

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
PROTECTED AREAS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: EXPLORING THE
CHALLENGES OF NATURE CONSERVATION AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

OCTOBER 5 – 6, 2023

SOFIA, BULGARIA

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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ORGANIZER

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic
Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences



WITHIN THE FRAMEWORKS OF

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The loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural resources with which people have closely linked their way of life have been one of the global issues for at least several decades. That is why the political agenda of our time brings to the fore the expansion of the areas placed under different conservation regimes. To date, more than 15% of the earth's surface falls within the frames of protected natural areas. In many cases, those areas are not uninhabited by humans, what is more, the increase in protected areas in recent decades happens precisely by including places inhabited by humans and in close proximity to their settlements. In the age of the Anthropocene, when human impact is seen as a main cause of change in the surrounding world, it is important to study both the challenges and opportunities in managing protected areas and the needs and perspectives of the local communities.

Examples from different parts of the world show that the imposition of an institutional regime of conservation upon certain natural site is always accompanied by changes in land use rights and in the forms of resource consumption. For example, the inclusion within a protected area of territories historically used for hunting, gathering of wild plants, logging, grazing or farming limits or even prohibits these activities. On the other hand, opportunities and incentives for alternative economic and social activities are emerging. All this is related to significant transformations in the everyday life and livelihood of people whose settlements are located within or in close proximity to protected areas.

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Assist. Prof. Violeta Periklieva, Ph.D.

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Assist. Prof. Nacho Dimitrov, Ph.D.

Website of the conference: <https://protectedterritories.wordpress.com>

Panel 1. Traditional Environmental Uses, Conservation Challenges, and Local Resilience

Małgorzata Zofia Kowalska
malgorzata.kowalska@amu.edu.pl

Online

Institute of Anthropology and
Ethnology, Adam Mickiewicz
University in Poznań, Poland

More-than-Human Conservation

Abstract: I conduct engaged, transdisciplinary research in the Natura 2000 site in Central Poland with a particular focus on Charophytes and lakes with benthic stonewort meadows. Following Tim Ingold (2021), I argue that local understanding, knowledge, and links to the ecosystem are preconditions of a sustainable place. It is the relatedness and a sense of belonging that builds responsibility. Therefore, I challenge the understanding of nature conservation as expert-based environmental management and propose to think of a protected site as a meshwork of more-than-human “world-making projects” (Tsing 2022). The anthropologist's work focuses on reimagining (Strang 2021), not describing the place, and stirring up a conversation between natural scientists, conservation managers, and local communities. The overall goals of the project are to relocate humans within the ecosystem (Strang 2021) – and rethink future conservation and relation to nature.

Keywords: Benthic Stonewort Meadows, More-than-Human Sustainability, Ecological Anthropology, Transdisciplinary Research

Bio: I am a social anthropologist with an interest in ecological anthropology and collaboration with natural scientists. I work as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Anthropology at AMU, Poznań, and currently as a Research Fellow in the Biodiverse Anthropocene Program at the University of Oulu, Finland. My research in a nature conservation site in the Gnieźnieńskie Lakeland has been funded by the National Science Centre in Poland (NCN UMO-2021/43/D/HS3/02018).

“Conservation, Yes, but of What?” Tensions and Resistance around Traditional Environmental Uses in Europe

Abstract: This communication proposes to question the contemporary evolution of certain uses of the environment qualified as "traditional" within the European continent.

It is based on a long-term ethnographic survey (10 years), conducted in medium immersion within various local and indigenous European communities (in depth and multi-sited ethnography), which still practice uses such as gathering, hunting, fishing, or beekeeping.

During this survey, the question of the perpetuation of these uses was clearly raised by the local communities. In the face of various ongoing changes, whether political, socio-economic, or environmental, the transmission of these uses, and the knowledge derived from them, to future generations is now being questioned. The theme of Nature conservation is identified by certain actors in these communities as one of the contemporary changes that affect these uses, by restricting or even prohibiting them. Conversely, other actors take advantage of public conservation policies to conserve these uses in addition to the Nature they exploit.

Seeking to go beyond this sterile Nature/Culture dichotomy, this communication proposes to explore the diversity of the points of view collected, ranging from resistance and blockages to elements facilitating the implementation of a reasoned conservation of Nature including the sustainable uses of IPLCs.

This communication is particularly in line with the conceptual frameworks of critical analysis of Biocultural diversity and the study of Intangible cultural heritage (and specifically its subcategory “knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe”).

Keywords: Nature/Culture, European IPLCs, TEK and LEK, Ethnography, Heritage diversity

EA 4513 Centre de recherche Europes-Eurasie, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, Paris, France

IRN Apolimer, UMR 7266 Littoral, Environnement, Société, CNRS & La Rochelle université, France

Bio: Anatole DANTO is an environmental anthropologist. In the last ten years he worked with local European communities to understand their relationships to Nature, especially in coastal context. He practices a contemporary anthropology, based on the concepts of sustainability within communities of Northern part and overseas territories of Europe.

He conducts his research within the Research center Europes-Eurasia (Inalco, Paris) and the International research network Apolimer (La Rochelle university, France). He is member of the Ramsar convention Culture network and of the Working group ‘History of fish and fisheries’ of the International council for the exploration of the sea. He teaches anthropology and sustainability sciences for bachelor and master students for 6 years (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, Sciences Po Rennes, University of Western Brittany, ...).

Reconciling Conservation with Local Livelihoods: A Study in MM Hills Landscape, Karnataka, India

Abstract: Protected areas are crucial for preserving natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. However, creating protected areas can adversely affect local communities that depend on these resources for their livelihoods. To address this issue, the concept of conservation and local livelihood development (CLLD) has emerged, which aims to integrate conservation objectives with the socio-economic and ecological needs of local communities and is essential to protect ecosystems, species, and geodiversity features from human interference. There is a need for the conservation and preservation of natural resources, the impact of these areas on socio-ecology, and the rights of indigenous communities.

The research also highlights the challenges of managing protected areas without causing damage and addressing their increasing threat level. The research focuses on the Male Mahadeshwara (MM) hill landscape of Chamarajanagar in Karnataka, India, and its comprehensive network of protected areas (PA), using deliberative and participatory methodologies for environmental valuation and assessment to assess the social valuation of the region and provide opportunities for local livelihood. Studying various ways to empower locals with sustainable agricultural practices and non-timber forest products to reduce the overexploitation of forest resources.

The main aim is to conserve wildlife and habitats without neglecting human welfare. It highlights the critical role of these areas in promoting conservation and livelihood development through sustainable use and preservation of natural resources. The study looks at the essential parts of CLLD in protected areas, like how important it is for the community to be involved, how important it is to find sustainable ways to make a living, and how important it is to promote practices that are good for the environment. It also discusses the problems and benefits of implementing CLLD in protected areas, such as the need for enough money and support from institutions. It concludes that CLLD is essential for achieving long-term conservation goals while improving the well-being of local communities and that a participatory and integrated approach is necessary to achieve success.

Keywords: Conservation and Local Livelihood Development (CLLD), Protected Area (PA), Ecosystem, Natural Resources Management (NRM)

CEENR DEPARTMENT, INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE (ISEC), BANGALORE - 560072

Bio: Currently working as Research Scholar in the Department of CEENR at Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru. His areas of research interest lie in Natural Resource Management, Ecology and Environment and Environmental Impact Assessment. His Specializations are in Climate Change and Socio-Ecological Development. He has presented papers in national and international seminars and conferences and published in journals.

Priyadarsini Sinha
doel.sin@gmail.com
Jenia Mukherjee, PhD
jeniamukherjee@gmail.com

In-person

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, West Bengal, India

Neoliberal Entwined: An Enclosure of Ecological Commons through Forest Governance in Duars, North Bengal

Abstract: The British colonial forest policies and law-making processes in India were directed with the fundamental motive of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ causing marginalization of the forest-dwelling communities, gradually turning them into ecologically dispossessed. Duars, the sub-Himalayan savannah grassland spanning across 1790 sq. km, belonging to the Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts of West Bengal, India, presents the (yet undocumented trajectory of) colonial extractive capitalism reliant on a robust politico-legal apparatus that has penetrated deep into the roots, making Duars a contested space. The forest villages are inhabited by heterogenous ethnic communities including Rabbhas, Mechhs, Kochs and others being severely deprived of their rights, forming the ‘forest underclass’ – collectively subjugated and impoverished by the prevailing forestry institutions. Nonentitlement to policies, bureaucratic reluctance along with inadequacies are among the major impediments in the implementation of policies that led to contemporary socio-economic deprivations against the atrocities of the statecraft.

The contemporary debates and directions dotting enclosures of ecological commons and measures pertaining to ‘fortress conservation’ are but part of the unimpeded colonial legacy. With the enactment of arrays of Forest Rights Acts, there have been enclosures in the name of non-coexistence which led to the emergence and efflorescence of National Parks and Tiger Reserves in India, causing alienation of the forest dwellers. The world-renowned Gorumara National Park, Jaldapara National Park, Buxa Tiger Reserve, Duars are part of this ‘scientific forestry’ initiative. The contemporary neoliberal restructuring under the disguise of policies and laws provides political space for forest governance and forces of capital, bringing out the politico-economic entanglements. The politics of decentralised forest management are efforts to politicise forest community rights through new forms of authority, nonentitlements, deprivation, marginalisation and exclusion. Covering a wide temporal range along colonial and contemporary times and using the historical political ecology approach, this study demonstrates how adaptive governance can readdress policy implementation through knowledge coproduction involving engagement of social actors, as part of the qualitative design deployed through this research.

