

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN



ANNUAL REPORT  
**2023**

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS  
CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS



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## GREETING

Dear Readers,

Founded just over two years ago as part of the University's Excellence Strategy, the College of Fellows is already a central hub for international research at our institution and an integral part of university life. It is a place that invites scholars from all over the world to pursue their research in a stimulating environment and at the same time give new impetus to research at our University. Moreover, the College of Fellows is open to all international guests at our faculties and institutes who wish to make use of its opportunities for exchange. It is thus a showcase for the high number of international researchers who come to Tübingen every year, attracted by our University's excellent reputation, infrastructure, and world-leading experts.

Bringing together fellows from a wide range of subjects, the College of Fellows also provides a space in which scholars can engage in a broad interdisciplinary exchange on topics that are exploratory in nature. Many scientific questions today require the involvement and cooperation of disciplines that are traditionally far removed from each other. This challenge requires independent and open structures. The College of Fellows offers such intellectual spaces for this kind of experimentation, of which there are all too few in the current research landscape.

In addition, the College of Fellows reaches out to the public. As a place where the world comes together, it provides an outstanding opportunity to reflect on the pressing issues of our time.

We are keen to capitalize on the high potential of our international research fellows and to engage in discussions with them about the future of our world.



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Universität Tübingen

I invite all scholars at our University – international and local – to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the College of Fellows, to exchange ideas with our international guests, and to contribute their own ideas. I hope you all enjoy reading this report and wish the College of Fellows continued success.

**Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. (Dōshisha) Karla Pollmann**  
President of the University of Tübingen

# WELCOME

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to give you an insight into the work of the still very young College of Fellows at the University of Tübingen in 2023. Following the ceremonial opening of the College of Fellows in the spring of 2022, the past year was the first in which we were able to devote ourselves entirely to the task of providing international visiting scholars with a second academic home at the University of Tübingen and of creating spaces for new ideas, innovative projects, getting to know one another and networking. And we are still in the process of adding new fellowship and event formats, modifying existing ones, and gradually deepening cooperation with the faculties.

At a time when war has returned to Europe, when the Hamas assassination and the ensuing war in Gaza have shaken humanity, when tensions are escalating around the world and nationalist and populist calls for isolation are growing louder, and when exclusion and intolerance are on the rise in our societies, places like the College of Fellows, where people from all over the world and all walks of life come together to exchange ideas, to work together, and to reflect on the pressing questions facing humanity, is more important than ever.

The fellows are at the heart of everything we do. Get to know some of them better on the following pages and find out what they are working on, how they are integrated into the College of Fellows and how they experience Tübingen and our University. The interview with Tetjana Midjana, who came to us from Ukraine, is particularly impressive. She talks about the University and the College of Fellows as places of refuge in times of war.



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Mykola Saltanov, also from Ukraine, tells about his project on the philosophy of recognition. No less fascinating is what historian, feminist, artist, and activist Ponni Arasu from India has to say about how we can make universities more fair and more inclusive. You can also read about Ramona-Elena Irimia from Romania and her work on the evolutionary ecology of plants, and you should immerse in the literary meditation in which Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Ech-Cheikh reflects on his time in Tübingen.

Besides interviews and fellow portraits, we report on some of the many events, conferences, workshops, lecture series, and projects that we have carried out together with the fellows over the past year: Find out about the visit of the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro; about the workshops with the literary theorist Rita Felski on her work on post-critique; about the documentary films by Hermilio Pereira dos Santos Filho, and the panel with Lynne Tirrell on toxic speech.

Above all, we hope that the reports on the following pages will inspire you to get involved in the College of Fellows, to attend our events, or simply drop by and get to know some of the international guest researchers at the University of Tübingen.

Hope you enjoy!

**PD Dr Niels Weidtmann**  
Director of the College of Fellows

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**COLLEGE OF FELLOWS**  
Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies

COLLEGE OF FELLOWS



## 2 ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

# COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

## CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

The College of Fellows is the Tübingen model for a university-based Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS). It was officially inaugurated in April 2022 as a central institution of the University of Tübingen within the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments. The first IAS was founded at Princeton University in the 1930s. Since then, numerous IAS have been established around the world. What they have in common is that they invite outstanding scholars to devote themselves exclusively to their research, free from other duties and responsibilities in teaching, administration, and fundraising. The IAS have thus become institutions in which researchers from all over the world and from all disciplines come together for a given period of time. As the invited scholars are usually required to be in residence, the IAS offer many opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange, which has turned some of them into veritable think tanks for interdisciplinary collaboration.

With the College of Fellows, the University of Tübingen has established such an institute. The College of Fellows has a unique profile, though. Fellowships are only awarded to international guest researchers and are primarily, but not exclusively, aimed at early career researchers in the post-doctoral phase, with established researchers and highly renowned visiting professors being nominated in a particular fellowship programme or invited to give lectures and participate in conferences; in addition, the College of Fellows is open to all international guest researchers who join the various institutes at the University of Tübingen with other funding. The College of Fellows is thus an academic home for all international research fellows at our university beyond their host institutes, enabling them to present their work to a broader university audience as well as the public, to network with each other, and to collaborate across disciplines. Not all of the well over three hundred regular international guest researchers at the University of Tübingen have yet discovered the College of Fellows as a place of exchange and inspiration, and by no means do all of them participate in our programme as intensively as the fellows we invite through our fellowship programmes. But after just a short time, many of them no longer want to miss it.

In its work, the College of Fellows pursues two main objectives, which are reflected in its subtitle: Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies. It is a place where interdisciplinary exchange is encouraged and fostered, even if it does not directly lead to new research projects. The university needs such spaces for research and exploration that enable exchange across disciplinary boundaries in an environment free of day-to-day academic obligations. The College of Fellows cannot replace research in the faculties, but it can certainly provide various new impulses. This is also the guiding principle when we repeatedly invite internationally renowned personalities to make a topic more visible and to create a crystallization point around which discussions and events take place. In addition to the interdisciplinary orientation, there is a second focus that is naturally central to the College of Fellows: It brings together scholars from around the world.



We want to draw on this potential to make the College of Fellows a place where issues of global relevance are discussed, and we want to make it a place where people from all over the world come together to share their research, ideas, experiences, stories, and traditions and to live the intellectual diversity of our world.

Besides the exchange with other internationals, fellows have the opportunity to meet with interested scholars from the University of Tübingen in thematically oriented focus groups. Focus groups on the thematic fields of Belonging, Neighbourhoods, Neuroscience and Society, Intercultural Studies, and Interdisciplinary Anthropology have currently been established. Their members meet regularly and organize workshops and lectures or develop joint project ideas. During the past year, we developed the *New Horizons* Fellowship following this path. Interdisciplinary groups of researchers from the University of Tübingen can nominate high-caliber guests and, if the nomination is selected, establish new focus groups together with *New Horizons* fellows. The fellows of the Global Encounters platform and the fellows in Intercultural Studies also form such groups. The Teach@Tübingen Fellowship brings postdoctoral researchers to Tübingen to gain teaching experience alongside their research, complementing the English-language teaching at the University of Tübingen.

The College of Fellows is supported in its work by an International Advisory Board consisting of representatives of the university's departments and five directors of other IAS from around the world. Chaired by President Karla Pollmann, the Board of the College of Fellows consists of representatives of the Presidential Office of the university, the Advisory Board, the Excellence Strategy, and the College of Fellows.

Our successful work over the past year would not have been possible without the commitment of our fellows, the work of a dedicated team and the university community's interest in taking up the College of Fellows' offerings. We invite you to join our events and to get involved – we look forward to getting in touch with you!



Our team in 2023: Katharina Wurzinger, Yanti Hölzchen, Dorothea Stieler, Maren Göttke, Marco Wallis, Sonja Pfisterer, Sara Bangert, Niels Weidtmann (left to right).



Our team in 2024: Lisa Holler, Sara Bangert, Kristína Janačková, Yanti Hölzchen, Cora Hartmann, Niels Weidtmann, Rosalie Fayner, Benedikt Holzschuh, Dorothea Stieler (left to right; missing on the photograph: Katharina Wurzinger, Mădălina Guzun, Abbed Kanoor).

Text: Niels Weidtmann  
Photograph: © Alexander Gonschior



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EVENTS



# ENGAGING SUSTAINABILITY

## Dr Olusegun Samuel

30 – 31 March 2023, Neue Aula, Room 236  
Workshop (Focus Group Intercultural Studies)

Sustainability is one of the most frequently used buzzwords nowadays. From major global initiatives on sustainability developed by international bodies such as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations to many local grassroots organisations and networks promoting sustainable practices in their communities – the idea has received attention in all domains of public and political life. In academia, the field of sustainability research is exponentially growing. Additionally, in business, the increasing demand for environmentally conscious products is in some cases leading to greenwashing – a phenomenon when companies are making unsubstantiated claims about the sustainability profile of their products or the company as a whole. Taking these various aspects of sustainability into account, we can ask: What exactly is sustainability and how can we bring it about?

With the hope of contributing to the existing understanding of sustainability, the workshop “Engaging Sustainability”, which took place between 30 and 31 March 2023, aimed to investigate and engage theoretical problems related to sustainability, including the question of how we should understand sustainability, the role of ethics and ontology in sustainability thinking, and methodological issues in framing sustainability. It focused on approaches to sustainability from the Global South and thus aimed at challenging prevailing Western conceptions.

The workshop was organised as part of the Focus Group Intercultural Studies at the College of Fellows, which is centred on topics like diversity of philosophical and historical traditions, cultural belonging, and critical examination of Western intellectual thought.

Over the course of two days, 14 speakers from three continents addressed sustainability from various angles and within a range of disciplines, including ethics, philosophy, human animal studies, moral theory, and ethnography. James Ogude, Professor in African Literature and Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at Pretoria University, South Africa, set the agenda in addressing issues of global justice with regard to environmental sustainability.



This has been taken up by many of his colleagues from African universities. There is a danger of continuing the Global North’s sovereignty of interpretation under the guise of promoting sustainability in the environmental sector. The workshop critically reflected on this danger and explored the question of whether there are genuinely African approaches that can help in dealing with the multiple environmental crises of our time. Of course, these too must not be adopted uncritically. The organiser himself, Dr Olusegun Samuel, presented his research on otherness as a problem of sustainability ethics.

In order to stay true to the idea of sustainability, the event was organised as a hybrid event allowing participants to join in person or remotely via Zoom.

Olusegun Samuel was a Research Fellow at the College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies at the University of Tübingen from 1 March 2022 until 31 May 2023. His work covers a wide range of topics within African and intercultural philosophy, decoloniality, ecological ethics, and sustainability. Samuel has received numerous scholarships, fellowships, and grants. During his undergraduate studies, he won the Lagos State University Scholar Award. Later, he graduated with distinction from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. International Postgraduate University Award, a fully supported PhD scholarship, enabled him to undertake his doctoral studies at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Over the course of his PhD, he also received other grants and awards, including the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Top-Up Scholarship, Arts & Social Sciences Higher Degree Research Equity Scholarship, and Higher Degree Research Career Development Grant in 2020. Besides these achievements, Samuel was awarded LASU Philosophy Excellence Award by the Department of Philosophy at the Lagos State University in 2022. In January and February 2023, he was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Montreal, Canada.



