studio.
- A further preference will be shown for students with a demonstrable interest in the topic
- A further preference will be shown for students able to speak multiple languages and to take a social scientific eye to newspaper reports in various countries.