

# Environmental *Identities*

*Environmental Identities* is a programme of public conversations, screenings and other online and offline events, in pursuit of a multi-layered understanding of the co-defining relation between self- and social identity and the natural environment. The sequence of events will promote a dialogue between cultural practitioners and researchers from the natural and the social sciences, around ways of construing our self- and social identities in a world increasingly marked by unsustainable and out-dated hegemonic notions of humanity, and by the ever-increasing processes of ecosystemic devastation instigated by these.

The unfolding changes brought upon us by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, spanning from individual behaviours to planetary conducts, have underlined that our common lives are inextricably linked to a more comprehensive ecosystem. The natural and the social sciences have long proven that we are physically, cognitively and emotionally connected to our surrounding environments. The acknowledgement of these findings leads us into directions that challenge the self/non-self, subject/object, nature/culture dichotomies that have characterized Western thought, and show us that a re-evaluation of our relation to the natural environment is inseparable from a readjustment of our own self-understanding as individuals and societies. In addition, the often-impassioned nature of environmental conflicts reiterate that they are tied with our sense of personal and social identity, further attesting that environmental breakdown is not only a techno-scientific battleground but also as an ontological one.

The current pandemic has also triggered a profound reassessment of the Jan van Eyck Academie's *modus operandi*, which occurs simultaneously to a shift in the Academy's visual identity. This new institutional identity expresses the Jan van Eyck's commitment in tackling climate change and environmental breakdown, by exploring the agency and civic significance of art, design and other cultural practices in relation to these processes. The impossibility of "business as usual" caused by the current pandemic, has not only underlined the urgency of the Academy's new commitment, but also brought the opportunity for a profounder reconsideration of the institutional identity beyond the visual and conceptual rebrand. *Environmental Identities* is also an exercise in understanding what this institutional shift in identity entails, and how it can prefigure and nurture modes of self- and social identity that motivate socio-environmental sustainability and equity.

# Environmental *Identities #1*

A conversation with Dr. Susan Clayton

16 June 2020, 16:00 (CEST)

The inaugural event of the Environmental Identities series was a conversation with Dr Susan Clayton exploring the notion of “environmental identity”. Dr Clayton shared her expertise as a conservation psychologist whose research focuses on the human relationship with nature, how it is socially constructed, and how it can be utilized to promote environmental concern. Throughout the conversation the notion of “environmental identity” was defined and discussed in relation to group identity, political and ideological affiliations, climate change, perceptions of social justice and inequity, essentialist conceptions of individual, gender, race, among other topics.

You can watch the video recording by clicking [here](#).

Bio:

Susan Clayton is Whitmore-Williams Professor of Psychology and chair of Psychology at the College of Wooster. She has written or edited six books, including most recently *Psychology and Climate Change* (2018; co-edited with Christie Manning). She co-authored the American Psychological Association (APA) reports on “Psychology and Global Climate Change” and “Psychological Impacts of Climate Change.” She is a lead author on the upcoming 6th assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Her Ph.D., from Yale University, is in social psychology. Susan is on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* and *Social Justice Research*, and is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Society for Environmental, Population, and Conservation Psychology (SEPCP), the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). She is a past president of both SEPCP and SPSSI.

# Environmental *Identities #2*

National Identity & Environmental Hostility

Online Screenings, 8-15 July 2020

Conversation, 15 July 2020, 16:00 <sup>(CEST)</sup>



To restore an ecosystem  
is always a choice.

# Environmental *Identities #2*

## National Identity & Environmental Hostility

Online Screenings, 8-15 July 2020

Conversation, 15 July 2020, 16:00 <sup>(CEST)</sup>

Following the conversation with social psychologist Dr. Susan Clayton, *Environmental Identities #2 - National Identity and Environmental Hostility* explored the notion of environmental identity in relation to the structures of nationalist and far-right ideologies and the understandings of the natural environment embedded in them.