Text: Kristína Janačková  
Photograph: © Olusegun Samuel

# ‘BUEN VIVIR’ AS AN UCHRONIC POLITICAL HORIZON

**Dr René Alberto Ramírez Gallegos**

18 July 2023, Neue Aula – Großer Senat

Global Encounters Lecture Series

René A. Ramírez Gallegos was a short term visiting professor at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Global South Studies in 2023. The fellowship was awarded by the university’s platform Global Encounters which brings together researchers from the social sciences and humanities. Ramírez Gallegos presented his work in the Global Encounters lecture series co-organised by the platform and the College of Fellows.

“WE [...] HEREBY DECIDE TO BUILD A NEW FORM  
OF PUBLIC COEXISTENCE, IN DIVERSITY AND IN HARMONY  
WITH NATURE, TO ACHIEVE THE GOOD WAY OF LIVING,  
THE SUMAK KAWSAY.”  
(THE PREAMBLE OF ECUADOR’S CONSTITUTION)

What constitutes a good life? Does the idea of well-being apply only to humans, or can we expand it to all living beings? What about elements of nature like trees, rivers or mountains? Can we reconcile human prosperity and environmental protection, or are the two in direct opposition? How can we measure well-being at all?

Individual answers to the above questions might vary. But when evaluating well-being at a state level, the assessment is usually restricted to measuring economic output like the gross domestic product (GDP). Environmental and social factors, e.g. biodiversity preservation or social cohesion, are not considered.

Reliance on GDP as a measure of prosperity has been broadly criticised as an inadequate representation of progress. While alternative metrics that provide a more holistic assessment of societal advancement have been proposed and are in use, such as Human Development Index, Happy Planet Index or Genuine Progress Indicator, GDP nevertheless remains politically dominant in most countries of the world – with few exceptions. Famously, the kingdom of Bhutan has been promoting population happiness and well-being over mere economic development for decades. In 2008, the Gross National Happiness Index was formally adopted as the country’s development indicator in the constitution. In the same year, after a long and broadly participative constituent process, Ecuador’s new government adopted a constitution where “Buen Vivir” or “good living” was declared as a social and political priority.

Dr René Alberto Ramírez Gallegos was Ecuador’s Minister of Planning and Research at the time. In his talk “‘Buen Vivir’ as an uchronic political horizon”, he introduced the philosophy of Buen Vivir and presented his unique methodological framework for measuring time “well-lived”.

“Buen Vivir” distinguishes itself from the ideas of an individual good life that tend to dominate Western thinking. The philosophy stems from the Quechua indigenous tradition of “sumak kawsay” (in English “a good way of living”) and is pluralistic by nature. This means that what constitutes a good life can be interpreted differently depending on the local community and cultural and historical setting. However, the fundamental part of this worldview is based on the relationship between humans and the natural environment. As opposed to the anthropocentric worldview of the Global North, where humans are dominant and nature is a commodity, Buen Vivir takes on a biocentric perspective. Nature is not understood as a never-ending supply of resources available for exploitation but as “Pachamama” (in English “Mother Nature”) with its own rights that are worth of protection.

In summary, Buen Vivir marks a radical departure from Western conceptions of economic development, individualism, linear progression, and clear nature-culture dualism in favour of indigenous relational ontology rooted in the idea of community that includes nature, people, and all other forms of life.

From a political perspective, Ecuador’s constitution is surely groundbreaking. But how can the realisation of Buen Vivir in Ecuador be examined in a rigorous, scientific, and constructive manner? In his research, Ramírez Gallegos applies the metric “time for a good life” as the unit of his analysis. As he pointed out in his talk, the measurement of time “well lived” has the advantage of being an ambivalent indicator – it is both empirical-factual and prescriptive-desiderative. “It accounts for a fact and reveals a desire,” he argued. His proposed concept allows to address time distribution that focuses on the following dimensions: time of existence, time dedicated to the good life, the concentration or inequality of time well lived, geography, and the time of time well-lived, the macro-structuring of time for good life, the temporality of the Pachamama, and the impact of time on satisfaction with life.



Text: Kristína Janačková  
Photographs: © René Alberto Ramírez Gallegos

**René Alberto Ramírez Gallegos** is a trained economist, with expertise both in academic research and in policy development and implementation. He holds a master’s degree in Economic Development from the Dutch Institute of Social Studies and in Government and Public Policy from the Latin American School of Social Sciences in Mexico. He completed his PhD in Sociology with specialization in Labor Relations, Social Inequalities and Trade Unionism at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Among other functions, Ramírez Gallegos has served as Ecuador’s Minister of Planning and Development and later as Minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. After being active in politics at the national level for seven years, he decided to return to academia and is currently affiliated with the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM), Mexico. His areas of expertise include social public policy, inequality, poverty, the economics of happiness, use of time, citizen participation, and the knowledge economy. From June to September 2023, he was a visiting professor at the University of Tübingen as part of the “Global Encounters Fellowship”. He was hosted by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Global South Studies and the Baden-Württemberg Center for Brazil and Latin America.

# INDIGENOUS MULTINATURALISM FROM A COSMOPOLITAN POINT OF VIEW

**Professor Eduardo Viveiros de Castro**

28 September 2023, Alte Aula  
Public Lecture, University of Tübingen

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro is an internationally renowned Brazilian anthropologist whose research is focused on the indigenous peoples of the Amazon and on the development of a decolonial anthropology. Since 2012, he has been a Professor of social anthropology at the Nacional Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (*Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*).

“IN WESTERN MODERNITY,  
MAN CONSIDERS HIMSELF AN EXCEPTIONAL CREATURE.  
IT IS AS IF THE HUMAN SPECIES WERE THE ONLY ANIMAL  
WHICH, BECAUSE IT KNOWS ITSELF TO BE AN ANIMAL, ISN'T  
AN ANIMAL. WHICH IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS.  
THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE ANIMALS SHOULD MAKE  
US MORE HEEDFUL OF THE CONDITIONS THAT LINK US TO  
OTHER ANIMALS; THAT IS, THE NEED  
FOR A TOLERABLE ENVIRONMENT.”  
(VIVEIROS DE CASTRO)

Viveiros de Castro is well known for being one of the representatives of the “ontological turn” in anthropology and for proposing the notion of “perspectivism”, according to which the world is inhabited by different subjects, be they humans or non-humans, who perceive reality from their distinctive points of view.



This conception leads to an idea contrary to the European frame of multiculturalism. According to the latter, we tend to think that there must be only one nature, which many cultures share but which they perceive differently. On the contrary, according to the indigenous thought described by Viveiros de Castro, one should rather consider the world in terms of “multinaturalism”: humans and non-humans share the same categories of interpretation, but what changes from one perspective to another is the world itself. Thus decentralising the European understanding of nature as an objective given that is represented differently, Viveiros de Castro shows that the European frame of thought is not universally admitted but locally engendered, advocating for a “continuous decolonisation of thought”. Going beyond the fact of considering other ways of interpreting the world than we do, his proposal implies that we admit the locality of our own thought.

In September 2023, Viveiros de Castro was a short-term fellow in Tübingen and held a public lecture titled “Indigenous Multinaturalism from a Cosmopolitical point of View”, which took place in the historical building of the Alte Aula of the University of Tübingen and was attended by a large audience. In addition, Viveiros de Castro held a one-week masterclass with 16 international PhD students, during which he gave input lectures and shared his personal feedback on presentations of the PhD students’ respective research projects. The seminar took place as a closed event, for which the participants had applied via an open call for papers on the theme of “The Anthropology of Perspectivism”.

The public lecture and the masterclass were part of a larger project within the Focus Group “Interdisciplinary Anthropology” at the College of Fellows, and succeeded previous lectures and masterclasses held by Philippe Descola in 2022 and by Tim Ingold in 2019.



### Learning from amerindian perspectives

The lecture of Viveiros de Castro started with the following question: *Somos de verdade uma humanidade?* "Are we really one humanity?" What does it mean to be human, and which part of this humanity will decide for the rest? If we accept non-human actors as political actors, then the "we" itself changes its meaning, for it could include mountains and rivers as well, and it would lead to a *cosmo-politics* that equates to a politicisation of the cosmos and to a different understanding of the human being than the one that has reigned for centuries in the Western world.

The figure of the "anthropos", that is, of the human being, has been shaped until now following the separation that the Europeans institute between nature and culture. The Western world's view on nature, conceived as an objective realm divided among many subjects, has led to the idea that we may control this objectivity and place it under our grasp. This turned us not only into a mercantile society but also into a technological one, whose fascination for the artificial intelligence renders us more interested in the soul of the machines than in the soul of animals and plants – and even of humans. According to the ideas of post-humanism that we are contemplating today, humanity itself has become obsolete.

A completely different image of the world is revealed if we try to think along with the indigenous peoples of Amazonia. By challenging the stability of the separation between nature and culture, and, above all, the place of the humans as being above nature, the indigenous point of view states that everything is "human". In this sense, there is only one "culture" – one way of being alive –, whereas there are many natures, corresponding to different ways of embodiment and to their own perspectives. The idea of *perspectivism*, far from placing the human being in the center of the equation, rather deprives the human being of any privilege among all the other beings: if everything is human, then the humans themselves are no longer the most important beings in the world.

To the question asked at the beginning, one could thus offer a positive answer only if one signals the bankruptcy of a certain idea of humanity. By putting into question the Western line of thought and by interacting with the beliefs of amerindian peoples, we may gain a sense for our future.



Text: Mădălina Guzun,  
Photographs: © Alexander Gonschior



**Eduardo Viveiros de Castro**, born in 1951 in Rio de Janeiro, obtained his PhD in Social Anthropology at the Nacional Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1984, where he taught classes of ethnology from 1978 to 2011. Being a member of the research team "Americanist Ethnology" (Ethnologie Américaniste) of the CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique) in France since 2001, Viveiros de Castro also taught at several other universities around the world, among them being the University of Chicago (1991, 2004), the University of Manchester (1994), the University of São Paulo (2003), and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (2005–2006). Along with one of his most well-known books, *Metafísicas canibais: Elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural* ("Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-structural Anthropology"), one counts also *A inconstância da alma selvagem e outros ensaios de antropologia* ("The Inconsistency of the Wild Soul and other Essays of Anthropology") and *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds and From the Enemy's Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*.

# POSTCRITIQUE, RECOGNITION, LIFE WORLD

**Professor Rita Felski**

23–26 October 2023, Alte Aula

New Horizons Workshop and New Horizons Lecture

“RATHER THAN TAKING IT FOR GRANTED  
THAT A WORK GAINS ITS MEANING IN RELATION  
TO A HISTORICAL OR POLITICAL CONTEXT THAT IS  
BEING ASSUMED BY THE CRITIC, WHY NOT INSIST ON  
ITS POTENTIAL TO TRANSFORM WHAT COUNTS AS A  
RELEVANT CONTEXT?”