Keywords: Forest Rights Acts, Extractive Capitalism, Dispossession, Forest Governance, Duars

Bio:

Priyadarsini Sinha, a doctoral research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, she is focusing on extractive capitalism, resource politics, environmental governance and critical geography. She uses an interdisciplinary social science approach to work in forest governance's critical interface.

Jenia Mukherjee is Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur. Her research spans environmental history, political ecology and transdisciplinary water. As part of EU-India, SSHRC (Canada) and AHRC-ICHR funded projects, she is currently focusing on coastal livelihoods in deltaic Bengal. Jenia was awarded the Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship in 2010 and 2015 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia to conduct research on the chars of Bengal. She received the Carson Writing Fellowship (2018–19) for completing her book *Blue Infrastructures: natural history, political ecology and urban development in India* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2020).

Tran Hoai
tranhoai.vn@gmail.com
K. David Harrison, PhD

Online

“Who Eats the Forest?”: From “Our” to the “Protected” Forest and the Local Community’s Adaptations

Abstract: This paper explores two contrasting views of forests (and protected forests) in Vietnam. The first is the local ecological view, held by indigenous minority peoples who live near the forest, gather its resources, and regard it as a spiritual abode in their cosmology. Like many other ethnic groups in Vietnam, the Bahnar people in the Central Highlands have traditionally relied on the forest for subsistence, practicing swidden cultivation, hunting small mammals and birds, and gathering plants. Their cultures are rich in environmental intelligence and knowledge of managing forest resources. They also own sacred forests to maintain and create the social space where people practice and hand down customs, indigenous knowledge, taboos associated with particular forest trees or wild animals, and rituals for offering to forest gods. In contrast, the second view sees forests as a national resource to be managed and exploited. A state leader’s famous statement aptly summed up this: “Forests are gold.” This view of forests is ideological and policy-driven and is held by the government and various external stakeholders such as NGOs. The forest nationalization has recently restricted Bahnar’s access to the forests, which the government now defines as protected areas, and abandons swidden cultivation, hunting, collecting edible plants and medicine, etc. Our paper explores difficulties, contradictions, and conflicts that occur from the encounter of the two perspectives. It also demonstrates the practical resilience of the Bahnar community facing political, cultural, and environmental challenges to safeguard their connections with the forest together with their intergenerational ecological knowledge.

Keywords: Forest, Ecological Knowledge, Cosmology, Forest Nationalization, Protected Areas

School of Interdisciplinary, Vietnam National University Hanoi

Bio:

Hoai Tran received his Ph.D. from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in 2020. He is the author of *Doing Gong Culture: Heritage Politics and Performances in the Central Highlands of Vietnam*; (LIT-Verlag, 2021). Dr. Hoai Tran is currently a lecturer and researcher at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

Prof. Harrison earned his M.A. and PhD at Yale University. He is a National Geographic Society Explorer, a Fellow of the Explorer’s Club, a member of the Daylight Academy (Switzerland), and an honorary research associate at the New York Botanical Garden’s Center for Economic Botany. He used to work at Swarthmore College as Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Professor of Linguistics and Cognitive Science. Prof. Harrison is also a filmmaker. Throughout his career, and in his role as a National Geographic Explorer, Prof. Harrison has travelled the world to make films and write books on the topic of Endangered languages and Indigenous cultures. Some of his documentary films include the Emmy-nominated “The Linguists”, “One World, Many Voices: Endangered Languages and Cultural Heritage”, “Manx: Reviving a Language”; etc... His book “When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World’s Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge” (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007) has been translated into Arabic and Spanish.

Zlatina Bogdanova
zlatina_bogdanova@abv.bg

In-person

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Activism and Resistance of Mountain Communities between Certainties and Uncertainties

Abstract: Based on empirical research this paper will address one current issue: how people from small village communities in the Rhodope Mountains (Bulgaria) have united to take measures against the realization of private business interests and investments – the opening of quarries for the extraction of marble and ballast that would disrupt the established regimes of environmental protection in the region of the Middle Rhodopes - these are the protected areas included in the UNESCO biosphere reserve Červenata stena (Red wall) and the ecological network “Natura 2000”.

The ongoing research is focused on people’s strategies of coping with change and uncertainty such as protests and social resistance movements that mobilize public support through social, kinship and political networks. The following issues will be discussed in more detail: the emergence of new political, cultural, and ecological awareness of mountain communities fighting against the environmental exploitation of their territories; the role of the new inhabitants and their families in preserving local livelihoods and traditions, and the many forms of negotiation on how living together, including different visions and even conflicts on practices of resource management, sustainability, and heritage.

The analysis is based on an ethnographic study carried out in the villages of Červen, Dolnoslav, Gornoslav, Dobrostan and the town of Asenovgrad - the center of the local Municipality within the research project "Anthropology of Uncertainty"(2021-2024) supported by the Bulgarian Science Fund.

Keywords: Resistance, Social Movements, Uncertainty, Protected Areas

Bio: Dr. Zlatina Bogdanova is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum - BAS. Bogdanova has obtained her doctoral degree in ethnology from the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg after a successful defense of her thesis - Studying the Processes of Exclusion and Inclusion in Rural Bulgaria: the Significance of Kinship and Social Networks. She has earned a MA degree in Cultural Anthropology of Southeastern Europe from the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The topic of her Master's thesis is: Intercultural aspects of the youth short-term labour migration within the frameworks of the "Work and Travel" program. Bogdanova has published studies in the field of urban anthropology, cultural policies and heritage, creative industries and districts, tourism.

Pavjo Gjini
gjinied@hotmail.com
Diana Malaj
diana_malaj@hotmail.com

Online

University of Graz

Emerging Environmental Movements in Albania and their Vicissitudes. The Case of Zall-Gjoçaj

Abstract: Over the last decade, several environmental movements and campaigns have emerged in Albania, mediating new forms of politics. From the movement for the protection of Valbona Valley to the movement for the protection of the last wild river of Europe, Vjosa, organizations, local communities, and several other actors have been using various means to oppose investment projects, namely constructions of hydropower plants - perceived as harmful to the environment and detrimental to the local communities. The case of Zall-Gjoçaj is one of these instances, with the local community being a central actor in building a movement against the construction and in solidarity with the protection of Lurë-Mali i Dejës National Park. Deprived of the water flowing through the streams of Flim river, a river vital for the support of their way of life, the local community managed over the last five years to organize a series of actions using different means and methods to oppose the construction of a hydropower plant inside the National Park of Lurë-Mali i Dejës. Their actions include protests, guerrilla actions, lawsuits, campaigns, and online activities to support their cause. Our lecture will present the development of the trajectory of this movement while highlighting the impediments that it has faced over the last couple of years: the way the local municipality treated the local community, the reactions of the private company, the response of central authorities, courts decisions, and procedure and also the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the developing of the movement. We aim to bring forward the dynamics accompanying these new types of emerging environmental movements and their intersections with different authorities.

Keywords: Social Movements, Political Ecology, Southeastern Europe, Zall-Gjoçaj, Hydropower Plants

Bio: Pavjo Gjini, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Graz. He is a research and political activist mainly interested in the intersections between ideology, history and politics. He holds a B.A in Political Science and an M.A in Political Theory, and is currently following his Ph.D. in Law and Politics at Graz University (Austria). He appreciates interdisciplinary work aiming at an understanding of the entanglements between ideology, historical processes and politics of knowledge. His academic interests cover topics of really existing socialism, social movements and contemporary higher education dynamics. He holds seminars inside and outside academic settings on the history of political thought, academic writing and political sociology. He has also co-edited and translated in Albanian a number of books and articles in critical theory. Diana Malaj, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Graz. She is an activist and researcher. She has conducted her bachelor's and master's studies in Law at the University of Tirana and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Law & Politics at the University of Graz. She is one of the founders of the collective ATA (Them) in the city of Kamza and also the editor of the local newspaper founded by the collective, Nyje.al. Together with other activists she engages with various disciplines and practices, from law to ethnography, activism to journalism, and essay writing to artistic performances. Her work has been focused on political, environmental, and human rights issues concerning marginalized and discriminated communities.

