



# POSTHUMAN SYMBIOSES MASTERCLASS

## A Thinking-With Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti

8th December 2023

Organised by the Architecture Philosophy and Theory (APT) academic group /  
Ecologies of Architecture (EoA) research group  
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft

Julianalaan 134, 2628BL Delft, Berlagezaalen



Focusing on the urgent question of our 'becoming-with' environments, the 'Posthuman Symbioses Masterclass' aims to find conceptual tools for redirecting future architecture and urban design towards a more sympoietic direction that may mitigate the increasingly complex crises in the Anthropocene.

As the posthumanist philosopher Rosi Braidotti argues, the environmental, social, and technological transformations that define the present can no longer be addressed separately by the sciences, humanities, and engineering. This disciplinary separation along divisions of nature, culture, and technology prevents the approach of these immense and irreversible problems as processes that are created, co-constituted, and co-individuated by design. The concept of sympoiesis elaborated in Donna Haraway's well-known work critically extends autopoietic notions of self-organising systems by attending more closely to the forms of co-evolution in which things always 'become-together-with' other things.

Held in conjunction with Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, the host of 'An Evening With Donna Haraway, Bruno Clarke and Rosi Braidotti' on Thursday, 7th December, the 'Posthuman Symbioses Masterclass' on 8th December at BK/TU Delft is open to a maximum of 100 participating MSc students and PhD candidates.

The Masterclass is organised around two sessions where a total of 12 selected students will be given the opportunity to deliver a brief pitch presentation of their research (maximum of 5 slides, 10 minutes) with a following discussion round. The event is conceived as an intergenerational experience of 'learning-with' Haraway and Braidotti as leading (eco)feminist/posthumanist theorists, and (PhD) students with a keen interest in adopting and adapting their approaches in their own research and designerly work. The wider intention is to generally foster inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches to architecture and urban design that embrace the life sciences or humanities, and especially posthuman/sympoietic approaches, situated forms of knowledge, and 'minor' angles.

*Cover Art: Shoshanah Dubiner, Endosymbiosis: Homage to Lynn Margulis.  
A six-foot wide reproduction of the painting occupies a hallway in the Morrill Science Center at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, MA, USA where Lynn Margulis was a Distinguished Professor from 1988 until her death in 2011. (Image courtesy of the artist).*

PROGRAM / SCHEDULE

09:15-09:45 Coffee/ tea

09:45-10:00 Welcome

by Bob Gorny and Andrej Radman

10:00-12:30

SESSION ONE:

POSTHUMANISM

10:00-10:30

Introduction by Setareh Noorani

10:30-11:30 Research Pitches

10:30-10:40 Myrto Karampela-Makrygianni

10:40-10:50 Johanna Just

10:50-11:00 Molly Anderson Fiero

11:00-11:10 Jere Kuzmanić

11:10-11:20 Chris F. Julien

11:20-11:30 Ricardo Avella

11:30-12:30 Discussion

12:30-13:30 Lunch Break

13:30- 14:00 Coffee/ tea

14:00-16:30

SESSION TWO:

SYMPOIESIS

14:00-14:30

Introduction by Bruce Clarke

14:30-15:30 Research Pitches

14:30-14:40 Victor Muñoz Sanz

14:40-14:50 Alina Paias & Catherine Koekoek

14:50-15:00 Amina Chouairi

15:00-15:10 Gert van der Merwe

15:10-15:20 Maria-Dolores Heinrich

15:20-15:30 Katerina Stavridi

15:30-16:30 Discussion

16:30-17:30 Drinks



# SESSION ONE: Posthumanism





## Myrto Karampela-Makrygianni

### “The Sea as Island: Borderscaping the Mediterranean Basin”

The Mediterranean Basin embodies a mesocosm for the Critical Zones containing all the fragilities, urgencies and uncertainties that characterize living in the 21st century. In its deep obscured oceanic space, the notion of coexistence is constantly negotiated through overlapping (re)territorialization processes, accelerated climatic-geological transformations, and increased interaction between human and more-than-human entities. As the urbanization focus shifts from land to sea, the question of sympoiesis and response-ability becomes central for the establishment of a counter-paradigm for the worlding of the sea; opposed to prevailing processes of domination, expulsion, and colonization. Thus, the research paints the Mediterranean's fragmentary portrait as product of conflicting political, cultural, historical, and environmental forces, reveals significant minor stories, and experiments with soft territorial acts and situated forms of knowledge for the creation of a common ground for the Mediterranean assemblages. To do so, it situates the island concept – understood as archetypal in-between space that reconceptualizes the spatiotemporal

understanding of the boundary – in the ephemeral Julia formation which becomes speculative (re)fabulation of a conscious terraforming act. Using Julia as synecdoche of the Mediterranean Basin, the project concludes by weaving an alternative model for the understanding of the sea and for the cohabitation of the ‘damaged’ planet.

#### Keywords:

Sea Urbanization; Borderscaping; Assemblages; Transfigurations; Critical Posthumanities

#### Bio:

Myrto Karampela-Makrygianni has graduated cum laude from the MSc at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU-Delft. Her areas of expertise are guided primarily by her research on more-than-city — especially ocean — urbanization, and on critical cartographies as a medium of new materialism worlding practices. Her current research focuses on alternative forms of co-existence between human and more-than-human assemblages through sympoiesis and practices of knowing-in-becoming.

## Johanna Just

### “An Earthly Writing of Space – Exploring more-than-human Relations in the Upper Rhine Plain”

Since the 19th century, the Upper Rhine Plain has undergone profound human-induced transformations. The engineer J. G. Tulla's initiative in 1809 to straighten the Rhine's meander zone paved the way for ongoing extractive practices. Today, the region epitomises complex more-than-human relations with highly modified ecologies of the Anthropocene. The transformations were both represented and enabled by 19th-century maps and drawings of the area. In contrast to earlier depictions of a vital landscape, they helped create a disconnect from the land and encouraged spatial interventions by abstracting and objectifying the unpredictable river. Inspired by Bruno Latour's call for earthly sciences, the research explores an earthly approach to spatial practice. It follows three animals that are indivisibly linked with the area – the Atlantic salmon (Rheinsalm), the floodwater mosquito (Rheinschnake) and the sand martin (Rheinschwalbe) – to explore how humans live with and against non-human others, testing ways of describing and representing a vital milieu.

#### Keywords:

More-than-human; Anthropocene ecologies; earthly; representation; vital milieu

#### Bio:

Johanna Just is an architect and doctoral fellow at the Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies at ETH Zürich. She is a guest editor of gta papers, co-founder of the journal DELUS and co-organised the PhD summer school Tentacular Writing. Johanna has worked in architecture and art practices in the UK and Germany and taught at the Bartlett and Oxford School of Architecture on architecture and landscape architecture programs. She studied Architecture at the University of Hanover and IUAV Venice and holds a MArch Architecture degree (distinction, Bartlett Medal) from the Bartlett.

## Molly Anderson Fiero

### “Othering time: tuning in to more-than-human animals in the theory and practice of landscape architecture”

From silkworms to swallows, horses to molluscs, humans and deer, this doctoral thesis explores the relationship between more-than-human animals, time and landscape design in the theory and practice of landscape architecture in Europe from 1600s to today. Grounded in feminist territories of new materialism, the research focus lies in the overlapping folds of time, bodies, and territory.

The investigation takes root in a walk through Paris, retracing the landscape and its inhabitants as participants and archivists of complex spatial histories, the terraforming dynamics of our encounters with an animal other. Beyond the mononarratives of the Great Divide, it seeks to bear witness to the interweaving of human and more-than-human animal actants in the drawing of landscapes. The aim is not to form absolute visions of things or place. Rather the collection of juxtaposed encounters, perform as discrete glimpses into the spatial-temporal complexities of a landscape in becoming. As both producing and reproducing naturecultures, how can landscape architecture better compose with?