(RITA FELSKI)

What does “postcritique” signify? How do post-critical concepts relate to critical theories? The 30 participants of the New Horizons workshop were able to discuss these and other questions with one of the outstanding representatives of the theoretical current, Professor Rita Felski, who was in Tübingen as a New Horizons fellow in October 2023.

The “postcritical turn” within literary and cultural studies has initiated a major turn in the practice of critique, offering new ways of reading, methodology and criticism which foreground emotion and affect in the reader’s experience, and which generally redirect the attention to aesthetic dimensions in the reception and interpretation of a text. As such, postcritique is relevant beyond the boundaries of literary criticism, addressing pressing issues across the humanities.

**23–26 October 2023: New Horizons Workshop “Postcritique, Recognition, Life World”, Alte Aula**

The workshop “Postcritique, Recognition, Life World” enabled discussions with Rita Felski, one of the major proponents of postcritique, building on her recent scholarly work. Pieces of Rita Felski’s current work were pre-circulated and read in advance by the participants. The workshop opened with a session on theoretical and methodological aspects; a second session, “Recognition”, built on a chapter on Didier Eribon’s *Returning to Reims* (published in *New Literary History*) and a third session focused a chapter on ‘Life World’ and on Magda Szabo’s *The Door*. The moderators each gave a co-presentation to introduce the discussion. The workshop explored aspects and implications of Felski’s concepts: What theoretical impulses can be derived from her re-orientation in critical and creative vocabularies?

How does her recent work further develop the theoretical field of postcritique, building in impulses from the ‘New Frankfurt School’? Can the notions of ‘Recognition’ and ‘Life World’ serve as a reconfiguration of ‘post-critical’ concepts and forms of reading and interpretation?

How do such reconfigurations contribute to theoretical shifts within current debates in the humanities? These and other questions have been discussed during the three workshop days with researchers from the German Department, English Department, Global South Studies, Educational Sciences and EKW (Institute of Historical and Cultural Anthropology) as well as international and Tübingen-based doctoral students and postdocs/fellows.

## Programme

Mon, 23 October, 4:00-7:00 p.m.: Opening session with an introductory input by Rita Felski, followed by a discussion on “Theoretical basics (Chapter 2)”, moderated by Dorothee Kimmich

Tue, 24 October, 4:00-7:00 p.m.: Presentation by Rita Felski, followed by a discussion on the topic of “Recognition”, moderated by Markus Rieger-Ladich and Kai Wortmann

Thu, 26 October, 4:00-7:00 p.m.: Presentation by Rita Felski and discussion on the topic of “Life World” with a final wrap-up of the topics, moderated by Monique Scheer



## About the New Horizons Fellowship

The aim of the *New Horizons Fellowship* is to stimulate research at the University of Tübingen, deepen international contacts and broaden research horizons. Since 2023, *New Horizons Fellowships* are advertised twice a year by the College of Fellows throughout the university.

**25 October 2023: New Horizons Lecture “How Not To Talk About Experience”, Audimax**

Why do standard textbooks of literary theory avoid the concept of experience? And why is the turn to literary experience now an accelerating trend? The public lecture looked to recent German theory, especially Hartmut Rosa’s account of the phenomenology and sociology of resonance, as a resource for literary critics interested in rethinking experience in relational and worldly terms. It introduced Rita Felski as a renowned international researcher and New Horizons Fellow and offered insights into her recent research findings. It served to increase the visibility of the fellowship and the possibility to network with a wider, interdisciplinary circle of participants. The evening lecture met with broad interest among researchers, lecturers and students from various subjects and disciplines, with around 120 people in attendance who asked various questions following Felski’s talk. The subsequent public reception, to which the College of Fellows invited the guests, was attended by around 60 people, who were able to use this opportunity for an in-depth discussion with her.



Rita Felski is John-Stewart-Bryan-Professor of English at the University of Virginia and Niels-Bohr-Professor at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU). She is a leading scholar in the fields of aesthetics, literary theory and cultural studies, feminist theory, modernism, and postmodernism, and has been influential in such areas as the development of postcriticism and the discussion of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in literary studies. Felski has published *The Limits of Critique*, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, *The Gender of Modernity*, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, *Literature After Feminism*, the Blackwell Manifesto *Uses of Literature*, and *Rethinking Tragedy*, among others, and is a former editor of *New Literary History*. *The Limits of Critique* has been particularly widely reviewed and discussed. Felski raises comparable topics in the anthology she co-edited with Elizabeth Anker, *Critique and Postcritique*. *Hooked: Art and Attachment*, which explores how and why works of art captivate us, was published in 2020. Felski has recently begun work on a book project about the new Frankfurt School and its significance for literary studies.

Text: Sara Bangert  
Photographs: © Sara Bangert, Sara Bangert, Rita Felski



# THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE. NAVIGATING BETWEEN NOSTALGIC NATIVISM AND HOPEFUL LIBERALISM

**Professor Jan Willem Duyvendak**  
(Director of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study,  
Amsterdam)

27 October 2023, Alte Aula  
Semester Opening Event

It is now a tradition that at the beginning of each new semester, the College of Fellows' staff, international fellows, and interested university members gather for a small celebration. This winter semester, the opening event took place on 27 October 2023 in the Old Auditorium (Alte Aula). It offered a great opportunity to get to know the College of Fellows and to learn more about its programme and activities it offers to international fellows.

As a special guest, the College of Fellows invited Professor Jan Willem Duyvendak from the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study to hold an opening lecture with the title "*The Return of the Native: Navigating between nostalgic nativism and hopeful liberalism*". Building on his co-authored new book *The Return of the Native* published by Oxford University Press in 2023, Duyvendak explored how and why there has been a resurgence of nativist logic in so many Western countries, even those with strong liberal traditions. According to him, rising right-wing phenomena, such as populism, anti-black racism, and islamophobia all have the same cause – namely nativism, which he defined as "an opposition to an internal minority that is seen as a threat on the grounds of its foreignness". While it was once thought that liberalism can grind nativism to a halt, we can now observe how liberal ideas themselves are used to fuel nativist discourses. Drawing on these observations, he further offered a comparative analysis of the rise of nativism in France, the US, and the Netherlands, paying particular attention to the role of nostalgia in the construction of nativist narratives.

Following the guest lecture, Professor Dorothee Kimmich from the German Department (Tübingen) and Professor Boris Nieswand from the Institute of Sociology (Tübingen) joined Professor Duyvendak and the Director of the College of Fellows, Dr Niels Weidtmann, on the podium for a lively discussion. Finally, the concluding reception offered the opportunity to exchange and network with other fellows and scholars from Tübingen over drinks and finger food in an informal way.



Jan Willem Duyvendak is Distinguished Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Since 2018, he has also been the director of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (NIAS-KNAW). In 2021, he was elected member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and in 2022 of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His research focuses on the topics of belonging, urban sociology, "feeling at home" and nativism.

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN

College of Fellows

## Gradations in nativism

- Foreignness
  - Threat
  - Exclusion
  - Fringe/mainstream
- Irony of the Past  
Liberalism



EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN  
COLLEGE OF FELLOWS  
SEMESTER OPENING EVENT  
WITH  
JAN WILLEM DUYVENDAK  
The Return of the Native:  
between nostalgic nativism and hopeful liberalism  
27 OCTOBER 2023, 4 P.M.  
Alte Aula

Semester Opening Event on 10 October 2023:  
Podium with Professor Jan Willem Duyvendak (University of Amsterdam),  
Professor Dorothee Kimmich (University of Tübingen), Professor Boris Nieswand  
(University of Tübingen) and PD Dr Niels Weidtmann (College of Fellows)  
(left to right).

Text: Kristína Janačková  
Photographs: © Fabian Kurze

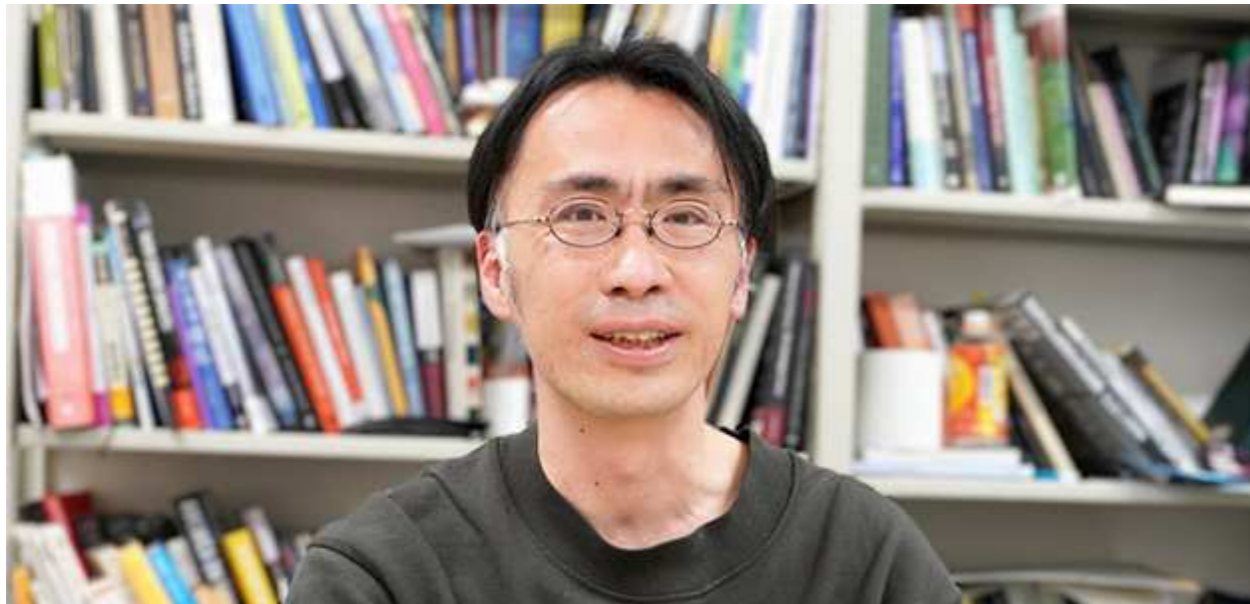


# AN UNDECIDED DIMENSION OF DEPTH: ON THE QUESTION OF THE PLACE IN THE THOUGHT OF KITARŌ NISHIDA

**Professor Masatake Shinohara**

31 October 2023

SIP Lecture



“WHENEVER WE THINK, IT IS ALWAYS WITHIN A CERTAIN PLACE (BASHŌ) AND AT A CERTAIN TIME OF THE HISTORICAL WORLD. OUR THINKING IS THOROUGHLY DELIMITED BY HISTORY.”

(NISHIDA KITARŌ, *LOGIC AND LIFE*)

The talk by Professor Masatake Shinohara (University of Kyoto), held as a hybrid event in Tübingen on 31 October 2023, was titled “An Undecided Dimension of Depth: On the Question of the Place in the Thought of Kitarō Nishida”. Masatake Shinohara is currently a program-specific Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Advanced Integrated Studies in Human Survivability of the University of Kyoto. His research is focused on contemporary philosophy, environmental humanities, architecture, and art. The latter allows him to develop a reflection in relation to an embodied realm that remains prior to any conceptual way of understanding. The main topic of his reflection concerns the human condition within the fragility of the contemporary world, and these themes were reflected in his talk as part of the SIP Lecture series.