Mariana Scholzova
mariana.scholzova@gmail.com

In-person

Freelance social researcher in the UK

Wild Plastics: Creating Lasting Relationships with Nature through Cleaning of the Norwegian Coastline

Abstract: With the impending threat of the climate crisis, more academic attention is being focused on the environmental efforts of communities and initiatives. This paper examines the role of the relationships of environmental volunteers to the landscape as the main motivator for their participation in conservative and protective activities. It uses plastic as the framing concept that determines and question's anthropological themes related to the nature culture dichotomy, the study of waste and discarding practices, and environmental stewardship. Research was conducted through ethnographic participation along the Norwegian coastline while working as a volunteer for In the Same Boat, a non-governmental organization focusing on remote coastal beach clean-up. This thesis concludes that participation in environmental volunteering with the organisation helps build intimate relationships with the landscape that in turn aids in the motivation of performing the hard physical labour of collecting plastic waste. Moreover, the effects of volunteer experience spills over into the volunteers' perceptions of the environment and their individual relationships to the landscape. It explores their activity as an imprint on the landscape, be it positive, and dives deep into the issue of nature making through the process of cleaning. Plastic acts as the underlying agent motivating and facilitating this change.

Keywords: Environment, Plastic Pollution, Norway, Landscape Ethnography, Nature-Making

Bio: Mariana Scholzova holds a MSc in Cultural and Social Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam and is currently working as a freelance social researcher in the UK. With a main focus on landscape ethnography and environmental anthropology, she explores the intricate relationship between humans and their natural environment. Her work delves into local contexts to better understand human connections to nature, particularly in the context of the climate crisis. By uncovering the cultural and social dimensions of these connections, Ms Scholzova aims to contribute to the advancement of human responses to environmental challenges. Her expertise in landscape ethnography and environmental anthropology aligns with the theme of the conference, and she looks forward to sharing insights and engaging in meaningful discussions.

Anna Batzeli
abatze13@gmail.com

Online

Microhistory and Micro-Stories from the Life in a National Park

Abstract: Samaria is one of the National Parks of Greece. It is located in the southwest Crete and was included in the National-Parks-list in 1962. Samaria is also part of the Natura 2000 and Biosphere (UNESCO) networks. The proposed paper will present the micro-stories of the people who were living in Samaria, prior and shortly after its declaration as a National Park. In particular, the paper will discuss local people's understating of "nature" and of the need to protect it, as well as, their initiatives to protect it. The paper will also present how the inclusion of Samaria in the National-Parks-list affected local people's lives and the local economy, as well as, its impact to state policies and the urban planning. Finally, it will provide an overview of Samaria's microhistory, attempting to explain why Samaria is an interesting case study. To this aim, it should be noted, that Samaria is not only known about its National Park. Samaria, due to its mountainous landscape, provided a safe refuge to local revolutionaries during different periods of history: from the Venetian to the Ottoman rule, and from World War II to the Civil War. Thus, Samaria is also considered as "shelter of life and bastion of freedom" by the local people.

Keywords: Samaria National Park; Crete, Greece

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Bio: Anna Batzeli completed her PhD in History at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Prior obtaining her PhD, she was involved in several EU- and national-funded research projects, among them the Marie Curie Action project 'Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue'. Following the completion of her PhD studies, Anna participated as a researcher in several H2020 projects and conducted archival research with the support of various organisations. Today she is working as a postdoctoral researcher on different case-studies in the Balkan region and in Greece and as senior bid manager/proposal writer for EU funding. She is also a co-editor of the Society of Romanian Studies' academic Newsletter, member of the EC of the International Committee for the History of Technology and Archives Portal Europe Ambassador. Anna has published two books and several articles and papers. Her publications can be found at:
<https://auth.academia.edu/AnnaBatzeli>.

Valerie Braun

Valerie.Braun@uibk.ac.at

Annemarie Polderman

Maria.Polderman@oeaw.ac.at

Online

High Mountain Nature Park Zillertal Alps: How the Five Functions of the Tyrolean Nature Parks Contribute to Sustainable Development?

Abstract: The creation of the five Tyrolean Nature Parks was preceded by controversy, as actors had conflicting demands for the areas such as use for hydropower, as skiing areas or as traffic routes. Local people in response founded associations in order to obtain a protected area designation, with support of NGOs such as the Alpine Club and the WWF. The initiatives for the establishment were either supported by the federal government of Tyrol and / or by the mayors in the regions. An exception is the Karwendel Nature Park, which was already designated as a protected area ("Banngebiet") in 1928 and, after a turbulent history, was designated as a nature park in 2009.

The High Mountain Nature Park Zillertal Alps in Tyrol has been a regional protected area since 1991. A few years later, it was declared a "nature park" by the Tyrolean provincial government. The designation as a nature park not only underlines the traditional tasks of a protected area to preserve valuable and unique alpine natural and cultural landscapes, but also highlights five valuable and interrelated functions of the area, namely recreation, ecotourism, environmental education, research and regional development. These five functions form the basis for the creation of a model region for sustainable development.

This presentation will give an overview of how the parks in Tyrol came into being and then zoom in on the Zillertal Alps High Mountain Nature Park, focusing on the milestones that have been reached and the changes that have taken place. The governance structures of the park will be highlighted and the different functions of the nature park presented. The synergies between the five mentioned functions will be shown and the related challenges for the nature park management and the stakeholders will be discussed.

Keywords: None

Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences
Innrain 25, 3. Stock, 6020 Innsbruck, Österreich

Bio:

Valerie Braun works at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research and is co-editor of *eco.mont*. She holds a PhD in ecophysiology of alpine plants from the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Due to her many years of work with protected areas in mountain regions, she is interested in the designation of protected areas in Austria and their anchoring in society.

Annemarie Polderman has a PhD in human geography from the Ohio State University (USA) and is a post-doc and project manager at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences in Innsbruck. She is part of the institute's research groups "Coupled Human Landscape Systems" and "Man and Environment, Settlements". She is currently involved in different Austrian and European projects focussing on disaster risk reduction and resilient mountain communities. Her main interests are transdisciplinary approaches, qualitative methods, DRR and socio-ecological systems, transformation processes from a geographical perspective, and (feminist) political ecology.

Dessislava Dimitrova¹
dessidim3010@gmail.com,
Sofia Kostadinova-Ilkova²
Teodora Ivanova¹
1Kremena Gocheva¹

In-person

¹Institute of Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Research, BAS
²Rila National Park Directorate

Belasitsa Mountain – where the Interest of People and Nature Come Together

Abstract: Belasitsa Nature Park was established in 2007 with the active participation of local communities and stakeholders who believed that protected areas provide opportunities rather than for local sustainable economic development. This positive attitude resulted in a number of well-maintained human-nature activities:

- Maintenance and promotion of nature heritage as a business opportunity, e.g. gathering of chestnuts, herbs and greens from the mountain; creation of 10 thematic routes (e.g., about the chestnut, the butterflies and flowers, the woodpeckers, etc.) and an annual three-day "Winter Belasitsa" tour.
- Promotion of local cultural heritage by organizing the annual Chestnut Festival (since 2007) that attracts ca. 2,000 visitors and involves ca. 50 participants from the local communities and invited guests and Terra Madre Belasitsa – a gathering of stakeholders from Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia (in 2013 and 2022). Since 2019 the Podgorie chapter of the Slow Food movement promotes and valorizes the food heritage of local communities.
- Engaging different age groups of wider public by the Park Directorate (e.g., annual hobby course in herbalism in May; children activities in the Park's visitors' centre and along the routes in the park (ca. 1000 children per year)) and the local communities.

The human-nature interactions increasingly attract sustainable tourism companies which consolidates and motivates the local communities and stakeholders to cherish and to actively participate in the maintenance of Belasitsa Nature Park. They are also a foundation for establishing a Long-term socio-ecological research (LTSER) platform in Belasitsa as part of the national Long-term ecosystem research infrastructure.

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Keywords: Belasitsa Nature Park, Human-Nature Interactions, Local Communities, Sustainable Tourism, Socio-Ecological Research

Bio: Dessislava Dimitrova is a botanist whose main topics of research are food plants, gastronomic traditions, valorization of traditional knowledge for sustainable local development. Since 2004 she is the coordinator of Slow Food in Bulgaria which gives socio-ecological impact of her work.

Teodora Ivanova is a biotechnologist with a PhD in botany, and currently works on conservation and valorization of plant diversity especially food and medicinal plants, combining interdisciplinary field and laboratory methods.

Sofia Kostadinova-Ilkova is a biologist who participated in the establishment of Belasitsa Nature Park and was its biodiversity expert until 2022. She established the Slow Food Podgorie chapter and together with the remaining authors has impelented many local activities. Currently she works at Rila National Park Directorate but maintains activities with local communities in Podgorie.

Kremena Gocheva is a PhD researcher in ecology with focus on human-nature interactions, including ecosystem services and socio-ecological research. In her work she applies the Whole System approach to holistically study the ecosystem structure and functions.

Protected Area of Rupite, Bulgaria: Construction of a Landscape

Abstract: By examining the different layers and the role of the related actors, this study aims at revealing the ways in which the local people view the locality of Rupite in Southwest Bulgaria and in which the landscape is constructed. The construction of Rupite as a landscape and a tourist destination happens mainly from the bottom up, through separate initiatives of different actors, and not following a certain vision and development plan by the responsible institutions. Rupite is being constructed as a multi-layered landscape of sacred, cultural, historical and natural significance, on which different actors draw to develop various forms of tourism: religious, cultural and historical, spa. The inextricable connection, which was built between the image of the prophetess Vanga and Rupite, leads to thinking about the locality as an extremely sacred place. It is Vanga and the sacrality that form the main layer of the landscape. The rest of the elements (cultural, historical and natural) characterizing the landscape, on the one hand, serve as an additional “evidence” of the sacrality, and on the other, win recognition by means of the image of Vanga. Each actor related to Rupite constructs the place in a specific manner. However, all of them use one main mechanism and draw symbolic capital (and thus legitimize their positions and activities, even though being often contradictory) from one main source – the image of Vanga.

