

EWIS 2021 Workshop Proposal

Workshop Title

“Imagine all *the creatures*, sharing all the planet...”

The role of fantasy in imagining futures: Post-COVID-19 subjectivities and transformation of naturecultures

Conveners

Ayşem Mert (Stockholm University) and Katja Freistein (University of Duisburg-Essen)

1) Description of workshop topic and its relevance

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a global health crisis. Like any moment of shock and dislocation in history, the pandemic has made deep structural changes possible, both in global policy areas and in micropolitics. We do not know which one of these transformations will be maintained in the future, or if these changes will nudge the global political agenda towards a more sustainable and just world order. It is certain, however, that what is regarded as possible public policy, acceptable risk, or responsible behaviour has been transformed. The greatest fears and political desires of citizens have changed, and accordingly, what we expect from decision-making and hope for the future of our societies. The emergent imaginaries of the future and new fantasmatic orders connecting the global to the micropolitical will undoubtedly underlie the political changes in the coming years and should be systematically studied.

Accordingly, this workshop examines how fantasies shape post-COVID-19 futures, i.e. identities and relations (individual, social, environmental, international, cross-species, more-than-human), practices and imaginaries, or which fantasies transform or create new political imaginaries, social practices, standards, and routines. Different fantasies of various naturecultures imagine different futures after the pandemic, effectively changing ontological stances, epistemological preferences, political imaginaries and social practices. More even, fantasies empower or disempower specific modes of action. We aim to bring together scholars from different disciplines focusing on the role of fantasy in the imaginaries of future (posthuman) societies and subjectivities, particularly on the way we rethink naturecultures during (and possibly after) the global pandemic.

We use the concept of fantasy to explore the affective relationships that guide human experience and agency, providing orientation during crises. Following Glynos and Howarth (2007), the workshop highlights how fantasmatic elements in a discourse affectively ‘grip’ people by providing them with forms of identification, structuring their desires, and promising a future goodness that is better than the present. Beyond the logics approach, following Haraway, Tsing, and Braidotti, our goal is also to explore the role of fantasy in making action and agency possible, to study fluid identities and the making of human/non-human relations. While the contributions to the workshop can take different and innovative forms, we aim to produce a special issue after the workshop with a coherent set of papers that would cover some of the following:

- changing imaginaries of global cooperation and the world order (especially the practices, discourses and imaginaries of global environmental governance).
- how recovery, improvement, and social transformation are (re)imagined; including the ultimate post-COVID-19 sustainability goals.

- fantasies constructed within and against BLM, Fridays for the Future, and other popular movements
- political fantasies of nature: viruses, bodies, contact, mobility, movement, data and measurement, protection etc.
- fantasies of the Anthropocene which transforms other political imageries or introduce new ones.