The writings of Masatake Shinohara include the following titles: *Ningen igo no Tetsugaku* (“Philosophy after the Human”), *Jinshinsei no Tetsugaku* (“Philosophy in the Anthropocene”), *Fukuseisei no Ecology* (“Ecology of Multiplicity”), *The Luminous Openness of Rinko Kawauchi’s Photographs* and *Rethinking the Human Condition in the Ecological Collapse*. As a translator, he rendered into Japanese the works of Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature* and *Humankind*.

In his SIP lecture, Professor Shinohara addressed the question of place by describing a dimension of *depth* that exceeds our grasp. In Japanese, depth is the translation of the word *okusoko*, which originally evokes the hidden dimension of the real world. Such a dimension belongs to the place in which we always find ourselves, yet which exceeds our conscious grasp. The idea that we are not mastering the ground of our existence thus calls into question the belief that the place where humans are emplaced is solid and stabilized. In contrast to our common understanding, Shinohara showed that we are being constantly challenged with a radical uncertainty that is always present underfoot.

In this respect, the work of Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), one of the founders of the modern Japanese philosophical tradition of thought, can be reformulated in its formulation of the question concerning the dimension of depth that is rooted within the profound vastness of place. Yet, Nishida also characterizes the place as that which is not merely external to the self but determines the mode of existence of the self. By way of the engagement with the thought of Nishida, Masatake Shinohara proceeded with a question of place that is characterized as the contradictory dimension that is not merely external to the self but is not continuous with the self. First of all, the place within which the self is emplaced is characterized as the hidden dimension that is expected to be revealed at the depth of the active self. This is also a dimension of alterity that simultaneously embraces and transcends the self who inhabits it. More specifically, the place as the dimension of alterity can be understood in the interest of the earthly dimension that environs humans but is irreducible to the human artifice. Thus, being uncontained by the boundaries that constitute the realm of the human artifice for the everyday life, it would be assumed to go beyond the limited horizon of everyday experience in a way that announces the possible futural dimension in which the imaginal form of coexistence among humans would emerge.

## About the SIP

The SIP lectures are a series of lectures organised within the cooperation between the Society for Intercultural Philosophy ([www.int-gip.de](http://www.int-gip.de)) and the Focus Group “Intercultural Studies” at the College of Fellows once a month, either as a public online or hybrid event. The meetings are focused on intercultural thinking and they bring to the fore the work of scholars from non-European traditions along with scholars who try to open the European tradition itself to an intercultural perspective. Each presentation is followed by questions from the public and discussions. The SIP lectures reach a global audience.

Text: Mădălina Guzun  
Photograph: © Masatake Shinohara

# TOXIC SPEECH: RESISTING EXTREMIST RHETORIC

## Professor Lynne Tirrell (University of Connecticut)

9 November 2023, Alte Aula  
Science & Innovation Days

“EXTREMISM IS ONLY ONE EXAMPLE  
OF TOXIC SPEECH, BUT, IN THESE TIMES,  
IT IS ONE THAT IS HAVING  
A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR WORLD.”  
(LYNNE TIRRELL)

In January 2024, the investigative media house “Correctiv” published a report titled „Geheimplan gegen Deutschland“ (Secret Plan Against Germany) that revealed a secret meeting of high-ranking, mainly right-wing, politicians and other actors with disturbing intentions. Back in November 2023, “AfD” politicians, members of the right-wing conservative “Werteunion”, right-wing extremists, including the “Identitarian Movement”, and entrepreneurs gathered in a hotel near Potsdam to discuss plans for the expulsion – euphemistically coined “remigration” – of millions of migrants from Germany. Following the investigations, an internationally recognized wave of protests began, with hundreds of thousands of people demonstrating against right-wing extremism.

At the same time, the German party AfD, which is observed as an in parts confirmed right-wing extremist party, is at an all-time high in the polls.

The broad opposition to the New Right that arose in civil society in the spring of 2024 raised public awareness of an explosively relevant topic in the public perception, to which two events at the College of Fellows were dedicated in autumn 2023: the College of Fellow’s semester opening lecture by Professor Jan Villem Duyvendak (Director of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, Amsterdam) titled “*The Return of the Native. Navigating between nostalgic nativism and hopeful liberalism*” and Professor Lynne Tirrell’s lecture in the framework of the Science & Innovation days, which were dedicated to populist and right-wing extremist language and ideology.

From 8 to 11 November 2023, the Science & Innovation Days invited the university community and citizens in and around Tübingen to join talks, discussions, and information booths around the interdisciplinary topic of resilience (#SIDays23 Resilienz. Gemeinsam arbeiten wir dran). The topic of ‘resilient societies’ was one of the recurring themes of the S&I days, which is of particular relevance not only in Germany, but globally.

Professor Lynne Tirrell (University of Connecticut) addressed the question of how to resist right-wing extremist rhetoric in her talk organised by the College of Fellows as part of the S&I Days programme on 9 November 2023.

The talk focused on the toxic dimensions of right-wing extremist rhetoric to understand its mechanisms and to identify ways to resist and promote resistance. Her approach, starting from Victor Klemperer’s remarkable linguistic analysis *The Language of The Third Reich* (LTI), focused on discursive practices rather than one-off speech acts, and drawing on her epidemiology of discursive toxicity, emphasised patterns of speech that enact norms shaping how we treat each other, and how we live together as citizens. The questions of how the rhetoric of right-wing extremism is changing norms, undermining important institutions, damaging our basal security and trust, and what we as citizens can do when a society is besieged by the toxin of hate in everyday speech and in political pronouncements, were explored in the talk and discussed in depth on the podium with Dr Rolf Frankenberger (University of Tübingen, Institute for Research on Far Right Extremism (IRex)) and PD Dr Niels Weidtmann (College of Fellows), together with the audience.

Lynne Tirrell is a professor of Philosophy at the University of Connecticut, where she is affiliated with the Human Rights Institute. Her research concerns the intersections of philosophy of language with social and political philosophy, focussing on the ways that linguistic practices influence or shape social justice or facilitate injustice, and how these practices enhance or violate human rights.



Text: Sara Bangert  
Photograph: © Universität Tübingen/ Jörg Jäger  
Links: [www.sidays.com/events/toxische-sprache](http://www.sidays.com/events/toxische-sprache)

Resilienz.  
Gemeinsam arbeiten wir dran.

**SCIENCE &  
INNOVATION  
DAYS 2023**

Thank you  
**Vielen Dank**  
lynne.tirrell@uconn.edu



S&I Days on 9 November 2023:  
Podium with Professor Lynne Tirrell (University of Connecticut), Dr Rolf Frankenberger (University of Tübingen, Institute for Research on Far Right Extremism (IRex)) and PD Dr Niels Weidtmann (College of Fellows) (left to right).

Photograph: © Universität Tübingen/ Jörg Jäger  
Links: [www.sadays.com/events/toxische-sprache](http://www.sadays.com/events/toxische-sprache)

# ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S OCEANIC BORDER THINKING

**Dr Keyvan Allahyari**

22 November 2023  
Humboldt Lecture Series

On 22 November 2023, the Humboldt Lecture was held by Dr Keyvan Allahyari and Dr Laurie Atkinson, both from the English Department at the University of Tübingen.

Allahyari's presentation was titled "Abdulrazak Gurnah's Oceanic Border Thinking" and explored the novel *By the Sea* (2001) by the 2021 Nobel Prize winner in Literature. Gurnah, the Tanzanian-born author writing in English, was honoured by the Nobel jury "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fates of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents". While his novels, short stories, and essays have been critically acclaimed for years, he did not acquire a mass readership until winning put him under the international spotlight.

*By the Sea* investigates the themes of migration and border crossing in the Indian Ocean world in the second half of the twentieth century. Through the memories of Gurnah's main characters – Saleh Omar, a former furniture dealer, and Latif Mahmoud, a literary studies professor – readers are offered a panoramic view of the histories of British border politics.

Allahyari, a literary scholar in border studies and environmental humanities, approached Gurnah's novel by focusing on what he called "oceanic border thinking". According to his reading, the novel offers a critique of the normative understanding of the border as being a discrete land-based territory. Instead, the border in *By the Sea* is always in motion and can be best described as "permeable formation". This border's liquidity challenges the (neo-)colonial literary imagination and simultaneously allows an appreciation of the complex historical and political conditions in which borders develop.



**Keyvan Allahyari** is currently a Marie Curie Fellow at the University of Oslo. Prior to this position, he was a Postdoctoral Humboldt Fellow at the University of Tübingen and the University of Potsdam. He completed his PhD in English at the University of Melbourne in 2019. He is the author of the monograph *Peter Carey: The making of a Global Novelist* (Palgrave 2023) and is finalising his second book based on his research on border studies with the title *Liquid Borders: Abdulrazak Gurnah and the Oceanic World Literatures*. His articles have appeared in numerous academic journals, including *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *The Cambridge Companion to the Australian Novel*, and *Journal of Australian Studies*. Being committed to public humanities, he also contributes to various literary periodicals.

# CO-CREATIVITY IN EARLY ENGLISH LITERARY PRINT

**Dr Laurie Atkinson**

22 November 2023  
Humboldt Lecture Series

The second presentation with the title "Co-Creativity in Early English Literary Print" was given by Laurie Atkinson, whose work addresses issues of authorship in the early modern English literature. Two questions ran like a red thread through his lecture: Who were the makers of English literature before Shakespeare? And why don't we talk about them?

As Atkinson argued, there were numerous people involved in the production and consumption of literary texts during the first decades of printing in England, not just the author and the reader. The patrons, printers, booksellers, and other agents played a fundamental role in literary production too. He underlined that rather than applying the post-Romantic paradigm of individual authorship to the early sixteenth-century England, we should think about this literary period in terms of co-creativity. By refocusing our attention from a sovereign individual author to the multiple agents of the literary landscape, we can then trace and explore what he called "the co-creative networks of early English print". To illustrate his theory, he referred to the hugely popular collaborative collection, *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), and other earlier English literary publications. Overall, Atkinson's research highlights the importance of the often obscured literary-historical period to the evolution of English literature as we know it today.

Text: Kristina Janačková  
Photographs: © private/  
Keyvan Allahyari/ Laurie Atkinson



**Laurie Atkinson** completed his PhD at Durham University in 2021. Following his PhD, he provided research as an MHRA Postdoctoral Research Associate for the new Cambridge University Press edition of the complete works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Laurie is currently a postdoctoral Humboldt Research Fellow at the University of Tübingen, where he works on early English literary print. His monograph, *Ideas of Authorship in the English and Scottish Dream Vision: Skelton, Dunbar, Hawes, Douglas*, was published by Boydell & Brewer in spring 2024.