Keywords: Cultural and Historical Heritage, Landscape Construction, Legitimization, Nature, Prophetess Vanga, Protected Area, Rupite, Sacrality, Tourism

Acknowledgement: The research was conducted within the scope of the project “Life in Protected Zones and Areas: Challenges, Conflicts, Benefits”, supported by the National Science Fund of Bulgaria, Contract No. КП-06-H40/12

Bio: Violeta Periklieva holds a PhD in ethnology (Popular Religion in the Balkans – Traditional Patterns and Contemporary Practices, 2014) and works as an assistant professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She has good fieldwork experience among various ethnic, religious and local communities in Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo. Her main academic interest is in the field of Balkan ethnology, anthropology of religion, identity, border studies, migration and mobility, cultural heritage. She worked on several projects within which she studied various problems related to migration from the city to the village (including cross-border), educational and labour migration, sociocultural dimensions of life in border regions, identity construction in the context of symbolic and state borders, the impact of different nature conservation regimes on local communities and landscape. The results of her work are presented at many international scientific forums and in peer-reviewed publications. In 2013, she received the Youngest Scientist Award “Ivan Evstratiev Geshov” of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the field of Cultural and Historical Heritage and National Identity.

Asya Kozhuharova

asya.kozhuharova@gmail.com

Elina Yankova-Tsvetkova

Vladimir Vladimirov

Marina Stanilova

In-person

Department of Plant and Fungal Diversity and Resources, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

Seed Viability and Germination in Two *Swertia* Species of High Conservation Concern in the Bulgarian Flora

Abstract: Two species of the genus *Swertia* occur in the high mountains of Bulgaria: the glacial relicts *S. punctata* Baumg and *S. perennis* L. They are included in the Red Data Book of the Republic of Bulgaria as “critically endangered” and “endangered” species respectively, and protected by the national Biodiversity Act. Both species are therefore of great interest for in vitro propagation as a means of their ex situ conservation. Seed viability and germination were studied to evaluate the reproductive capacity of the taxa. Seeds were collected from one *S. perennis* and two *S. punctata* Bulgarian populations in autumn 2022. Their viability was assessed by tetrazolium test, hundred seeds per population. Low seed viability usual for many rare species was established only for the Gorni Lom population of *S. punctata* (25%). Despite the high seed viability found for the Chiprovtsi population of *S. punctata* (82%) and the Rila Mt. population of *S. perennis* (76%), no germination was noted either in vivo in Petri dishes on wet paper or in vitro on MS medium. To overcome possible seed dormancy, 100 seeds were refrigerated at 10 °C for a month, but the problem persisted. Only a few out of 150 seeds germinated after 2-week stratification in a freezer at a very low temperature of –18 °C, which simulated winter conditions in the mountains. Additional methods would be applied to improve seed germination which is a prerequisite to obtain sufficient material for the in vitro propagation.

Keywords: Biodiversity Protection, Glacial Relicts, Endangered Species, Seed Dormancy

Acknowledgement: This work was partially supported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science under the National Research Programme “Young scientists and postdoctoral students” approved by PMC 206/07.04.22 r.

Bio: I completed my higher education in Sofia University, in 2013, and I obtained my Master’s degree of “Medicinal and aromatic plants” at University of Plovdiv. Since 2015, I have been working as a young scientist in the Biotechnology Laboratory of Medicinal Plants of the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at BAS. In the laboratory, I developed my MSc thesis, entitled: “In vitro propagation of *Valeriana officinalis* L.”. Currently, I’m a young researcher with completed experimental research of my PhD thesis, with forthcoming defence of the dissertation. The topic of my PhD-thesis is: “Biotechnological approach for conservation and cultivation of licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* L., Fabaceae)”. I have participated in 8 scientific projects (I’m the project leader of 3 of them, as a young scientist). I’m a co-author of 6 publications, 2 of them with ISI IF and SJR. I have participated in 8 international and national forums in Bulgaria and abroad.

Panel 4. Unveiling Heritage and Landscape

Irene Martí Gil

irenemagi@gmail.com,

imart23@lsu.edu

Online

Independent researcher

Archaeological Resources in Guatemala: The Vibrancy of Artifacts

Abstract: The traditional Maya cosmovision conceives archaeological artifacts and long-ago-abandoned structures as “regalos del patrón,” or gifts that have been passed down by the ancestors for the community to use. As such, the indigenous populations of Guatemala regard antiquities and prehistorical and historical vestiges as any other resource readily available in the forest, like wood, plants, water, stone, or animals. Consequently, to local communities, the extraction, manipulation, usage, and/or repurposing of ancient artifacts (practices commonly known as archaeological looting) are no different from logging or hunter-gathering.

Given the ontological equivalence between natural and cultural assets in the traditional worldviews, I address the challenges of managing heritage resources in Guatemala. First, I analyze the core similarities between natural and cultural assets: they are key for the formation and development of humanity, they can be limited and finite resources, and they are menaced by external forces and stressors. Then, I compare the initiatives set in place by the government and local authorities to protect the diversity and richness of those assets. Finally, I propose to develop a more sustainable, viable, and inclusive heritage management plan that (1) is based on the material vibrancy of archaeological artifacts and the natural, symbolic, social, and financial capital attached to them, and (2) is meant to prioritize the aliveness of cultural material and honor the local knowledge, beliefs, and practices.

Keywords: Looting, Huecheria, Heritage Management, Vibrancy, Living Maya

Bio: v Originally from Barcelona (Spain), Dr. Irene Martí Gil obtained her bachelor's degree in Archaeology at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain), having pursued an academic exchange at Université Paris-Sorbonne IV (Paris, France), and graduated from Escuela de Liderazgo Universitario-Universidad Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid, Spain). She earned a master's degree in Cultural Heritage from University College London (London, United Kingdom) in 2017 and a doctoral degree from the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, USA) in 2023. Her field of research is focused on archaeological looting and antiquities trafficking from an interdisciplinary (legal, archaeological, ethnographic, and linguistic) perspective.

Vihra Barova
barov@abv.bg

In-person

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

History and Nature in Protected Territories

Abstract: Recent debates in the field of wildlife conservation come down to challenge the modernist view of culture and nature as strictly separated. It is suggested that such a division is external to local communities and does not correspond to their understanding of nature (and culture) based on relations of reciprocity. The history of the half-ruined, half-hidden and half-forgotten monuments in protected forested areas, that were defined during socialism as "historic places", and today predefined as "characteristic landscape" is a telling example of the study of biography of the landscape. In a sense, the "historic places" can also be seen as access points to protected territories that provoke many different conversations with the local residents. The attitude towards these places does not directly determine the attitude towards the protected territories, but it can give a certain perspective to the problem.

It is concluded that the local community, taking into account all the voices within it, has not yet made a definitive decision about the final development of the landscapes/places (legacy of the socialist period), in which the memory of actual events, as well as the sense of local identity, are intertwined. The biography of the landscape in the region is marked by different, sometimes contradictory, ideological and aesthetic processes - afforestation, clearing, planting, building (of monuments), "shaping and beautification", "farming", privatization, conservation. However, if we accept that a clear division between culture and nature cannot exist, we will find out that the knowledge, memory and identity of local people in protected areas and territories do not change radically, despite national and supranational policies.

Keywords: Nature, Conservation, Protected Territories, Historical Places, Landscape

Acknowledgement: The research was conducted within the scope of the project "Life in Protected Zones and Areas: Challenges, Conflicts, Benefits", supported by the National Science Fund of Bulgaria, Contract No. КП-06-H40/12

Bio: Dr. Vihra Barova is associate professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She is working in the field of social and cultural anthropology. Her main interests include youth culture, intercultural communication, social networks, environmental anthropology.

(Re)Inventing Local Cuisine: A Case Study on Healthy Food and Use of Local Ingredients

Abstract: Proposed paper is based on a research carried out in the first half of 2021, in the context of a larger research project focused on the inventory of Romanian food heritage. Mainly, it will capitalize a series of interviews conducted in some villages situated within the West of Romania, in the Banat region. These discussions draw attention to a particular subject which at the time the documentation was done did not represent a specific focus of the research. Altogether, these interviews draw attention on the growing interest to integrate in the local cuisine some ingredients or cooking techniques considered mandatory for a healthy lifestyle understood by the local communities as components of human well-being.

Thus, current paper aims to analyze the way in which the interviewed persons relate to these topics, considering that the research was carried out in villages located in the vicinity of several protected areas. It was precisely this geographical location that determined in recent years the increase frequency in preparing certain dishes or in using modern culinary techniques which overlap the traditional ones, which lead to the creation of a particular culinary landscape under the influence of cultural and tourist policies that have contributed in recent years to reshaping attitudes towards the commons and their use.