*Environmental Identities #2 - National Identity and Environmental Hostility* started with a week-long online screening of the videos *Habitat 2190* (2019) by Hanna Rullmann & Faiza Ahmad Khan, and *Oysters for Naturalization* (2019) by Domenico Mangano & Marieke van Rooy. These works were the instigators and the basis for a public conversation that gathered their authors, alongside Dr. Bernhard Forchtner, editor of the book *The far right and the environment: politics, discourse and communication* (New York: Routledge, 2019) and Associate Professor and Director of Postgraduate Research at the School of Media, Communication and Sociology at University of Leicester.

The conversation explored how the connection between natural environment and social/national identity provides an arena for the inclusion and exclusion of certain bodies and subjectivities - both human and non-human - by traversing such topics as the ways in which political stances on environmental issues are conditioned by nationalist ideologies; the relation between the scientific discourse of nature and its preservation, and the nationalist discourse of the nation and its protection; the relation between the supposed threat of foreign species, and the perceived threat of foreign races and cultures; the “weaponization” of nature in Europe’s mechanisms of border control; climate denialism/skepticism and the defense of national sovereignty versus the transnational challenges of climate change, among others.

You can watch the video recording by clicking [here](#).

# Environmental *Identities #2*

## National Identity & Environmental Hostility

Online Screenings, 8-15 July 2020

Habitat 2190 by Hanna Rullmann & Faiza Ahmad Khan  
Oysters for Naturalization by Domenico Mangano &  
Marieke van Rooy

*Habitat 2190* (2019)

*Habitat 2190* follows the construction of the nature reserve Fort Vert at the site of the so-called 'Jungle', former migrant camp in Calais, France – addressing the ways in which an imagination of nature is weaponised in the governing of borders, interrogating the intersecting mobilities, rights and co-existence of human and non-human life. It reveals complex relations around how nature and the protection of rare species are regarded as an opportunity to make claims over territory, and juxtaposes the value placed in the protection of other species against the lack of care for certain groups of human beings in vulnerable positions. *Habitat 2190* was commissioned by the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) as part of the exhibition *Fragile Earth: seeds, weeds, plastic crust* in 2019, supported by the Elephant Trust.

*Oysters for Naturalization* (2019)

In this short film Domenico Mangano and Marieke van Rooy approach the Japanese oysters from the Dutch Wadden Sea (present in the Netherlands for several decades) with a surreal questionnaire. The artists ask them to give the correct answer to a series of multiple-choice questions that relate to how they should behave in relation to the flora and fauna in their immediate environment. The questions are inspired by the actual integration exam for immigrants who want to get Dutch citizenship. The starting point for this project is the analogy between the Japanese oyster and the economic migrants who both arrived in the Netherlands at the end of the 1960s and '70s. Both were meant to stay temporarily but remained. The Japanese oyster has now "supplanted" the Dutch oyster, however there is a recent experiment to make it possible for the original "Dutch" oyster to return to the Dutch seas. This film connects two social issues in the Netherlands and questions them in an ironic way. Domenico Mangano and Marieke van Rooy use a specific ecological issue – to what extent can you intervene to reduce the expansion of the exotic Asian oyster in the Dutch Wadden Sea? – as a metaphor for the integration issue, a focal point of Dutch politics since the eighties.

# Environmental *Identities #2*

## National Identity & Environmental Hostility

Conversation, 15 July 2020, 16:00 (CEST)

With Dr. Bernhard Forchtner

Conversation between Hanna Rullmann, Faiza Ahmad Khan, Domenico Mangano, Marieke van Rooy and Dr. Bernhard Forchtner. Mediated by the Jan van Eyck Academie's curator of public programme Bruno Alves de Almeida.

### Bios:

Dr. Bernhard Forchtner is Associate Professor and Director of Postgraduate Research at the School of Media, Communication and Sociology, University of Leicester. He has previously worked as a Marie Curie Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences, Humboldt University of Berlin, where he conducted a project on far-right discourses on the environment. Dr. Forchtner is a specialist on far-right activism, with an emphasis on environmentalist rhetoric by the far right, past and present. In particular, he has focused on how issues such as global warming and/or biodiversity are playing their part in far-right communication. He is also the editor of the book *The far right and the environment: politics, discourse and communication* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

Hanna Rullman is a London-based researcher and designer, developing a practice around questions of conservation, environmental policy, border ecologies and legal/political production of natures.

Faiza Ahmad Khan is an award-winning Indian documentary filmmaker and activist based in Mumbai.