## About the Humboldt Lecture Series

The Humboldt Lecture Series is a well-established event format organised by the College of Fellows and the Welcome Center, in cooperation with the Humboldt Club Tübingen and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Throughout the semester, it invites Humboldt Fellows to present their research to a broader academic audience. Its further aim is to serve as a meeting point for all international scholars currently based in Tübingen. Each lecture consists of two talks by fellows from various disciplines. After the Q&A session, the discussion and networking can be continued over drinks in the Small Senate.

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STORIES

# BRIDGING BORDER SPACES: HOW TO TRANSLATE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH INTO A DOCUMENTARY

## An Interview with Professor Hermílio Santos



Brazilian sociologist and documentary filmmaker Hermílio Santos visited Tübingen in 2023 as holder of the CAPES professorship, hosted at the Baden-Württemberg Center for Brazil and Latin America and the Interdisciplinary Center for Global South Studies (ICGSS) in cooperation with the College of Fellows.

Hermílio Santos gave a talk as guest speaker of the College of Fellows' semester opening on 21 April, the title of which – “Bridging Border Spaces” – was based on his documentary *Border Spaces* (2022). Dedicated to the translation of scientific research into documentary film, Santos works at the intersection of sociology, philosophy, biographical research and media studies. The College of Fellows organised screenings of two of his documentaries in the Tübingen cinemas 'Arsenal' and 'Atelier'. The format of the events was meant to increase the visibility of a researcher using film as a widely received medium for communicating scientific content. The broad interest of the public was reflected in the two packed cinema halls.

### Hermílio, would you please introduce yourself and the background of your stay?

I am a Sociology Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, in Porto Alegre, and since 2010, I combine my research activities with sociological documentary filmmaking connected to my research.

I am the first Brazilian scholar to hold the CAPES (Brazilian Agency for Higher Education) Chair, associated with the Baden-Württemberg Center for Brazil and Latin America and the ICGSS at the University of Tübingen. I have concluded six documentary films, and currently, I am working on the production of six other documentaries.

### How would you describe your films screened in Tübingen, *Border Spaces* and *Infância Falada*?

In the first movie screened, *Infância Falada*, I accompanied social projects in the Brazilian states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Ceará, Pernambuco and Minas Gerais to investigate how children seek to change the environment of constant violence into which they are born. The film is based on a research work I coordinated, titled “Infância e violência: cotidiano de crianças pequenas em favelas do Rio de Janeiro, Recife e São Paulo” (“Childhood and violence: the daily life of children in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Recife and São Paulo”). The film presents social projects that promote alternatives to violence in everyday life, using music, radio, and dance. These are moving stories of boys and girls who dream of bringing peace to their neighbourhoods. The final message is an optimistic scenario of dialogue. The research and the film were funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and the results are used by governments and social non-governmental organizations to improve the living conditions of children.

The second film that we showed, *Border Spaces*, deals with frontier realms in Brazil and it follows people who describe their experiences with and at borders. It is based on the research project “The Social Construction of Border Zones” I coordinated. This study aimed to identify the perspectives of different actors who “make” borders in everyday practice: Those involved in border control, such as members of the federal police, army, police or Internal Revenue Service; those who use borders to smuggle drugs, and are imprisoned for these illegal activities; those who produce agricultural products in border regions; and perspectives from members of the indigenous population who inhabited border areas before the colonization of Brazilian territory by the Portuguese. Following the screenings, we discussed the research findings, methods, experiences during the production and perspectives presented in the films with the audience. It was an overwhelming experience for me to see my films shown in a full cinema hall, as I had previously shown them mainly in university contexts.

### The title “Bridging Border Spaces” referred also to a translation of scientific research into documentary films. In which ways are you considering borders between theory and practice?

The title addresses frontiers on several levels. In a concrete sense, in the film *Border Spaces*, borders are constituted by crossing them and by other practices along the border. Film is a way of making a multifaceted exploration of such social practices visible, indicating a second layer of meaning – the transition between theory and practice. More general, in filming documentaries, sociological research can be conducted on the spot and communicated in a low-threshold and participatory manner.

My aim is to translate scientific research questions and results into documentary films. Drawing mainly on sociologist and philosopher Alfred Schütz, who laid the groundwork for an empirical sociology, I use methods of interpretative sociology for my film work. I adopt a biographical approach: the research for the films is usually based on biographical narratives. My methodology, the interaction and encounter with people using the biographical method for interviews, thus establishes a common ground, a contact zone between research and film.

#### **How did your pathway from doing academic research to making documentaries look like?**

I used to go to the movies when I grew up in Minas Gerais, and when I was 17 and visited Germany for the first time, my intention was to stay there and attend the cinema school. I gave up on the plan, but never lost interest in cinema. In 2006, I was working on a research project on teenage offenders and at the same time I was trying to adopt the methodology of biographical storytelling.

I realized that this type of environment was inaccessible to many of my students and even professors. Here I had the idea of making a short documentary film that would provide access to this research environment. The project was originally conceived for a foundation. I filmed it myself, and had support from the inmates to hold the camera. Then a student of mine edited a 12-minute movie, *Intimidade Viglada*.

That's how it started. I still film my documentaries myself, travelling with my camera wherever I find my interview partners, with small budgets and just a little help with the post-production process.

#### **How does the methodology of Schütz shape your approach to documentary films?**

I became interested in Schütz during my undergraduate studies. He states that sociology has to get acquainted with the experiences of the subjects who experience a particular phenomenon in their concrete lives, criticizing sociology for creating sometimes a reality without considering the experience of the subjects. As an heir to Max Weber, Schütz developed problems that Weber had left open. Interpretative sociology, following Weber, assumes that actions carry meaning. Schütz picked up on this and asked how we attribute meaning to our actions. He drew on Husserl's phenomenology of horizons of meaning, and thus created an innovative sociology by entering into a dialogue with philosophy: a sociology that deals with an individual that reflects on the world and on itself in the world.

I am using Schütz's reconstructive biographical narrative approach, first developed by Fritz Schütze and later incremented by the sociologist Gabriele Rosenthal, so as not to impose my preconceptions – my relevance system, to speak with Schütz – on my conversation partners, when I bring in a script of questions for the interviews.

I tried to publicize these concepts, which are not very well known in Brazil. From 2012 to 2018, I was a member of the board of the International Alfred Schütz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretative Social Science.



I organised the translation from German into Portuguese and wrote the introduction of two books of Schütz and two books of Rosenthal to disseminate their approaches in the Portuguese Social Sciences communities. Besides, I produced two documentaries related to these approaches: *Lifeworld: The Sociology of Alfred Schütz*, screened and discussed in more than 20 universities worldwide, and *Lifeworld II: Biographies and Narratives*, launched in 2023. The first part introduces his biography; the second part features interviews with international experts explaining the most important theoretical aspects of his work; the third part is dedicated to presenting the central concepts of his sociological theory, “lifeworld” and “relevance”; the final part presents sociological examples of how Schütz's sociology is used in theoretical and empirical research.

Schütz's concepts shape my research and my film work just as much as the biographical method, which leads the translation of my material into documentary films: I mainly use interviews instead of voiceovers, and thus allow for the protagonists to themselves report on their biographical experiences. This approach has a social relevance, depending on the interviewees involved, as can be seen in my current project on “Black heiresses”: Only rarely is the perspective of black women considered in sociological research. My objective is to analyse the interpretation of their own everyday life experiences; the results will be presented in text format (papers and presentations in academic events) and through a documentary series.

#### **In which ways are documentary films effective means of transmitting academic results?**

It is a very powerful way to share academic activities especially with younger researchers, as well as with a non-academic audience, which usually does not have access to academic journals or events. As explained earlier, it can open access to research environments that are not otherwise accessible. It can reach a wide, international, interdisciplinary academic audience – for instance, researchers from all over the world who are interested in the Schütz films contact me –, as well as non-academic audiences, as a means of science communication. And I can show my films as well to the participants in the projects, like we did with the children who appeared in *Infancia falada* – they can see what has become of the interviews and see themselves on the screen.

## Events with Professor Hermílio Santos

Infância Falada – Histories of Transformation Based on Dialogue (2016), directors:

Hermílio Santos and Kamila Almeida, 15 June 2023, Kino Arsenal, Tübingen

Border Spaces/ Espaços de Fronteira (2022), director: Hermílio Santos, 16 June 2023,

Kino Arsenal, Tübingen

A third film Hermílio Santos showed in Tübingen, Desafios do Brasil Contemporâneo

(“Challenges of Today’s Brazil”), was screened in cooperation with the CineLatino in Cinema

Museum on 4 May 2023.

## What are your current film and documentary projects?

I am working on six projects in parallel now, including a documentary on the idea of beauty: *Ensaio sobre o Belo: Um documentário sociológico*. Another film project is focused on the music of the Brazilian composer Elomar Mello, called *Sertões de Elomar*. For once, this project is not based on sociological research. Furthermore, I’m working on *Tecidos: biografias tecidas em algodão*, a panorama of biographies of people who work with cotton. Another film called *Cidade das Mulheres* is focused on the experience of women in favelas, and a project I’ve been working on for some time now is a multi-episode project titled *Herdeiras Negras*. The research for this film is based on biographical narratives of three generations of black women belonging to three regions of the slave economy.

## How did you experience the supportive role of the College of Fellows during your stay?

The role played by the team of the College of Fellows is amazing, serving as a powerful platform for dialogue and visibility for efforts made by academics that most of the time stay isolated within the university’s walls. Research is about social realities, regardless of academic discipline, and with the support of the College of Fellows, exchange with the academic and non-academic communities is realised, giving an extraordinary new meaning to the research activities developed by fellows at the University of Tübingen.

**Hermílio Santos** is Professor of Sociology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the Freie Universität Berlin. Hermílio uses a method of biographical narrative both in his research and in his films, inspired by the sociology of Alfred Schütz. He has done research on and produced documentaries about the topics of violence in favelas, oil platforms, generations of black women in Brazil and slavery, and on the life and sociology of Schütz.

## Filmography of Hermílio Santos’s documentaries (selection):

*Infância Falada/Talked Childhood – Histories of transformation based on dialogue* (2016)  
*Mundo da Vida – A Sociologia de Alfred Schütz/Lifeworld – The Sociology of Alfred Schütz* (2018)

*Espaços de Fronteira/Border Spaces* (2022)

*Desafios do Brasil Contemporâneo/Challenges of Contemporary Brazil* (2022)

*Lifeworld II: Biographies and Narratives* (2023)

## Cooperation partners

A special thanks to the Baden-Württemberg Center for Brazil and Latin America, especially to Dr Júlia Galvez, to Matheus Romanetto, to Stefan Paul from the Tübingen arthouse cinemas ‘Arsenal’ and ‘Atelier’, and to the Interdisciplinary Center for Global South Studies, for this fruitful cooperation.

Interview: Sara Bangert  
Photograph: © Alexander Gonschior, Yanti Hölzchen, Sara Bangert



# EMBRACING ACADEMIA, ART, AND ACTIVISM

## An Interview with Dr Ponni Arasu

Contemporary academia is sometimes criticized for being an ivory tower where researchers are disengaged from the realities and struggles of everyday life. This surely does not apply to Ponni Arasu, who is currently a Global Encounters Fellow at the University of Tübingen. Working at the intersection of academic research, art, and activism, she is actively involved in many social justice movements. In December 2023, as part of the Lunch Talk Series at the College of Fellows, she gave a lecture about the methodological framework called TamilThanmai, which she developed during her research. Her honest interest and passion for a more inclusive and just world became a recurrent theme of our interview.