Keywords: Local Ingredients; Food Heritage; Healthy Food; Well-Being; (Re)Inventing Tradition(s)

Bio: Diana Mihuț is a research assistant within the Department of Romanian Studies at the West University of Timișoara and member of the RHeA (Research Center for Heritage and Cultural Anthropology) research group. She has carried out field research in rural communities from cross-border Banat region, with focus on regional intangible heritage and its capitalization. Since 2020 she has been part of the research team that conducted specific Romanian food heritage related research. She has published articles and book chapters that capitalize the results of her research and has experience in implementing non-reimbursable research projects focused on the identification and capitalization of the regional cultural heritage.

October 6, 2023 (Friday)

Panel 5. Wetlands, Conservation, and Search of Sustainability

Lalatendu Keshari Das

lkdas@hs.iitr.ac.in

Online

Reformed Bird Hunters in a Watery Wonderland: Wildlife Conservation, Ecotourism and Environmental Subjectivity in Odisha, India

Abstract: Resource-dependent communities have long been associated as caretakers of their environment. But what turns them into conservationists? Scholarly works on environmental subjectivity and subject formations show that individuals and groups have unique perspectives and experiences that influence their attitude and behaviour towards environment. Resource-dependent communities may care for their environment, but their relationship is mediated by the contingencies of social, economic and political factors. Meanwhile, ecotourism has been projected as part of alternative livelihood practices for sustainable environmental governance in the Global South. It is claimed that ecotourism not only disrupts the existing governance mechanisms but also productively contributes in good governance and management practices. Drawing on fieldwork in the Chilika Lake, India, and using a political ecology framework, this article attempts to understand the situated experiences of individual fishers/ reformed bird hunters and how they negotiate with the broader environmental discourses on conservation and ecotourism. Owing to different reasons, these bird hunters gave up poaching rare migratory birds to sell in the market and instead are now offering their services as boat drivers, tourist guides and ecotourist operators in their respective village sites. The paper concludes by elaborating on the situatedness of different environmental subjectivities that underline tourism encounters and the embodiment of diverse environmental subjects.

Keywords: Environmental Subjectivities; Political Ecology; Alternative Sustainable Livelihood; Tourism Encounters; Chilika Lake

Assistant Professor of Sociology
H-507, Department of Humanities
and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology,
Roorkee
Uttarakhand- 247 667

Bio: Lalatendu is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Indian Indian Technology Roorkee. Hailing from the coastal region of Odisha, Lalatendu has studied in Jharkhand, New Delhi and received his MA, MPhil and PhD from the University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. In his doctoral research, Lalatendu has proposed the idea that in order to understand capitalist development in India, understanding the specific regional social- economic and political dimensions are crucial. Primarily forwarding his theoretical interventions by conducting intensive fieldwork, Lalatendu's work articulates three debates- Marxist debate on capitalist development, political subjectivity, and ecology. Through this, Lalatendu tries to understand issues ranging from social movements, agrarian change, fisheries, and social and environmental justice. In terms of teaching, Lalatendu is interested in teaching- Sociology of Development, Critical Agrarian Studies, Political Ecology, Sociality and Social Movements in Contemporary India, and Understanding India's Informal Sector.

Anna Antonova¹

Anna.Antonova@rcc.lmu.de

Gloriya Marinova²

Diyana Kostovska²

Radostina Tzenova²

In-person

¹Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society / LMU Munich

²Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

Regimes of Value: The Role of Nature Conservation in Empowering Communities for Alternative Ecological Livelihoods in the Atanasovsko Lake Protected Area, Bulgaria

Abstract: Against the backdrop of tourism-related over-construction, nature conservation has acquired an important societal value on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. For many, it concerns not only environmentalist goals but also models of citizenship and policy-making (Antonova and van Dam, 2022). Defenders of existing protected areas, like citizen initiatives and NGOs, increasingly look for ways to shift the coastline's dominant economic models in ways that could re-center the role of protected areas in local communities' lives.

In this context, the Atanasovsko lake lagoon near Burgas presents a unique case study. The lake offers a potential alternative model for development akin to Gibson-Graham and Miller's definition of ecological economic livelihoods (2015). Salt production in the lagoon helps maintain the ecosystem features protected under both national and Natura 2000 legislation; meanwhile, various byproducts of the industry help support alternative imaginaries for both tourism and the life of local communities. Yet the protected area's ecosystem and the salt-making industry remain under continuous pressure from surrounding urbanization and tourism development plans.

In this paper, we present preliminary observations from our Transition Coastal Lab in the Atanasovsko lake - part of the wider EmpowerUs Horizon Europe consortium - which seeks to empower local coastal communities in finding alternative regimes of value and ecological livelihoods on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

Keywords: Coastal Communities; Conservation; Ecological Livelihoods; Bulgarian Black Sea; Atanasovsko Lake

Bio: Dr. Anna Antonova works at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at LMU Munich as director of environmental humanities development. She is Co-I and the academic lead for the Bulgarian Black Sea Transition Coastal Laboratory in the three-year Horizon Europe consortium EmpowerUs. Her research focuses on social and environmental change in the contemporary European context, particularly in coastal landscapes, and examines the relationship between societal transformations and environmental governance in the EU. Anna was previously a Marie Skłodowska-Curie research fellow as part of the ENHANCE network at the University of Leeds, where she wrote her dissertation on the conflicting narratives about environment and society emerging from the Yorkshire North Sea and Bulgarian Black Sea coastlines.

Desislava Pileva

desislava.pileva@iefem.bas.bg

Ivaylo Markov

ivaylo.markov@iefem.bas.bg

In-person

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Human-Environment Dynamics and Search of Sustainability in the Village of Ezerets, Bulgaria

Abstract: The establishment of institutional control, particularly within the realm of conservation, over a given landscape invariably triggers alterations in land use rights and resource utilization patterns. Such changes ripple through the economic and cultural practices of the local population, fostering an environment of uncertainty. Human activities significantly influence the landscape, while the environment itself sets conditions that shape how locals secure their livelihoods. People's attitudes toward natural resources evolve over time, influenced by national and global environmental concepts and movements, leading to transformations in local practices as they seek sustainable lifestyles. The study focuses on Ezerets, Bulgaria, exploring the roles of the Lake Shabla and the Black Sea coast in local life over eight decades. Factors like political shifts, conservation efforts, and socio-ecological conditions redefine the significance of these natural areas.

Keywords: Nature Protection, Environmental Change, Rural Communities, Local Practices, Landscape Transformations

Acknowledgement: The research was conducted within the scope of the project “Life in Protected Zones and Areas: Challenges, Conflicts, Benefits”, supported by the National Science Fund of Bulgaria, Contract No. КП-06-H40/12

Bio: Desislava Pileva is a PhD in Ethnology. She is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Among her recent research interests are contemporary development of rural areas in Bulgaria under the influence of new urban settlers (Bulgarians and foreigners), rural entrepreneur activities (economic, social and ecological), and eco and rural tourism.

Ivaylo Markov holds a PhD in Ethnology. He works as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He is the head of the research project “Life in Protected Zones and Areas: Challenges, Conflicts, Benefits”. In its frames, Ivaylo endeavours to study relations between nature protection, human well-being and local development in Bulgarian rural regions. Some of his earlier studies were also referring broadly to these topics – he was interested in the ways of conceptualizing local natural resources and cultural traditions as “heritage” and elements of local cultural identity, and the integration of these concepts into local and regional (incl. cross-border) development projects, especially in the sphere of rural and ecotourism.

Rakina Bara, Local Community and Preservation of a Unique Geological Heritage

Abstract: Rakina bara is a lake about 20 km from the center of Belgrade (Serbia). It represents an exceptional phenomenon as the only natural karst lake on the territory of the city. Until 2019, it was left to decay and the natural processes of the pond areas decline. Since 2019, the local community has started to deal with its revitalization and improvement. The citizens' association that launched the action, in 2022 received the highest recognition of the city of Belgrade for its undertaking, and the residents of the suburb where Rakina Bara is located, received a lake that represents a specific biodiversity niche within the urban environment. The initiative represents a DIY principle of action, and its success owes to a specific set of circumstances defined by the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

The presentation aims to show the cultural and demographic processes that led to the deterioration of the lake, and then it aims to present the initiative of the local community that organized itself, gathered the necessary knowledge and resources, to finally implement the actions in the process of restoring the lake and life within it. The intention of the presentation is to place the revitalization of the Rakina bara in the context of the affirmation of environmental activism in Serbia and to show possible ways of action and activities. On the example of lake Rakina Bara, we can observe the possibilities of action of the local community on limited areas. Likewise, it is possible to show the limitations of that community in meeting the institutions and their legal frameworks. The existing regulations for placing sites under state protection are complex and rigorous. The example of Rakina Bara shows that these practices are often a limiting factor that leaves certain natural entities to the carelessness of society and the misuse of private investors and capital.