How can it help to rekindle an embodied knowledge of the immediacy, depth, and extent of our messy entanglement with other species?

#### Keywords:

Landscape architecture; animal temporalities; political ecology; bodies in time; affect

#### Bio:

Molly Anderson is an artist and landscape architect based in Geneva, Switzerland. Having completed a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Edinburgh, her creative practice focuses on site specific research into the political ecology of landscapes in the shadow of the anthro/capitalo-scene and in particular the aesthetics of this contemporary sensoria. She is currently a doctoral student at the University of Geneva and teaches at the landscape architecture department of the Haute école du paysage, d'ingénierie et d'architecture in Geneva Switzerland.

## Jere Kuzmanić

### “Urbanism as social ecology: Reconstructing the continuous influence of anarchist ideas on the history and present of urban planning”

To reconstruct the historical continuity of the major under-presented influence on urbanism - the anarchist roots of the urban planning movement - means to follow an evolution of understanding how built environment and access to resources shape and are shaped by collaborative social action and pursuit of autonomy – or in other words, understanding why do we build. The argument goes that built environment is made by political subjects who tend to employ mutual aid, self-initiative and direct action to achieve social reproduction, relative individual freedom, and balance sufficiency. History of anarchist influences further speaks of social practices, intellectual collaborations, utopian speculations, and everyday acts of subsistence when seeking intentionality in human-environment synthesis: to decentralize space-making by downscaling it to each one's essential need to control the environment. This (over)view re-frames urbanism as a different concept – a multitude of planning cultures in complex social ecology of the built environment.

#### Keywords:

Social ecology; planning cultures; anarchism; continuity; influence

#### Bio:

Jere Kuzmanić is a PhD candidate at Departament d'Urbanisme i Ordenacio del Territori - UPC, with FPU Spanish state scholarship support. His research focuses on the history of planning cultures from proto-ecological and 'from-below' perspectives and urbanism as social ecology. Publishes non-academic pieces in: eFlux, Critica Urbana, Le Monde Diplomatique.

## Christopher F. Julien

### “Thinking as environment”

Can we think knowledge practices as environmental agencies? Exploring this question troubles the purposiveness of agency (and design) as an a priori principle. Tied to classical notions of causation, self-referential understandings of agency perpetuate an ontological “zero-point” (Santiago Castro-Gomés 2021) that presumes environmental destruction to operate. Renegotiating the ‘arrow of agency’ as an environmental index might avoid this destructive assumption of originality and further localise the posthuman turn.

I will present my research in this direction, emphasising the third of three steps. (1) The continuity of Guattari’s concept of transversality—from its institutional origins to its boundary at thermodynamic irreversibility—provides a common ground for living knowledge practices. (2) The temporal dynamics implied by dissipative structures render deterministic correlation as sited co-relations. (3) This processual mode of relating is diffractively read through the land-based knowledge practices of Bawaka Country, constituting emergent performances of environmental agency.

**Keywords:**  
Response-ability; diffraction; transversality; irreversibility; indigenous geographies

**Bio:**  
Chris’ research into ecological governance combines new materialisms, ecological and decolonial thinking. He is spokesperson for Extinction Rebellion NL and works on urban ecology, has published in MATTER, More Posthuman Glossary and Krisis (forthcoming), and holds cum laude masters degrees in Cultural Analysis and in Conflict Studies & Human Rights.

## Ricardo Avella

### “Modernizing the Venezuelan Amazon - Rural housing as an instrument of Cold War era colonization”

My research addresses the colonization of the Venezuelan Amazon under the aegis of the Alliance for Progress, a foreign aid program launched by the Kennedy administration in 1961 as an attempt to counter the radicalizing effects of the Cuban revolution during the Cold War. The colonization of the Venezuelan Amazon had a dramatic impact on a region that had remained relatively untouched by colonization until the 1960s. It brought thousands of new inhabitants, shaped new ways of living, and set new patterns of urbanization that interfered with the forest’s biodiversity and indigenous peoples’ practices and economies. Agrarian reform and housing provision were important elements in this modernizing effort, but little is known on the role rural housing played in this territorial project. The work seeks to grasp how these nation-building efforts might stand at the base of the environmental and social justice struggles that dominate the region today.