“MY ARTISTIC PRACTICE IS A SPACE FOR MY OWN  
NOURISHMENT BECAUSE ART MAKES ROOM  
FOR THINGS THAT FULL-FLEDGED SENTENCES AND  
FOOTNOTES IN ACADEMIC ARTICLES OR IN ACTIVIST  
WRITING OR SPEECHES CANNOT.”

“TÜBINGEN HAS BEEN A REAL PLEASURE FOR ME,  
BECAUSE IT IS PERHAPS THE ONLY ACADEMIC SPACE  
I HAVE BEEN IN SO FAR THAT HAS BEEN REALLY  
WELCOMING OF ALL PARTS OF MY PRACTICE.”  
(PONNI ARASU)

### Ponni, would you like to introduce yourself to our readers?

Alongside my scholarly work and my current fellowship in Tübingen, I generally wear several different hats in my life. I am a performer and I have had a performance art practice for over 20 years now. I am also an activist who has worked with different social movements in various parts of Sri Lanka and India on a range of issues, including gender, sexuality, labour, caste, and disability. Most notably, I was part of the campaign for decriminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults in India. The old colonial law was ruled unconstitutional in 2018. As a queer person myself, it is important for me to have been a small part of this grassroots activist movement because, in a sense, we decriminalised ourselves. That is also the reason why I became a lawyer. In my academic work, while I am a trained historian, I am committed to interdisciplinarity. For example, my PhD thesis became a historical ethnography.



### How do you navigate these different roles so smoothly? What connections, or maybe differences, do you see between academic research and artistic practice or activism?

As a historian, I know that the time we spend on Earth is so short compared to the time in a broader sense of the term, and I believe that we should leave this place in some small way a little bit better than the way we found it. So because my ethos holds it together, I barely see these different practices as being separate from one another. All research projects in my life have emerged out of social justice spaces, out of the communities that I am committed to working with, the communities that I am a part of. My artistic practice is a space for my own nourishment because art makes room for things that full-fledged sentences and footnotes in academic articles or in activist writing or speeches cannot.

### How can researchers work towards social change and conduct their research ethically and responsibly?

One of the reasons why I engage in research is because I think it is such a crucial part of building robust movements for social justice. I have identified a few things that would be useful for us to collectively move towards more ethical research. First, I think all research should begin with the question of why I am doing what I am doing. This is important in any discipline, but definitely in the social sciences, and especially when it involves working with other human beings.



Even when working with archives, we should ask the following questions: What is the connection between my research topic and me? How does it speak to my life, my identities, and my experiences? Second, there needs to be a more concerted effort to bring people from marginalised backgrounds into academic spaces, especially in the Western world. There needs to be a systematic response from universities, for example, in form of affirmative action, scholarships, and assistance. And the last thing is to honestly discuss these issues within our departments and classrooms, with our colleagues, with fellow research scholars, with people in the administrative structures. It has to be a continuous, sustained, vibrant process that is open to change.

**Would you like to say a few words about the theoretical framework and methodology you developed in your PhD called TamilThanmai?**

At the end of my PhD work, I realised that the existing concepts on how to make sense of people's identities, experiences, and resultant actions within public political spheres do not fully explain what I was seeing in my research field. TamilThanmai is not a fixed theoretical concept in the traditional sense of the term. It is rather a container – it can hold a range of different factors that we can use to describe particular social processes that are historically grounded in particular places. I have done that for one place at one time. In Tamil Nadu, where my research was, we have an anti-caste movement, but we continue to live in a very 'casteist' society. We had a moment where robust gender politics were being discussed in the public sphere and now we see a complete loss of that. So, to make sense of these present day realities, I went back to history and formulated what I call TamilThanmai as a way to understand the past and the present in order to envision an egalitarian future.

**What can TamilThanmai offer to different disciplines or as a methodological tool to different lifeworlds?**

It is an inherently interdisciplinary concept. It evolved out of ethnography, but it is profoundly committed to historical groundedness. Although I study particular people in a particular place and time, I am tracing something that resonates with different peoples and societies. After my talk at the College of Fellows, I got an email from a student from Bosnia and Herzegovina who was interested in applying TamilThanmai to their local context. Perhaps it is too early to tell, but I hope that TamilThanmai can move beyond my specific region and be more. In my own postdoctoral research in Tübingen, I am tracing histories of Tamil people in Trinidad and Tamil Nadu, and exploring their practices of worshipping the goddess Mariamman. It is going to be a very interesting experience to see how the concept can actually do the work that I claim it does.

**Finally, let's talk about your stay in Tübingen. How did you perceive German academia and the university system?**

Tübingen has been a real pleasure for me, because it is perhaps the only academic space I have been in so far that has been really welcoming of all parts of my practice.

During my stay, no one was saying, we only want Ponni, the academic; we only want Ponni, the lawyer'. For example, the Center for Gender and Diversity Research has helped me to organise a theatre performance. And it was a very supportive space! Other than that, I have been sitting with the realities and challenges that exist within the university, especially for graduate students and people who are at my own level. Both with colleagues and students, I have been discussing how to find a balance between the challenges of working within the structures of the university, financial issues, and the stress of all that is going on in the world. How do we continue to do research in the midst of all of this? How can we support each other more in our everyday life and work?

**What role did the College of Fellows play during your research fellowship?**

Academic institutions like the College of Fellows are really important because they provide valuable space for researchers pursuing their projects. It is not something I take for granted. I have had a lot of support, both in terms of administration and intellectually. A range of different things have been possible. These kinds of research fellowships for people at an early stage of their career, especially for those who take non-normative paths like myself, are incredibly important. I am deeply appreciative for this year and for this opportunity.



Interview: Kristína Janačková  
Photograph: © Ponni Arasu, @nicolacross,  
Rajashree Jaru, Geetha Wilson

**Ponni Arasu** is a feminist researcher, historian, activist, legal practitioner, translator, and theatre artist. She is trained in History at the University of Delhi, the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the University of Toronto. Her research and academic writing emerge from and feed back into contemporary social movements in South Asia. Her PhD research has led her to propose a theoretical framework and methodology called TamilThanmai. In addition to her academic work, she is involved in formal and non-formal teaching spaces in India and Sri Lanka; has produced theatre work with collaborators in India and Sri Lanka; and is a practicing expressive arts therapist working primarily with marginalised Tamil-speaking clientele.

# HOW CAN STUDYING THE GENOMIC FOOTPRINT HELP US TO UNDERSTAND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES?

**Dr Àlex Mas-Sandoval**

Dr Àlex Mas-Sandoval works in the field of population genetics. In his work, he aims to reconstruct how interactions between racial and gender hierarchies shaped population stratification since the colonisation of the Americas. In December 2023, as a short-term visiting researcher for the Global Encounters Platform, he held a lecture titled “The genetic footprint of racial and gender hierarchies”, which was co-organised by the College of Fellows. In the following text, he summarises his research project on *mestizaje/mestiçagem*.

“THE RESULTS OF MY RESEARCH CHALLENGE THE OVERSIMPLIFIED UNDERSTANDING THAT MESTIZAJE REDUCES POPULATION STRATIFICATION: A HIGH DEGREE OF MIXTURE CANNOT TRANSLATE INTO A DECREASE IN INEQUALITY IF IT OCCURS WITH STRONG GENDERED PATTERNS.”  
(ÀLEX MAS-SANDOVAL)

At the end of the 15th century, European powers started the colonisation of America, a continent that had been inhabited for thousands of years. To sustain the colonisation process, Europeans brought more than ten million people from sub-Saharan Africa and enslaved them. Through the lens of population genetics, nowadays the populations of the American continent are the outcome of the admixture of Native American, European, and sub-Saharan genetic ancestries.

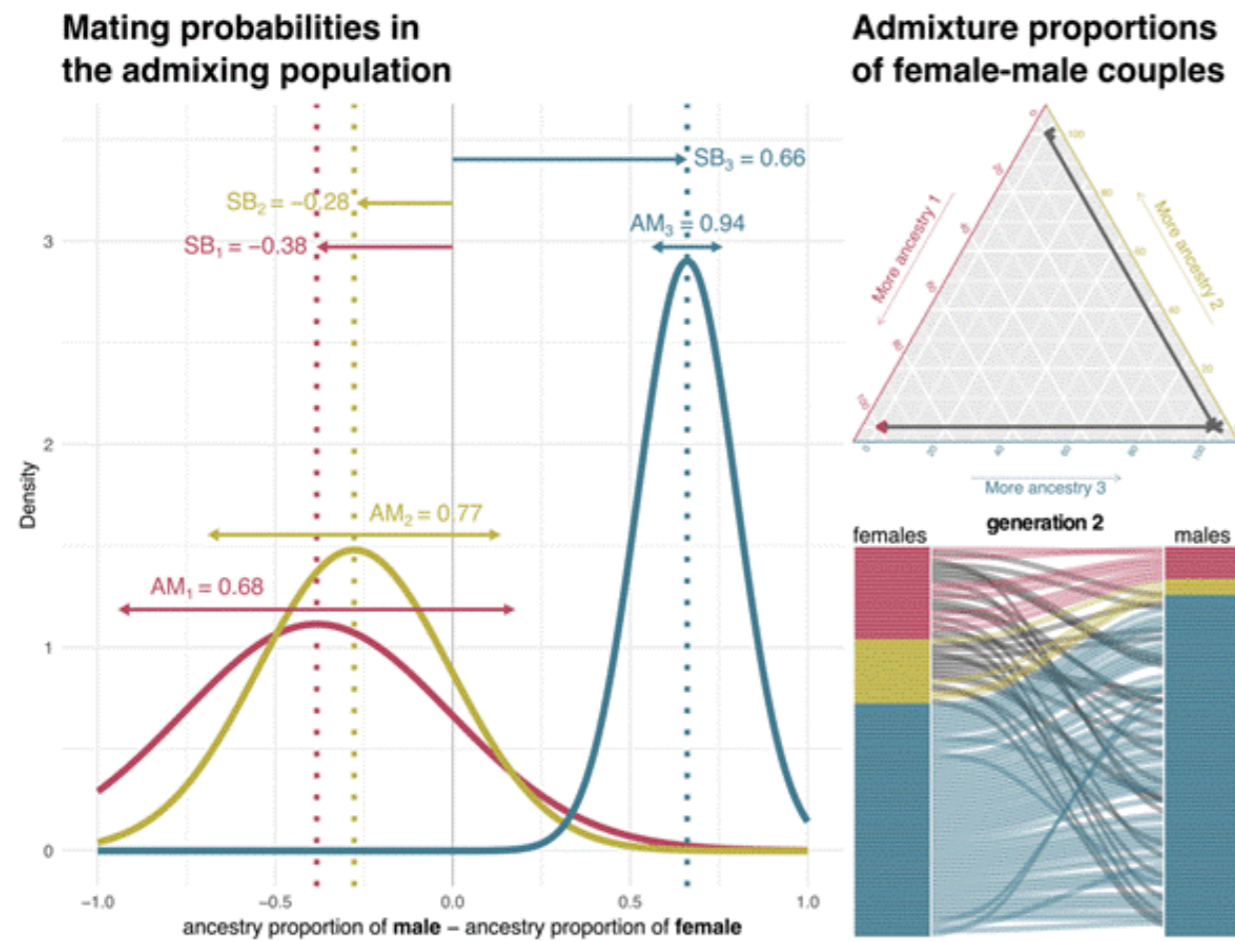
After the abolition of slavery, the socioeconomic stratification of the population remained based on hierarchical notions of racial difference. In the US, African-American communities suffered explicit segregation policies long after the abolition. In addition, in Latin America, European colonial powers and creole elites implemented eugenicist policies under the frame of *mestizaje/mestiçagem*.