Keywords: Rakina Bara, Revitalization, Activism, Conservation, Protection

Bio: I received my doctorate at the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 2019. My dominant research topics are anthropology of science, contemporary religiosity, political use of media and semiotics of mythology. I am an active member of the Eco-patrol Sremčica association, which is responsible for the revitalization of Rakina bara lake. I am the winner of the Award of the City of Belgrade "Despot Stefan Lazarevic" for environmental protection. Also, I am the author of the book "Cosmologic: contextualisation of popular cosmology" and several scientific articles dealing with topics related to religion, popular culture and anthropological interpretations of contemporary cosmology.

Ivelina Eftimova

ivelina_eftimova@yahoo.com

In-person

The University of Shumen

Kalimok – Brushlen Protected Area – Ecological Restoration and Conflicting Agendas

Abstract: Kalmok - Brushlen area – a former swamps, after the construction of the dykes along the banks of the Danube in the middle of the last century turned into agricultural lands and state fisheries – today is the largest protected area in Bulgaria. As part of the project for the restoration of wetlands along the Lower Danube, the Kalimok marsh within the boundaries of the Kalimok - Brushlen protected area (actions are being taken to restore the marshes and wetlands. This includes flooding of lands (on state lands), construction of sluices, canals, protective dikes and access roads to control flooding, optimized capture of biogenic elements, restoration of biodiversity.

The report focuses on the conflicting agendas of conservationists implementing and supporting the conservation measures and the local population who disagree with it. I explain the mechanisms of the conflict – one that is generalizable worldwide – and reflect on the possible theoretical models based on this research. This paper intends to contribute to an environmental anthropology based on ethnographic materials from Eastern Europe.

This presentation is based on ethnographic work in the area, on secondary literature and on published materials and reports.

Keywords: Ecological Restoration, Wetlands, Danube, Kalimok – Brushlen Protected Area

Bio: Assoc. Prof. Ivelina Eftimova, is a PhD. She is a Associated Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Shumen, 115 Universitetska str., 9700 Shumen, Bulgaria.

She is a lecturer in ethnology and cultural anthropology. Main field of interests: aging, environment anthropology. Ivelina is a participant in the project “Contested Waterway. Governance and Ecology on the Lower Danube, 1800–2018”, funded by the Leibniz Association (2020–2023).

Sophia Nicolov
sophianicolov@gmail.com

In-person

University of Leeds, UK

A Tale of Whales and Fish: The Rise of Whale Watching on North Yorkshire Coastline in the Twenty-First Century

Abstract: In this paper, I focus on the entanglements between coastal communities, marine wildlife, local industry, and environmental protections on England's North Yorkshire coast. Since the early 2000s, this region has been the site of small scale, formal and informal whale-watching activities which emerged in response to three key factors. Firstly, the increase in minke whales and bottlenose dolphins in the region in the last two decades. Secondly, anti-whaling and other environmental movements catalysing a paradigm shift in attitudes towards whales. Thirdly, socio-economic conditions have shifted as North Yorkshire's fishing industry declined from the late twentieth century in response to over-exploitation, and the introduction of regional and international quotas, regulations and protections. Tourism is now the major economy, and wildlife-watching is a growing area. Be it fishing, whaling, mining, and now tourism, coastal communities in North Yorkshire have adapted to changing conditions and economies for centuries, drawing on existing skills and infrastructure. Some fishermen have responded to recent challenges by diversifying to offer alternative experiences, including whale- and wildlife-watching trips which apply local, lived knowledge and experiences to generate new forms of encounter. This brings alternative income routes, offers the public opportunities to encounter and learn about cetaceans in UK waters, and feeds key sightings data to NGOs. While acknowledging existing and potential issues, including mounting tourism pressures, loss of traditional livelihoods, and wildlife disturbance, I put forward that whale-watching offers economic benefits that draw on existing maritime skills and heritage, encourages public engagement, and contributes to species and ecosystem protections.

Keywords: Whales, Whale-Watching, Tourism, Environmental History, Blue Humanities

Bio: Sophia Nicolov is an environmental historian exploring the entwined histories of humans and whales, particularly the afterlives of whales and other cetacean strandings. Her research focuses on cultural responses to strandings, the tangible and intangible legacies of whaling and colonialism, extinction and recovery narratives, and past and present threats to ocean ecosystems. While rooted in environmental history, her research also takes a broader interdisciplinary blue humanities approach. She completed her PhD at the University of Leeds (2021), which focused on gray whale strandings in the Pacific Northwest. Her most recent role was as Postdoctoral Research Fellow on the AHRC-funded Charismatic Encounters project at the University of Leeds, UK, in partnership with the World Cetacean Alliance, which explored the role of whaling and whale-watching in the coastal heritage of Yorkshire.

Svetoslava Toncheva

svetahet@abv.bg

In-person

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Bottom-Up Initiatives for Facilitating Brown Bear Conservation in Bulgaria: the Case of Small-Scale Ecotourism

Abstract: Ecotourism has been widely advocated as a strategy for sustainable development integrating biodiversity conservation (Weaver and Lawton 2007; Honey 2008). Its promotion is frequently grounded in the premise that economic benefits will encourage local people to protect what they receive value from' (Honey 2008: 162), yet multiple cases demonstrate how ecotourism often results, on the contrary, in imposing western ideas and representations or functioning as a tool for political control (see e.g., Duffy 2002; Honey 2008; Fletcher 2009). In particular, the promised economic benefits of ecotourism involvement have been described as representative of a sustainable development discourse that reframes lively nature as a passive environment containing valuable capital to be sustained (Escobar 1996). The presentation critically engages with these questions through a case of human- brown bear coexistence in the Rodopi mountains (Yagodina-Trigrad area) of Bulgaria, demonstrating how small-scale ecotourism around the bears, originated as local initiative, can facilitate the protected species' conservation due to diverse operational, ecological and cultural specifics.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Brown Bear Conservation, Protected Species, Bulgaria

Bio: Svetoslava Toncheva is associate professor in the Comparative Folklore Studies Department of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies in the Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on human-nonhuman interactions, convivial conservation, multispecies ethnography and large carnivores.

Atanaska Stancheva
atanaska.stancheva@gmail.com

In-person

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Environmentalism and/or Developmentalism? Local Entrepreneurs Perceptions about Linking Economic Development and Nature Conservation

Abstract: Bulgaria is one of the European countries with richest biodiversity. To conserve it the state has built a network of national protected areas and included the country in the European ecological network NATURA 2000. In attempts to create vital example for sustainable local development Bulgarian NGOs demonstrate that protected areas are not prohibited for any human activities, but can be prerequisite for such development. The idea became a main mission of one particular project, managed by several NGOs. It wishes to show that protected areas could be guarantee for the establishment of a successful model for local people, for business and for the environment. The paper will explore whether the project achieves its aims, are there clashes between cultural models of developmentalism and environmentalism, what social impact protected areas have on local entrepreneurs and what are their perceptions about linking nature conservation and economic development.

The analysis will follow Kottak's understanding of new ecological anthropology about recognizing pervasive linkages and concomitant flows of people, technologies, images, and information, and to acknowledging the impact of differential power and status in the postmodern world on local entities (Kottak 1999). It is based also on his assumption of ethnoecological clashes between cultural models of developmentalism and environmentalism. The paper will present different perspectives – both to entrepreneurs who are in the project network and to those who are not.

Keywords: Environmentalism, Developmentalism, Nature Conservation, NGOs, Protected Areas

Acknowledgement: The research was conducted within the scope of the project "Life in Protected Zones and Areas: Challenges, Conflicts, Benefits", supported by the National Science Fund of Bulgaria, Contract No. КП-06-H40/12

Bio: Atanaska Stancheva works as assistant professor at Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 2017 she defended PhD thesis titled *Environmental movements in post-socialist Bulgaria. Cultural practices and civic engagement* which was a contribution to the great debate on the impact of the human activities on the environment. It explores three environmental movements which attempt to solve some current environmental problems to reduce the ecological footprint in the environment by living in harmony with nature and implementing new forms of production, distribution and consumption of food. Her research interests include also sustainable development in rural areas and its ecological, economic and social dimensions; post-productivist transition in rural areas and its forms; and strategies of entrepreneurs in building sustainable rural livelihoods.

Jane Hibbert-Nicolov
janenicolov@aol.com

In-person

Former Places: Emptiness, Landscape Change and Ecological Futures

Abstract: The two major agrarian reforms of the 1950s and 1990s have had a profound effect on the Bulgarian landscape and rural life and identity. If the first transformation initiated flight from the land and growing urbanisation, the second accelerated those tendencies. One phenomenon has been the abandonment of settlements and previously cultivated land, particularly in marginal regions. Illustrative cases include the Vidin, Gramada and Kula areas of the North-West, Strandja in the South-East and mountainous areas including Plana and Vitosha adjacent to Sofia. This raises questions of what could and should be preserved or, conversely, be submitted to re-wilding. At the same time, awareness across Europe of the threat to traditional landscapes is central to both the idea of protected areas and of change through abandonment and emptiness.

Places overtaken by nature where boundaries between human settlement and natural processes blur, are now the subject of an archaeology of the recent past where decay is revelatory of cultural history. While the notion 'protected places' suggests the exclusion of certain human activity, abandonment and re-wilding complements that process by extending areas of ecological return. Intense interest in recreating wilderness is manifesting elsewhere in Southern Europe, notably in Spain where the same centrifugal forces of urbanisation have depopulated significant parts of the countryside. This points the way to new forms of ecological tourism and positive environmental outcomes replacing the melancholy of emptiness.