They both graduated with an MA from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University of London in 2018.

Domenico Mangano (Palermo, Italy, 1976) & Marieke van Rooy (Weert, Netherlands, 1974) live and work in Amsterdam. The duo was formed in 2014 after Domenico Mangano's individual artistic career, which started in the late nineties. Marieke van Rooy has an academic background in political history of the built environment. Their work is characterised by a combination of research and artistic practice. The narrative approach is central to their projects. Micro stories, anthropology, political and architectural constructions of the social and research of the history of the local, forms the basis of their art. Mangano and Rooy combine archival research, participation and educational projects in their process and transform these into works of art consisting of film, spatial installations, photos, drawings, performances and publications.

jan van eyck  
academie

# Environmental *Identities #3*

Dinner in the Forest Garden

A performative event by Niina Tervo and Youngeun Sohn  
Online Streaming, 6 September, 2020



# Environmental *Identities #3*

## Dinner in the Forest Garden

A performative event by Niina Tervo and Youngeun Sohn  
Online Streaming, 6 September, 2020

*Dinner in the Forest Garden*, a performative event conceived by artists in residence Niina Tervo and Youngeun Sohn, took place in the Jan van Eyck Academie's garden and gathered a group of participants around a series of edible sculptures made by Niina Tervo. Their interactions, with the sculptures and each other, were filmed and live-streamed through a video-setting devised by Youngeun Sohn.

The experiencing of the edible sculptures outside, gives continuity to Tervo's interest in how the inside of our bodies relate to the outer-world. In the event, food is approached as a means to connect human bodies to the natural cycles of matter and energy, and as a link between the human brain and the intestines. The artist has been interested in scientific research on the nature of energy as a part of the human body and consciousness, and on the influence of the gut microbiome in brain chemistry and behavioral phenomena, thus affecting our thinking process and emotions. By allowing for the interaction with and the ingestion of her sculptures Tervo unsettles the prevailing body-mind dichotomy, and the understanding of oneself as a self-contained system.

The event's live-stream is part of Sohn's artistic intervention, which uses Zoom not only as a platform to stream the happening, but also as a video-making tool. The artist allows the sequence of streamed images to be defined by Zoom's standard configuration which automatically changes from camera to camera according to the different sounds it captures. The unpredictable stream of images, and the different perspectives it offers on the unfolding actions in the event, accentuate how our everyday activities are widely disseminated virtually, while their perception is strongly mediated by a set of algorithms and software.

Niina Tervo and Youngeun Sohn devised a framework for an open-ended event that untangled our modes and devices for perceiving, interacting and communicating with (human and non-human) others and with our surroundings. An event that also explored the tensions between the mundane and the performative, the scripted and the spontaneous, and between bodily interaction and virtual perception.

You can watch the video recording by clicking here.

*previous page\_picture by Youngeun Sohn*

jan van eyck  
academie

# Environmental *Identities #4*

Feminist Naturecultures

Online Screenings, 15-22 September 2020

Conversation, 22 September 2020, 16:00 <sup>(CEST)</sup>



# Environmental *Identities #4*

## Feminist Naturecultures

Online Screenings, 15-22 September 2020

Conversation, 22 September 2020, 16:00 <sup>(CEST)</sup>

The Jan van Eyck Academie invites you to *Environmental Identities #4 – Feminist Naturecultures*, a week-long online screening followed by a public conversation that explores the correlation between gender and the natural environment, particularly by looking at female subjectivity and drawing from feminist viewpoints.

The online screening features the short films *Another Awaiting Stone* (2019) by current Jan van Eyck Academie participant Kanthy Peng and *Who's Afraid of Ideology?* (2017-2019) by artist Marwa Arsanios. These works are the instigators for a public conversation that gathers their authors alongside Prof Dr Wendy Harcourt, professor of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development at the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University, the Hague.

Intertwining artistic practices and academic research, the programme looks at how the association between gender, environment, power, and knowledge permeate the lived relations, daily needs, and embodied interactions of women. Drawing from the film *Another Awaiting Stone*, Kanthy Peng presents her reflections on how East-Asian folklores have long served to shape a specific type of female identity through the connection between nature, culture, history and image production.