*Mestizaje/mestiçagem* refers to the process of admixture of Native American, European, and sub-Saharan ancestries in the context of European colonisation. On the one hand, *mestizaje/mestiçagem* promotes and facilitates interactions across hierarchical differences understood as ‘racial’, differences of class, and differences of gender. On the other hand, *mestizaje/mestiçagem* reinforces those hierarchies.

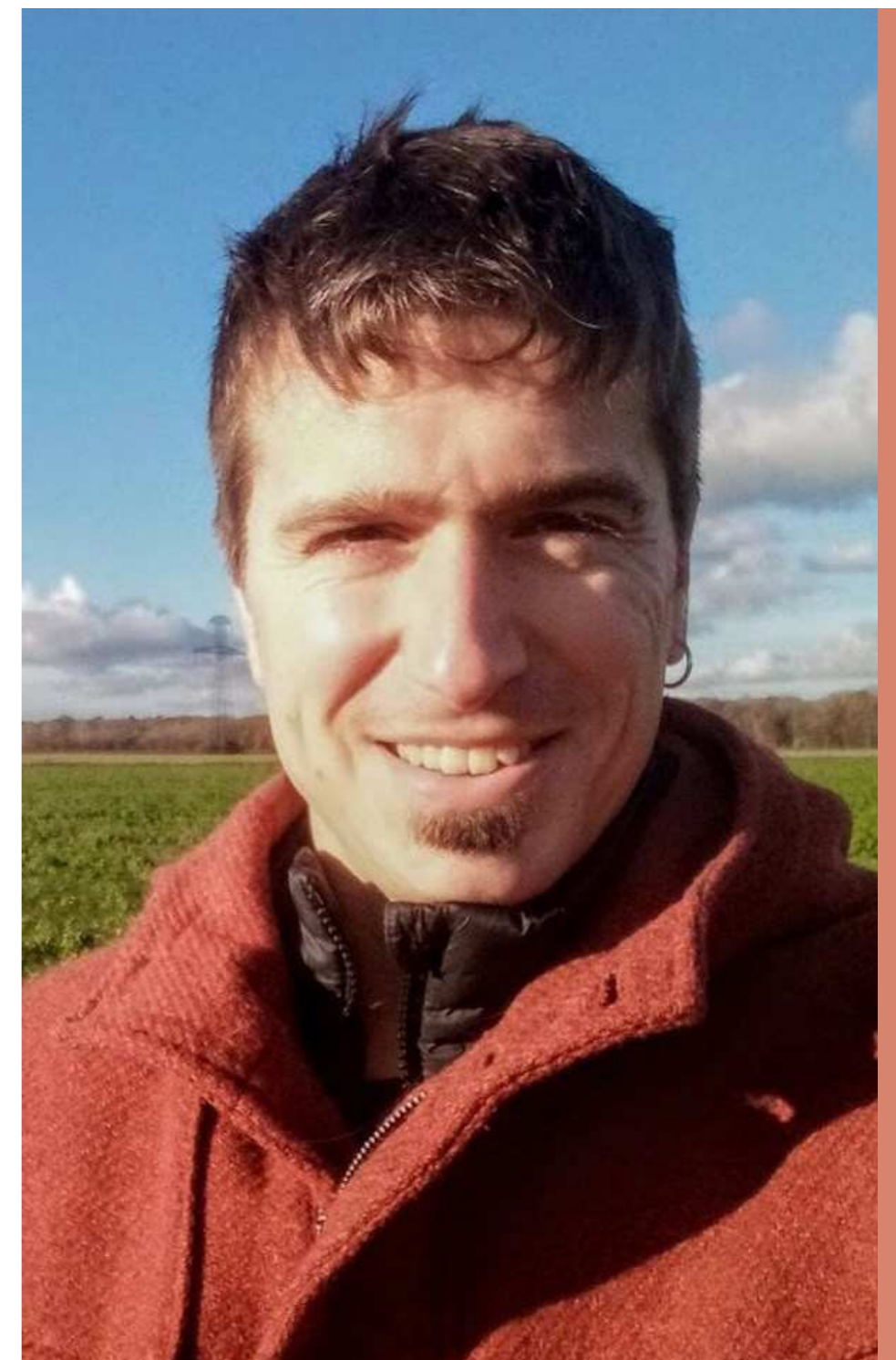
As a population geneticist, I focus my research on analysing the admixture dynamics of the population. I have developed a methodology to quantify how much the mating has been non-random regarding the proportion of the genome that males and females have inherited from Native Americans, Europeans or sub-Saharan Africans. In short, I measure the length of the DNA fragments that each individual has inherited from each of these three populations. Longer fragments from the same genetic ancestry are the result of a stronger ancestry-related stratification in the populations during the last 20 generations. In contrast, shorter alternate fragments from different ancestries show lower population stratification.

In my Humboldt Lecture, which took place in December 2023, I talked about how I unveiled the historical dynamics of *mestizaje/mestiçagem* by studying the DNA after generations of mating under the interaction of racial and gender hierarchies. The results of my research challenge the oversimplified understanding that *mestizaje* reduces population stratification: a high degree of mixture cannot translate into a decrease in inequality if it occurs with strong gendered patterns. Instead, this scenario provides evidence for a deep interaction between racial and gender hierarchies that shapes the social structure of the population. Often, *mestizaje* in Latin America has been compared to the US (with a scenario shaped by the One Drop rule and segregation policies) to argue that the higher levels of mixture in *mestizaje* lead to a more egalitarian society. However, from an intersectional perspective, *mestizaje* reveals itself to be shaped by a strong interaction of racial and gender hierarchies, as mating between women of higher Native American ancestry and men with higher European ancestry has been more frequent than the other way around.

In the framework of the colonisation of the Americas, the intersection of racial, class and gender hierarchies delimits the network of interactions of an individual and constrains mating. However, in other contexts, the drivers of cultural and socioeconomic stratification should be discussed in other terms. Addressing each scenario accurately, the footprint left by social stratification in the genome can contribute to the reconstruction of the evolution of inequalities throughout human history.



Caption: Assortative mating (AM) and sex bias (SB) values that shape the mating probabilities in a simulation example of 19 generations from the colonisation of America to nowadays. Red, yellow and blue correspond to sub-Saharan African, Native American, and European genetic ancestries. In the left, the mating probability for all possible male-female couples is set as a function of the differences in the genetic ancestry proportions. We assume a normal distribution, where SB sets the mean and AM is inversely proportional to the variance. In the right, the ancestry proportions of mating couples in each generation in ternary plots (top) and barplots (bottom), based on the mating probabilities defined in the left. In the top plots, each arrow represents a couple, where the arrow tail and head coordinates show the ancestry proportions of the female and the male, respectively. In the bottom, the barplots represent male and female ancestry proportions, linked by curved lines reflecting mating.



Text: Àlex Mas-Sandoval  
Photographs: © Àlex Mas-Sandoval

Àlex Mas-Sandoval is a population geneticist and data scientist, interested in how social inequalities and stratification impact the genomic footprint of populations across time and space. Currently, he is a short-term visiting researcher at the University of Tübingen in the framework of the Global Encounters Platform. He received his PhD at the Institut de Biologia Evolutiva (UPF) in Barcelona, Spain, and at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He spent his postdoctoral period at Imperial College London and is now affiliated with the Università di Bologna, Italy where he works as a research fellow at the Department of Statistical Sciences "Paolo Fortunati".

# WHY UNIVERSITIES MATTER IN TIMES OF WAR

## An Interview with Dr Tetjana Midjana

Dr Tetjana Midjana is an Associate Professor at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine. As a Humboldt Fellow in Tübingen from April 2022, she is working at the Department of General Rhetoric on a research project titled “Rhetoric of Presidential War Speeches in the War of Aggression against Ukraine”. In the interview she gave us, she presented her stay in Tübingen in relation to the political events in her home country, and explained how her field of research bring an interpretation to the current historical situation in Europe and beyond.

### What made you choose Tübingen as a research place and how did you choose the theme of your current project?

It is hard to believe, but the 21st century is also the century of wars. When my home country, Ukraine, was attacked by Russia on February 24, 2022 with missiles, aerial bombs, rocket artillery, this event destroyed all the private and professional goals of Ukrainians. All of a sudden, it was all about protecting life.

I have also learned during this difficult time that you are never alone. Right at the beginning of the war, the scholarship programmes of the University of Tübingen and the Philipp Schwartz Initiative for at-risk scientists from Ukraine were announced. The idea for the topic of the research project came from the war. I have decided to turn to the “rhetoric of presidential war speeches in the war of aggression against Ukraine”.

The submitted project was supported by the Seminar for General Rhetoric and my former scientific supervisor Professor Joachim Knape. I have had long-standing contacts with this institute, because I did my PhD on the topic of “Periphrase” in 1999-2004. The doctoral project was concerned with understanding the periphrase of semantic, syntactic, textual linguistic, and rhetorical perspective in order to distinguish it from metaphor, metonymy, and paraphrase.

### Could you tell us more about the focus of your project?

The actual project I am working on aims at testing two working hypotheses:

1. The presidential speeches concerning the war against Ukraine in 2022 are about the speech type “war speech”, which takes on a very special character in the historical situation of 2022.

2. The Russian presidential speeches are to be specified as offensive speeches and the Ukrainian speeches as defensive ones. Or is it perhaps possible to work out a new type of speech?

Methodologically, the phenomena are to be analysed rhetorically and textually on a linguistic level. Zelensky’s wartime speeches seem to be characterised by a highly persuasive character, because they have a great media impact. Here is the question: What makes these speeches so effective? However, the same public interest applies to the war speeches of Russian President Vladimir Putin, because they are the speeches of the aggressor.