Keywords: Landscape, Ecology, Abandonment, Re-Wilding, Preservation

MPhil/Doctoral researcher,
Department of History, Classics and
Archaeology
Birkbeck College, University of
London

Bio: After graduating from Cambridge University with a degree in Modern and Medieval Languages, I worked as a team member on an Oxford University project preparing an economic history of Eastern Europe, led by Professor Michael Kaser, (St. Antony's College). Subsequently, up to 1989, I held posts in industry, working and travelling extensively in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. After a period in teaching, I was awarded an MA in European History at Birkbeck College, University of London. My dissertation focussed on the 1960s Bulgarian novel *Vreme Razdelno* by Anton Donchev and its exploration of identity through the relationship with landscape, nature and territory at a time of major transformation of traditional rural life. Currently I am an MPhil/Doctoral researcher at Birkbeck College, London. The working title for my thesis is 'Land of no Return: Collectivisation and De-collectivisation of Agriculture and the Bulgarian Village'.

The Significance of Traditional Farming Practices in the Conservation of Biocultural Landscape - a Case Study of Wetlands in Biebrza National Park, Poland

Abstract: The Biebrza National Park represents one of the largest wetland ecosystems in Central Europe. The area is internationally recognised for its biocultural landscape, dominated by the semi-natural habitats (floodplain mires and fen meadows). The unique ecosystems have been formed through the traditional wetland use and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of local communities over recent centuries. However, social, economic, political and ecological changes over the last 50 years in the area have altered wetland management and consequently their biodiversity and TEK. In particular, wetland use abandonment has threatened those ecosystems, whereas the implementation of the EU agri-environmental scheme (AES) subsidy system has emerged as the main expectation for the reintroduction of use.

The present study aimed to analyse implications of those two drivers of wetland use changes on TEK and biodiversity conservation in the Biebrza NP. For this purpose, GIS analyses of the area were performed based on satellite and aerial photographs from the last decades. Subsequently, ethnoecological interviews were conducted with the local community on vegetation, landscape and traditional hay management practices on wetlands. Then the current use of the wetlands defined mainly by AESs was analysed on the basis of semi-structured interviews and data from agricultural agency and referred to the reconstructed traditional one.

Traditional farming practices embedded in TEK were identified as crucial for biodiversity conservation. However, it was found that first, TEK is eradicated among younger farmers and second, traditional practices are poorly integrated in AES system shaping to large extent the current wetland use. Therefore, a number of recommendations for improving the social-ecological system in this threatened biocultural landscape were proposed.

Keywords: Wetland Use Changes, Traditional Agriculture, Protected Area, Ethnoecology, Agri-Environmental Schemes

Bio: Dr. Joanna Sucholas studied biology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and herbalism at Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Poland). She received her PhD (Dr. Rer. Nat.) from Regensburg University (Germany). She conducted ethnobiological studies on wetland conservation, traditional ecological knowledge, agricultural system and urban marketplaces. She worked in a scientific project researching European systems of sourcing medicinal plants for commercial purposes. Currently, she is developing her own agroecological project with a focus on education and sustainable farming.

Joanna Mroczkowska

joanna.mroczkowska12@gmail.com

Online

Institute of Archaeology and
Ethnology, Polish Academy of
Sciences

“Nature Stopped Cooperating”. The Nature – Chemicalness Opposition in Polish Agrarian Communities

Abstract: The basic dichotomy functioning in the farmer’s communities in Eastern Poland is the opposition of naturalness and ‘chemical’. This duality affects the relationship between the farmer and the surrounding world (natural environment, nature). At the same time, along with changes, such as the introduction of GMO crops, EU regulations, system changes, these metaphors relating to the relationship between human and the environment become tools for articulating and experiencing one's (farmer's) identity.

I aim to show that identity is based on a specific attitude towards nature and as well as, being formed in opposition to products from the world over which the farmer has less influence - a world of cities, shops, trade, and thus what is associated with artificiality and chemicals. These two metaphors are the starting point for creating subsequent levels of logical structures, the expression and practice of which translates into local bonds, etc.

Based on extended ethnographic research, I attempt to analyze how these nature-chemistry discourses provide fascinating means of protecting older and more familiar cultural practices, gender relations and social intimacy, and of redefining these activities and beliefs to fit within the dynamic economy.

Keywords: None

Bio: Joanna Mroczkowska, PhD in social anthropology, is an ethnographer interested in food and agriculture anthropology, postsocialism, memory, gender studies. Has conducted research in Poland, Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan. Chief Editor of academic journal *Etnografia Polska*, employed at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences.

Conserving Autochthonous Livestock: Pastoralism and More-than-Human Heritage in the Balkan Mountains

Abstract: This paper explores the history and the present of caring for autochthonous breeds of cattle in the Serbian of the Balkan mountains. In socialist Yugoslavia, industrialization of agriculture meant amelioration of the so called “unproductive” old races, by inbreeding the local pramenka types of sheep with Spanish merino. But the newly introduced hybrids turned to be unfit for the mountainous climates, which accelerated the descent of peasants into towns and the ultimate depopulation of the Stara planina. Today, a small group of new cattle breeders near the town of Pirot and Dimitrovgrad tries to conserve the old breeds such as Balkan donkey, pirotska pramenka, and the buš bovine. They see such conservation as not only entrepreneurial but a total endeavour of restoring an entire inheritance of relations seen as at the brink of dying out – the devastated mountain pastures, the disappearing biodiversity, the forgotten pastoralist knowledge and the Šop culture (one conceived as a Balkan medley between the national identities of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia). This faithful return, however, is ever obstructed by increasing lack of state subsidies for autochthonous breeds, as well as the arrival of large energocapital, who eyes the local pastures as neat location for river dams and solar panels. And as Stara planina is becoming a natural park, same sights are in competition between ecotourist investments and neo-pastoralists. By comparing historical data on ameliorisation of pramenka sheep in the 1960s with my ethnography of contemporary efforts to revive it, I ask how deciding whose life should be nourished and whose left to expire runs through competing economic agendas, embodied local histories, and other-than-human bodies in their own right.

Keywords: Pastoralism; Heritage; Multispecies Relations; Conservation; Biodiversity

Bio: Ivan Rajković is a social anthropologist and University Assistant Postdoc at the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna. In his work, Ivan focuses on the politics and poetics of exchange in and after Yugoslavia – whether between workers and their companies, householders and livestock, or the living and dead. In his previous PhD project (University of Manchester, 2015), he focused on the long duree of the “social question” in Yugoslav car factory Zastava, and the articulations of gift, work and debt that occurred in and after socialism. His current research focuses on ecopopulist universality and inheritances of life in the Balkan mountains’ ageing abodes, particularly in relation to the contestation of energy investments and attempts to revive the local pastoralist practices seen as on the brink of both human depopulation and nonhuman extinction.

Ecological Protection of Indigenous Communities in India: A Case Study of Agriculture and Crop-Conservation by Adivasi Women in Jharkhand

Abstract: Ecofeminism seeks to construct a base of domination between flora and fauna and genders, thereby, creating a state of “conflict”. The underlying principles build critiques of the development models distinguished by high levels of disparities and inequalities due to the subjugation of women, minorities of all forms, children, nature and its components. Most of the models are designed on the long-lived principles of patriarchy. Trade and men become superior to nature and women respectively which leads to an overall change of societies at all levels. At all times, both nature and women have been exploited and epitomised as figurines of motherhood, obedience, homemaking and care, thereby, living their lives to look after the males and children of their families. The unequal models may have led to “widespread economic development” in some developing countries, having many long-lasting effects to it. Their unfettered growth has contributed to the rising disparities because of unequal distribution of resources between men and women and the services rendered to us by nature and women remain unvalued, which, in turn, cannot continue for long. It is during this time that the eco-feminist approach comes into action to bridge the prevailing gaps and to “reconcile” man with nature.

Many forms of eco-feminism in India trace their origins to nature-worship which has been an ancient practice, especially by the indigenous communities in different states (especially the Adivasis of Jharkhand). It is perceived that indigenous women of Jharkhand have had long standing relationships with nature and, therefore, practise a religion which calls for nature worship which has passed on to generations over centuries. Tribal festivals like Sarhul are celebrated by both men and women from the tribal communities with great enthusiasm in Jharkhand to pay tribute to the Mother Earth and all its elements (trees, animals and birds) that have been providing with food, water, clothing and shelter. The state of Jharkhand is popularly known to house 30 percent of India’s forest cover and natural resources form the basis of existence of the indigenous communities. Carved out of the state of Bihar in the year 2000, Jharkhand (Jhari means bushes and Khand means land tract) possesses plethora of fauna and flora. Consequently, it has attracted commercial interests in the name of “local development and employment generation” ever since India was subject to the

Bio: Aditi Basu is an independent researcher. She has completed her Masters in Political Science from Jamshedpur Women's College, India. Her research interests include Indian Foreign Policy, International Relations, Feminist Power Politics, Soft Power Diplomacy and Climate Diplomacy. Prior to this, she has presented her papers in different conferences and workshops in USA, Canada, Serbia, Croatia and South Africa on India's cultural importance and climate initiatives in influencing its foreign policy. She will be presenting her papers on India's Renewable Energy Politics in Bangkok, Thailand in June. Her latest paper on India’s space diplomacy has been selected for presentation at the Transplanetary Ecologies Workshop by the Centre for Outer Space Studies, University College London (UK).

