

THE EUROPEAN FORUM FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND THE
ENVIRONMENT

announces its 7th international conference

**“MYTH, RITUAL AND PRACTICE FOR THE AGE
OF ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHE”**

POTSDAM, 12TH-14TH MAY 2023

OPEN CALL

Issued on behalf of the conference committee

Sigurd Bergmann, NTNU Trondheim, Uppsala University

Radhika Borde, Charles University, Prague

Susannah Crockford, University of Exeter

Jeremy Kidwell, University of Birmingham

Todd LeVasseur, Yale National University Singapore College

Anders Melin, Malmö University

Abraham Ndûng'û, Chaplain, London Correctional Institution

Jonathan Schorsch, The University of Potsdam (Chair)

Tom Sverre Tomren, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

SCHEDULE

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| 18 July 2022 | Call opens |
| 31 Oct 2022 | Call closes |
| 15 Jan 2023 | Submission results announced |
| 15 Nov 2022 | Conference bookings open; accommodation information published |

All proposals should be submitted to Jonathan Schorsch (jschorsch@uni-potsdam.de) by email attachment. Please follow the detailed guidance below.

CONFERENCE THEME

Calls for truly ecological societies have grown increasingly urgent. While debate continues regarding what to call such approaches – Gaian, dark green, biocentric, more-than-human? – it also remains unclear what role, if any, religion can and should play in moving toward and grounding new ecological civilizations.

This conference will explore the many questions that arise from the apparent continuing philosophical and scientific indigestibility of mythology, ritual and practice. Ecological, cosmological or Gaia-logical mythology, ritual and practice has been recommended and concocted by activists, artists, and scholars as ways to address the environmental crisis, especially in industrial and post-industrial societies. Some argue that these modalities are or could be more persuasive than secular and/or rationalist analysis and critique. There is little agreement about whether an ecological society demands rituals and practices. From one perspective it can be said that contemporary scholarly analyses (Haraway, Latour, Stengers, Descola, Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Pantheologies*, etc.) comprise today's form of ecological myth. Some insist that ecological, cosmological or Gaian myth, rituals or practices be atheological (that is, metaphysical theology or theocentrism is inherently not deep-ecological or ecocentric) or posit a meaningful difference between the myths of "major religions" and "indigenous" cultures. In this view, ecological civilization seems to demand that contemporary societies "become indigenous" (James Clifford, David Chandler and Julian Reid, among others). Yet many ecological myths, practices and rituals draw on neither indigenous cultures or world religions, while world religions certainly offer ecologically-oriented approaches. Are there bases for considering or evaluating the skill or usefulness of ecological rituals, practices and myths? How have religious or spiritual environmentalists created ecological myths, rituals or practices? How might they? What artists, artistic works or modalities or works of popular culture stand as noteworthy examples? How have religious communities and individuals collaborated with thinking for the future and utilizing the past? How do scholars and practitioners alike navigate power-laden questions of appropriation, colonization, and privilege when addressing these matters?

Invited Presenters

Charlotte Du Cann, The Dark Mountain Project

Ronald Grimes (not yet confirmed)

Alastair McIntosh, human ecologist, writer, researcher and activist

Marko Pogačnik, artist (not yet confirmed)

Thinking about Pedagogy

In light of the conference theme, the conference committee welcomes relevant proposals and workshop ideas: How do we teach in the face of possible ecological collapse? How do we challenge the power structures in our host institutions and take seriously the implications of climate catastrophe? How might we approach our profession differently, from publishing to research to informed practice in the classroom to courses offered, if we imagine we are one of the final generations operating in a functional Academy? What would it take to be a “good elder,” with our teaching to our students, and being advocates for future lifeforms, within rigid bureaucracies wedded to disciplinary fragmentation and being a service feeder to petroculture? What might liberatory rituals of teaching look like, given the theme of the conference? This track invites proposals that speak to these questions, to empower participants in redesigning what education in the Anthropocene may look like, and for what purposes.

SHORT PAPERS

Short papers are invited on any aspect of the conference theme from delegates who will be attending the conference. Offers of short papers are welcome from established scholars, early career researchers, postgraduate students, as well as undergraduate students, and those with a postgraduate research interest in these topics, as well as artists, activists and practitioners.

Short papers will be presented throughout the conference in a series of parallel sessions. Short papers may be considered for publication in the book planned to come out of the conference. The book will not be conference proceedings, but an anthology featuring selected reworked and integrated chapters.

Abstracts (c. 200 words) of a paper to be delivered in a maximum of 20 minutes (followed by 20 minutes discussion), together with a short author bio (100 words) and contact information, should be sent to Jonathan Schorsch (jschorsch@uni-potsdam.de)

Prospective presenters should be aware of the diverse audience of this conference, and ensure that their papers are accessible to researchers from different fields and disciplines. This transdisciplinary ambition should be reflected in abstracts and proposals.

PANEL CONVERSATIONS

Invitations are invited for proposals for panel conversations on the conference theme. A proposal should indicate the topic, two or three critical questions to be addressed and provide a short abstract (c. 200 words). A panel proposal MUST include the names (and contact information) of those on the panel (between three and five persons).

The conference committee will assume that panel members listed in a proposal have agreed to be on the panel and will be registering to attend the conference. A slot for a panel will be no longer than 1.5 hours.

ROUND TABLE BOOK DISCUSSION

Invitations are invited for the nomination of a book, relevant to the conference theme, for round table discussion. The proposal should identify the book and briefly demonstrate (c. 100 words) the relevance of the book to the conference theme. A round table proposal MUST include the names and contacts of discussants (three or more).

The conference committee will assume that round table members listed in a proposal have agreed to be on the round table and will be registering to attend the conference. A slot for a round table will be no longer than 1 hour.

EXHIBIT

The conference committee welcomes proposals – from practitioners, artists and activists as well as scholars – for posters and the staging of visual presentations for an exhibition (e.g.: visual, musical, performative, videos, etc.) of diverse sorts. If you have an idea or proposal, please contact the conference chair Jonathan Schorsch (jschorsch@uni-potsdam.de)

BOOK LAUNCH

Nominations of a book to be launched at the conference are welcome. Nominations may come from an author/editor or publisher. Books should be in the public domain by the conference. Nominations to Jonathan Schorsch (jschorsch@uni-potsdam.de)

PLANNING AROUND COVID

We recognize that COVID is still an active issue and will update participants with any COVID-related changes that may occur.

While the conference is planned as an in-person event, we are hoping to make as much of it as possible accessible remotely as well.

For and on behalf of the Conference Committee

18 July 2022

[Conference website](#)

(to come soon; for now see <https://www.religion-environment.com/news-and-events>)