**Keywords:**  
Amazonia; Colonization; Modernization; Indigenous Knowledge; Rural Housing

**Bio:**  
Ricardo holds a degree in architecture from the Universidad Central de Venezuela, and graduated from the European Post-Master in Urbanism at TU Delft, where he is now a doctoral candidate. He has done research on the spatial impact of resource extraction in the Venezuelan Amazon, both on human and non-human forms of life.



# SESSION TWO: Symbioses





## Víctor Muñoz Sanz

### “Cowborgs in the polder: how the design of farm buildings, animal bodies and technologies transformed Dutch dairy landscapes”

Automated and reproductive technologies have driven the transformation and growth of the Dutch dairy industry. Today, this sector is questioned for its adverse effect on ‘nature’. To better address environmental problems caused by farming, it is important to understand how the use of technology in this sector is affecting those places where food is produced. This transdisciplinary research study is examining the interactions between designed animals, humans, robots, data technologies, and farm architecture in the industrialized large-scale Dutch dairy landscapes, from 1992 to the nitrogen crisis. Ultimately, the project will broaden our conception of how technology and industrial capitalism shape the built environment.

#### Keywords:

Dairy industry and animal industrial complex; automation technologies; reproductive technologies; cows

#### Bio:

Víctor Muñoz Sanz is a Spanish-Mexican researcher and educator, currently an assistant professor of urban design at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of TU Delft. His work examines the design and socio-spatial implications of the past, present and future of work. He is the co-editor of *Automated Landscapes* (Nieuwe Instituut, 2023), *Roadside Picnics: Encounters with the Uncanny* (2022), *Habitat: Ecology Thinking in Architecture* (NAI010, 2020).

## Alina Paias & Catherine Koekoek

### “Sympoietic conditions for change”

At a time when (bio, social, technological) diversity is threatened, spatial designers have a key role to play in imagining and establishing the conditions for urgent change. Simultaneously, architectural practices are often complicit in and even reliant on exploitation, extraction and the suppression of difference. This double diagnosis is the point of departure for the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2024, themed Nature of Hope . What conditions are needed in architecture for the design of spaces and practices affording sympoietic and response-able action towards the crises of our time? In this talk we focus on the coordination of the CEDEC programme by Mayumi Watanabe in São Paulo. This project for building primary schools in the periphery of the city linked the material conditions for the production of architecture to experimental institutional forms. The integration of systems for fabrication and construction, graphic design, community outreach, and a pedagogical programme is here presented as an instance of sympoietic, response-able architecture.

#### Keywords:

Conditions; sympoiesis; response-ability; production of architecture; institutions

#### Bio:

Alina Paias is an architectural worker and independent researcher based in Rotterdam. Catherine Koekoek has a background in architecture and philosophy and is a PhD candidate at Erasmus School of Philosophy, Rotterdam. They are both part of the curatorial team for the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2024.



## Amina Chouairi

### “Venice in a lagoon: shifting perspectives in an ‘insoluble labyrinth’”

While wetlands are internationally recognised to play the most crucial role in the current climate crisis, their surface continues to decline, with conversion and loss being perpetuated in all parts of the world. The Venice Lagoon located in one of the most important climate hotspots, the Mediterranean basin follows the trend. To tackle such an urgent environmental crisis and inform innovative urbanisms and landscape designs, it is necessary to deconstruct and critically reform the way the Venice Lagoon is perceived, thought, and designed. By shifting time, space and method perspectives towards a more comprehensive and continuous understanding of a city in a landscape, the aim is to rethink the system beyond either the city or the lagoon, focus on the very present beyond pasts and futures, and design with nature beyond pure infrastructures and laws. To proceed with such a reckoning, the study of the bare agency the brackish marshes, represents the ignition point from which to rethink the Venice in a lagoon landscape.