Image-making and the conventions of documentary portraiture are disrupted in *Who's Afraid of Ideology?* In this two-part film, Marwa Arsanios explores the lived experience of women in three war-torn places, their structures of self-governance and knowledge production, while unpacking the entanglement between ecology, feminism, gender struggle, social organization, nation-building and war.

In relation to these works, Prof Dr Wendy Harcourt reflects on the on-going debate within political ecology and feminist studies through the viewpoint of Feminist Political Ecology and shares her research on how gendered subjectivities, ideologies and identities are shaping our livelihoods and environments.

# Environmental *Identities #4*

## Feminist Naturecultures

Online Screenings, 15-22 September 2020

Another Awaiting Stone (2019) by Kanthy Peng

Who's Afraid of Ideology? (2017-2019) by Marwa Arsanios

### *Another Awaiting Stone (2018)*

The representative of the local office for Tourist Administration and his secretary go on a trip to find a potential touristic site on a barren mountain - an Awaiting Stone. The stone that they are looking for needs to resemble a gesture of a housewife anticipating her husband to come home. In the field of deadly silence, the secretary has to reenact her life as a woman - being trapped, gazed at, manipulated, and denied.

### *Who's Afraid of Ideology? (2017-2019)*

As an introduction, standing on a stony path, director Marwa Arsanios faces the camera and wonders: "What does it mean to belong to a place? What does it mean to "be here"? What does the word "nature" encompass? What does it imply when we say "we"? These political questions arise from experiments conducted by women in three war-torn places. First, in the mountains of Kurdistan, in early 2017, the guerrilla led by the Kurdish women's autonomist movement invites us to experience and consider space, plants, survival, ecology and economic battles in a different way. The process, so we are told, ensues from practical concerns: how do you set up an organic food production cycle? When does a tree need to be cut down? Then in Jinwar, literally the "place of women", a village in Rojava, Northern Syria, built by women for the exclusive use of women. And finally, in a cooperative in the Bekaa Valley, near the Syrian border, which has become a sanctuary-like community for refugees. In these communities, the issue of the reappropriation of the land and means of production and subsistence is paramount, and it creates a different landscape. These three eco-feminist strategies at work bring about self-governance, and the creation and transmission of knowledge. These fragile yet so precious experiments are like pages in an herbarium, featuring carefully collected and hand-drawn plants, arranged in the film like silent, up-front manifestos. (Nicolas Feodoroff)

# Environmental *Identities #4*

## Feminist Naturecultures

Conversation, 22 September 2020, 16:00 (CEST)

With Prof Dr Wendy Harcourt

Conversation between Kanthy Peng, Marwa Arsanios, and Prof Dr Wendy Harcourt. Mediated by the Jan van Eyck Academie's curator of public programme Bruno Alves de Almeida.

### Bios:

Prof Dr Wendy Harcourt is Professor of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development at the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University in The Hague. Wendy Harcourt joined the ISS in November 2011 after 23 years at the Society for International Development, Rome as Editor of the journal *Development* and Director of Programmes. She has edited 10 books and her monograph: *Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development* published by Zed Books in 2009, received the 2010 Feminist Women Studies Association Book Prize. She is series editor of both the *Palgrave Gender, Development and Social Change* and the ISS-Routledge Series on *Gender, Development and Sexuality*, a member of the International Governing Council of the Society for International Development as well as actively involved in gender and development journal boards and civil society networks. She is Coordinator of the Research Group on Civic Innovation, Chair of the ISS Institute Council as well as Coordinator of the EU H2020-MSCA-ITN-2017 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks (ITN) WEGO (Well-being, Ecology, Gender, and Community).

Kanthy Peng is an artist from China who works primarily with photography, video, and installation. She received her MFA degree from the Yale School of Art in 2019, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in the same year. She is an artist-in-residence in 2020-2021 at Jan van Eyck Academie.

Marwa Arsanios, born in Washington DC, USA, is an artist, filmmaker and researcher who reconsiders politics of the mid-twentieth century from a contemporary perspective, with a particular focus on gender relations, urbanism and industrialisation. She approaches research collaboratively and seeks to work across disciplines.