British colonial rule. These have led to the exploitation of natural resources and tribal women specifically. Herein the rhetoric of eco-feminism and anthropocentrism emerges when the roles of women in defending their environment are highlighted. In an essentially-patriarchal society, women in Jharkhand have now organised themselves into civil society groups to “expose and dismantle” the oppression of women and nature in the 21st century globalised world.

Hence, the paper explores the sustainability debates of “women, environment and development” in 21st century with special reference to the roles of Adivasi communities of Jharkhand in crop conservation like wheat, bajra and trees like Sal and Mahua. It delves into their roles towards environment conservation and sustainability according to their traditions using indigenous practices.

Research Questions

The research analyses the following questions:

1. How have women agriculturalists contributed to crops' and forests' conservation in Jharkhand? How has seeds/crops/forest conservation contributed to sustainability in Adivasis' lives?
2. What are the changes noticed in indigenous communities practising agriculture with women becoming self-reliant economically?

Methodology

The research is a case study analysis. It uses an inductive method to analyse the role of women in ensuring sustainability through agriculture in Jharkhand. A socio-economic approach has been used to analyse the patriarchal constructs of indigenous communities in Jharkhand. Qualitative research has been conducted through newspapers, journals, interviews and video recordings.

Keywords: *Adivasi*, Agriculture, Eco-Feminism, Employment, Sustainability

Hafiz O. Ramon-Yusuf
hafiz.ramony@gmx.co.uk

Online

Crisis in Conservation: Assessing the Threat of Insurgent Activities to Biodiversity and Local Livelihoods in the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex

Abstract: This research highlights the crisis resulting from the activities of insurgent groups in the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex, and its detrimental effects on nature conservation efforts and the wellbeing of local people. Drawing upon primary documentary sources, this qualitative analysis examines the multifaceted impacts of insurgent activities on the complex and its surrounding communities.

Since 2018, Insurgent groups: Katiba Ansarul Islam and Katiba Serma have been operating in W National Park of the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex, a transboundary protected area between Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger. These groups have been engaging in various illicit activities, including poaching, illegal resource extraction, and wildlife trafficking. These activities not only pose a direct threat to the biodiversity of the area but also undermine the conservation efforts aimed at protecting the complex's unique ecosystems.

Furthermore, insurgent activities contribute to habitat destruction, deforestation, and the displacement of local populations. This leads to environmental degradation and compromises the sustainable use of natural resources by the local communities, who depend on them for their livelihoods.

Managing this crisis necessitates a comprehensive approach that combines security measures to tackle insurgency, strengthened law enforcement to combat illegal activities, and community engagement strategies to empower and involve local communities in conservation efforts. This research finds that collaborative efforts between governments, conservation organizations, and local communities are essential to mitigate the impacts of insurgent activities, preserve biodiversity, and enhance the overall wellbeing of the region.

Keywords: Crisis, Nature Conservation, Insurgent Groups, Local Livelihoods, Biodiversity

C/O Postgraduate Centre,
Limkokwing University Of Creative
Technology,
1, Jalan Teknokrat 1/1, Cyberjaya,
63000 Cyberjaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Bio: Hafiz Ramon-Yusuf is a researcher and academic primarily focused on crises, conflict resolution and climate facets of development studies. He received his B.Sc. (hons) in International Studies in 2014 and in 2016, He earned a Master of Arts in International Conflict Analysis from the University of Kent, Canterbury. Hafiz is currently a Ph.D. Student researching Crisis Management at the postgraduate centre of Limkokwing University of Creative Technology. He is currently researching survival strategies of third world countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research project aims to investigate the survival strategies adopted by third world countries in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the interplay between crises, poverty. And sustainability.

Emily Chrystie¹

Emily.Chrystie@edu.fh-kaernten.ac.at

Marta Korchemlyuk²

Marta.Korchemlyuk@edu.fh-kaernten.ac.at

Elisabeth Wiegele³

E.Wiegele@fh-kaernten.at

Online

Implementation of the Nature for Peace Concept to Support Protected Areas Through Multilateral Thematic Based Partnerships and Project Based Cooperation

Abstract: Armed conflicts have devastating effects on the environment, contribute disproportionately to carbon emissions, and negatively affect community resilience to climate change. Conflict causes degradation to ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services, the restoration of which can be a lengthy process. Early impact assessments and rapid response actions in the aftermath of conflict are essential for establishing baseline datasets and facilitating successful recovery. However, the one-way flow of external resources is not always sufficient to achieve the targeted results. Partnership building and the involvement of the local population are essential for the restoration of natural ecosystems, and the mutual exchange of support between different protected areas. The Nature for Peace concept brings together rapid response and long-term methods to help raise awareness and empower people to protect and restore their remaining natural capital.

The Nature for Peace concept aims to help empower people affected by armed conflicts by accompanying them in their rehabilitation process. This concept is carried out in protected areas, drawing on the healing mental health effects of natural environments. During this communities are empowered to protect and care for their natural environment. Sharing this knowledge is essential to enable the restoration of affected natural environments and support to affected communities. To achieve this, developing partnerships for project delivery and knowledge exchange is essential. Two partnerships are presented here and their relevance to the Nature for Peace concept evaluated: multi-lateral thematic cooperation, and project-based partnerships.

Keywords: Nature, Armed Conflicts, Mental Health, Nature for Peace

¹ HALO Trust

² Carpathian National Nature Park & Environmental NGO “MAMA--86-Yaremche”

³ Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (CUAS)

Bio:

Emily Chrystie, MSc (Defence, Development and Diplomacy) Membership of professional bodies: Union of International Mountain Leaders (UIMLA). Research and Development Officer for the HALO Trust, an international humanitarian Mine Action organisation working in communities affected by conflict around the world. Currently conducting research into opportunities within the Mine Action sector for mainstreaming of environmental concerns and implementation of conservation projects.

Marta Korchemlyuk, PhD (Engineering Science, Ecological safety) Since 2003 till present time – Head of the Laboratory of Analytical Control and Monitoring of the Carpathian National Natural Park, Ukraine. Responsibilities: general management of the scientific research of water quality, development of monitoring programs for natural complexes, and methodological material development.

Author of the scientific articles: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3417-2962>, and co-author of three monographs.

Membership of Professional Bodies: Scientific Board of the Carpathian National Nature Park, Prut and Siret River Basin Council, Eco-TIRAS

International Association of River Keepers.

Since 2000 till present time – Head of the Environmental NGO “MAMA-86-Yaremche” (Ukraine). The field of work – projects implementation related to reduction of negative risks of the environment on human health and nature, ecological awareness raising, involving communities in decision making, and improving of environmental policy.

Professional interests: ecological safety, environmental monitoring, management of conservation areas. Elisabeth Wiegele, BSc (Ecologist, Nature Conservation Engineer).

Elisabeth Wiegele, Bsc. is a geographer and trained nature conservation engineer. She was working for 6 years for the nature conservation company E.C.O. Institute for Ecology. Since 2018 is she a researcher at the Carinthian University of Applied Sciences and a team member of the UNESCO Chair for Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas. Her research and work focus on nature conservation in the construction sector, invasive alien species, management of protected areas, and Nature for Peace.

Compatibility of the Green New Deal of the USA with the Different Types of Ecologism

Abstract: In order to solve climate change, there's a need for implementing policies that could lead to long term reforms; and to achieve the design of those policies we need political frameworks or ideologies guiding them. In that sense, the following conference seek to evaluate the compatibility of the latest USA policy for environmental action, The Green New Deal, with the different types of ecologism (reformist, eco-socialism, eco-anarchism, eco-feminism and deep ecology). The research was qualitative on approach, comparative on level of analysis and used case study as method. The technic was observation, instrumentalized via an observation sheet. The policy had the dimension diagnosis, objectives and activities/tasks; and the types of ecologism, vision of the world, wished future and model of political action. The procedure was to compare the dimensions vision of the world with diagnosis, wished future with objectives and model of political action with activities/tasks. It was found that reformist ecology, eco-socialism and eco-feminism were totally compatible with the policy; and that two of the three dimension of eco-anarchism and one of deep ecology. It was concluded that the evaluated policy is mainly compatible with three out of the five types of ecologism. It was recommended to do the same type of analysis on other countries policies to understand the ideological perspective they are taking.

Keywords: Public Policy, Ecologism, Environment, Political Action, State Planning

Bio: Member of the research team Hermes of the Riva-Aguero's Institute of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Bachelor in Humanities, mention Philosophy by the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Graduated from the Master on National Development and Defense on the Centre for Higher National Studies of the Ministry of Defense of Peru. Specialized in Public Policy by the Pacific University of Peru.