#### Keywords:

Wetlands; socio-ecological relationships; deconstructing paradigms; Venice lagoon

#### Bio:

Amina Chouairi is a PhD student in Urbanism at Università IUAV di Venezia and holds a Master of Science in Landscape Architecture from Delft University of Technology. Since 2019, she has been researching and working on the Venice Lagoon complex transitional territory, exploring the debated relations among its cultures and natures.

## Gert van der Merwe

### “Water: Flow, Code and Stock - A rhizomatic genealogy of the Political Ecology in Namibia”

The research proposes a ‘politics of compassion’ literally meaning ‘to suffer with’ as a affirmative and generative theory to resist rhetoric of disaster, risk, and scarcity, which propagate capitalist exploitation, by shifting the discourse from scarcity to a conception of abundance. It utilizes a new materialist approach to build a non-linear genealogy (the value of origin and the origin of values, a differential from which values are derived) by following the affects of water throughout the arid Namibian landscape, to reconceptualize the political ecology through the Deleuze’s Flow, Code and Stock model to unpack interactions between diverging normative systems coexisting in a postcolonial context. The investigation aims to develop an understanding of the role of water in reciprocal interactions, building it up from the abiotic, to the biotic and finally to the cultural and political landscape in contemporary Namibia, where heterogeneous norms coexist and are intertwined.

#### Keywords:

‘Politics of compassion’; Milieu; Ubuntu; Political Ecology; Genealogy

#### Bio:

Gert grew up in Namibia before moving to South Africa where he graduated from the University of Pretoria (MProf. Arch.) in 2014 and worked until 2020, before returning to teach at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. He is currently pursuing a PhD at TU Delft.



## Maria-Dolores Heinrich

### “Becoming-with: Genealogising Collective Futures.”

The inspiration for the suggested pitch is my graduation project that approaches the ancestral and anthropomorphic relationship between human and soil by formulating a collective biography of a specific ecosystem. Of special interest is the method of transhuman genealogies that I developed for the biography, where each newly introduced actor is a reflection of the self, as conceiving a genealogy is considered becoming-with.

In the pitch I want to suggest this method as a trans-disciplinary educational tool that helps researchers formulate and embody critique. By co-creating a genealogy together with the participants of the masterclass in a quick exercise based on my own research, I want to test the limits and possibilities of speculation. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to think together and conceive a truly collective biography for a possible future.

Keywords:  
Genealogy; method; education;  
eco-feminism; speculation

Bio:  
Maria Heinrich is an architectural designer and researcher working for parties such as the Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam or MonU magazine. She received her B.A. from the TU Munich and her M.Sc. from the TU Delft in Summer 2023.

## Katerina Stavridi

### “The Subject of Rescue: Producing the Nation through Transnational Dog Rescue Mobilities”

Cities are reconceptualized as dense and heterogeneous contact zones of more-than-human companion species. But where do companion species come from and what kinds of material-semiotic knots do they produce along their way? Increasingly, in the European context, companion species are brought together through transnational dog-rescue networks, through which dogs from south-eastern Europe are ‘rescued’ and rehomed in cities of the European north. Focusing on these networks, this project aims to understand the role of companion species in the (re)production, enactment and contestation of national belonging, borders, and difference. I approach this objective ethnographically by following the relationships between humans, canines and their social and material environments as they move from rural to urban space, and from the periphery of EUrope to its centre. Drawing on feminist geopolitics, animal geographies and queer STS, this project will lead to a novel approach to transnational mobilities and migration studies through a more-than-human lens.

Keywords:  
Urban geography; nationalism; companion species; multispecies ethnography; EUrope; borders

Bio:  
Katerina Stavridi is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens. She has a background in Urban Studies (UvA) and Architecture (NTUA). Her research interests include more-than-human urban geographies, sensory urbanism and feminist methodologies that aim to destabilize ways of knowing bodies and space.