Text: Mădălina Guzun  
Photograph: © Alexander Gonschior

### How would you describe your research stay in Tübingen?

Since April 2022, I have not only been able to conduct research in safety, but also to present and discuss my research results in public. The panel for the discussion was provided by the College of Fellows. Thanks to its excellent organisation and advertising, I was able to welcome many teachers, students, and other interested parties to my Humboldt lecture at the University of Tübingen. In a meeting initiated by the College of Fellows, we also discussed ideas for further collaborations. In addition, I am offering an advanced seminar for rhetoric students at the University of Tübingen in the summer semester of 2024. In this course, we want to take a closer look at ten speeches given by both presidents. Research, teaching, and discussions fill me up and help me a lot not to think about the war all the time. For this opportunity, I owe the Philipp Schwartz Initiative, the Department of General Rhetoric, as well as the College of Fellows. I sincerely hope that all our efforts will contribute to strengthening peace in the world.

**Tetjana Midjana** studied German language and literature at the University of Lviv in Ukraine. Between 1999 and 2004, she worked on her PhD centered around the subject of the periphrase under the supervision of Professor Joachim Knape at the Department of General Rhetoric, University of Tübingen. In 2005, she started teaching at the Department for German Philology at the University of Lviv.

# THE RESISTANCE OF UKRAINIAN ACADEMIA AGAINST ANNIHILATION

## Dr Mykola Saltanov

Dr Mykola Saltanov obtained his PhD in philosophy at the Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, Ukraine. His research is focused on German classical and modern practical philosophy. From March to November 2023, he was a fellow in Intercultural Studies, dedicating himself to the research project "The Intercultural Dialog and the Problematisation of the Challenges of Globalisation". The practical side of his research directly relates to political and social challenges, which brought us to discuss with Dr Saltanov the way in which current historical events like the war reflect in the academic realm.



**"TODAY, WHEN GLOBALISATION BLURS OR OPENS THE BORDERS OF NATIONAL STATES AND PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO CLOSELY COEXIST WITH DIVERSE CULTURAL VALUES, RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS OR POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES, THERE ARISES A NEED FOR PRESERVING A REASONABLE DIVERSITY."  
(MYKOLA SALTANOV)**

### **What problem or question does your research address and what fascinates you about your research area?**

I developed a model for understanding "recognition" in modern practical philosophy. Recognition takes place at three levels: individual (recognition and the problem of constituting identity), collective (recognition and the problem of social justice, human rights and co-existence of all cultural forms on the even conditions in cross-cultural dialogue), and interstate (recognition of the problem of domestic and external legitimacy of the state). The most intriguing questions in my research are the following: What criteria should we use to consider any culture or cultural practices as equal or unequal? It is necessary to examine closely the relationship between the identity of the cultural group and the self-consciousness of the individual. In this sense, it is also applicable to the research of rapprochement abilities between cultural majority and cultural minority groups.

### **Would you say that the social relevance of your project is connected with these two questions?**

Yes, for I study the mechanisms of preventing the dominance of one culture over another, and that research has a socio-cultural significance. Today, when globalisation blurs or opens the borders of national states and people are forced to closely coexist with diverse cultural values, religious systems or political perspectives, there arises a need for preserving a reasonable diversity. Especially in the sphere of multicultural societies, the demand to recognise the autonomy of one cultural group is based on an idea of the parallel existence of diverse cultures that can permeate, enrich and develop each other. Intercultural dialogue and recognition not only play an important role in critical reflection on the importance of pluralism, dialogue and freedom in the context of globalisation, but are also particularly relevant in view of the current Russian-Ukrainian war.

### **What does it mean for you to do research abroad when your country is at war?**

Being abroad while one's country is at war entails physical safety from direct risks, but it is impossible to fully distance oneself from the homeland. The phenomenon of war itself is not novel, yet the experience of it is unique and unforgettable. Being distant from the homeland does not alleviate the pain caused by the ongoing events. Communicating with relatives in Ukraine, one comprehends that people, as horrendous as it may sound, become accustomed to war. Reading the news, one horrifyingly realises that those people with whom one has spent a significant part of one's lives could end up in the danger zone. It is entirely natural to call and inquire whether they are alive.

### **How does the political situation in Ukraine show itself from Germany?**

Local media outlets have recently presented information in a more balanced manner compared to the initial months of the war, when Russian propaganda narratives occasionally surfaced in newspapers or television. Currently, the German press endeavors to be eyewitnesses to the events, and there has been a noticeable increase in direct coverage by German journalists.

### **How did the war affect the academic environment?**

In the first two weeks of the war, university life froze in anticipation of shock and uncertainty. However, by March, education resumed in an online mode, as the interruption of education could affect the country's ability to train the youth, essential for the state's future. In my hometown of Kharkiv, approximately 30 universities and institutes continued to operate. Most professors who left Ukraine continue to teach online. I volunteer to teach at a university twice a week to maintain professional and psycho-emotional contact with Ukraine. My students cope with the impossibility of choosing between full integration into Europe and the desire to return to Ukraine, studying thus at a Ukrainian university (online) while also attending a European university (in person). But the longer the war lasts, the more Ukrainian professionals will integrate into the European environment, without returning to their country of origin.

### **The National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine called the consequences of Russia's actions a "scientificide" (destructions of higher education and science). What is your opinion?**

It's difficult to disagree with this assessment. In Ukraine, over 3,400 educational institutions suffered damages due to Russian aggression, with 353 being completely destroyed. However, science and education cannot be simply annihilated, but they resist the war.

### **How can we foster intercultural dialogue in times of war?**

We must promote cultural dialogue rather than cultural expansion. Contemporary Russia denies the right to the existence of Ukrainian identity or culture, whereas cultural dialogue must occur on the basis of equality. After the war, people returning to Ukraine will enrich Ukrainian culture with that of other European countries, leaving no chance for Russian cultural expansion.

**Mykola Saltanov** graduated with honours from the Faculty of Philosophy of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University in 2010. In 2014, he defended his doctoral thesis titled "The Problem of Recognition in German Classical and Modern Practical Philosophy". He participated in international scientific conferences and summer schools in Germany, Austria, Spain, Armenia, Moldova, and China. He was a scholarship holder of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt a.M., as well as a fellow of the Austrian Academic Exchange Service (OeAD) at the University of Vienna. In 2022, he conducted research in the field of bioethics at the University of Münster at the Institute of Ethics, History and Theory of Medicine.

Interview: Mădălina Guzun  
Photograph: © Alexander Gonschior

# FROM GARDEN EXPERIMENTS TO HERBARIUM COLLECTIONS: UTILIZING DIFFERENT METHODS TO UNDERSTAND PLANT EVOLUTION

## An Interview with Dr Ramona-Elena Irimia

Dr Ramona-Elena Irimia is a plant biologist with expertise in plant evolutionary ecology, population genomics, biological invasions, and biogeography. In her work, she relies on a range of research methods, including common garden experiments, plant genotyping, and most recently, studying historic genomic data from museum collections. In June 2023, she presented her research project under the title “Using Herbaria to Track Biological Invasions and Plant Response to Climate Change – A Case Study of Japanese Knotweed” during the Lunch Talk Series – a popular event format at the College of Fellows.

“MUSEUM SPECIMENS CAN GREATLY EXPAND THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCH, AS THEY CAN PROVIDE ACCESS TO EXTINCT SPECIES OR INDIVIDUALS FROM REMOTE AREAS THAT WOULD BE HARD TO ACCESS OR COLLECT IN THE WILD NOWADAYS.”

“MY LUNCH TALK LAST YEAR ABOUT THE USE OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS TO STUDY PLANT RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE ENDED IN AN ENGAGING DIALOGUE AND STIMULATING EXCHANGE OF IDEAS.”

(RAMONA-ELENA IRIMIA)

**In your recent research, you explore historical DNA from museum collections to study the evolutionary history of Japanese knotweed – one of the world’s worst invasive weeds. What challenges do you face when working with herbarium collections? How is this kind of work different from research conducted in natural environments?**

Herbarium collections are preserved plant specimens that comprise a vast amount of botanical metadata including information on plant functional traits, changes in plant physiology (i.e. leaf, flowering, and fruiting time), plant interactions with pollinators, herbivores and pathogens, shifts in species distribution, anthropogenic pollution, and in addition are a good source of DNA. The study of herbarium specimens may allow us to determine how species respond to environmental and anthropogenic perturbations, track biological invasions, and understand the genetic basis of species adaptation to different habitats.



Museum specimens can greatly expand the resources available for research, as they can provide access to extinct species or individuals from remote areas that would be hard to access or collect in the wild nowadays. Working with museum collections poses several challenges. Herbarium collections require proper handling, preservation and storage conditions (constant temperature and humidity), and curation to maintain their integrity and preserve them for future use. Gaining access to physical specimens can sometimes be challenging particularly for noxious weeds or endangered taxa listed in the CITES (The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and may require getting special permits and adhering to ethical guidelines on herbarium practices and use. Finally, working with historical DNA extracted from herbarium specimens presents some unique challenges as the DNA is highly degraded and present in small quantity, which can make it difficult to extract, amplify, and sequence it.

**How can research findings from your field, plant ecology and evolution, be translated for a wider non-specialist audience? What strategies do you use there, e.g. when giving talks? How did these feature in your Lunch Talk, and what are your takeaways from the interdisciplinary discussion?**

I think translating the research findings to a non-specialist audience implies using an accessible and simple language that is easy to understand by the target group. To make the content of my talk more accessible, I use visual aids and try to make the narrative relatable by providing real life examples to explain scientific concepts and keep people engaged. The Lunch Talks series organized by the College of Fellows is a great initiative for interdisciplinary discussion and networking, as it brings together fellows with different backgrounds and fields of expertise.





My Lunch Talk last year about the use of natural history collections to study plant response to climate change ended in an engaging dialogue and stimulating exchange of ideas. It was an interesting experience for me to hear different viewpoints and gain new insights about my work that go beyond the boundary of my discipline. Moreover, it sparked some reflection on future interdisciplinary collaborative projects.

**Could you please outline the relevance of your work, especially in the context of climate change and loss of biodiversity?**

My work examines the ecological and evolutionary mechanisms that allow plant species to cope with changing environments. Specifically, I use invasive species – which can be regarded as replicated natural experiments across novel environments – as study systems to investigate species resilience and range shifts in response to climate change and explore the limits of plant adaptive potential. This information can assist in developing policy strategies for the management of endangered and vulnerable species and aid in the effort of biodiversity conservation and crop improvement. Moreover, my findings can potentially serve as a foundation for future studies to investigate how we can better manage biological invasion events by designing targeted strategies that incorporate genomic information into the management tools.

**You grew up and studied in Romania, then moved to Portugal for your PhD, spent one year in the UK as a visiting researcher, and now you are a postdoctoral fellow in Germany. How do you perceive different academic traditions of these countries?**

I think international mobility is an essential part of the training of a young researcher. Professionally, it may allow access to infrastructure and resources that are not available in the home country and it fosters new collaborations increasing the researcher's visibility. Living and working in different EU countries provided me the opportunity to get a better understanding of the academic and scientific landscape across Europe and helped me to become more independent and resilient to change. Compared to my home country where universities are more focused on teaching and education, academic institutions in Western Europe also have a strong international reputation for doing excellent research, are better funded, and offer more career prospects.

Interview: Kristína Janačková  
Photographs: © Patrick Gerstorfer

**Ramona-Elena Irimia** is a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow jointly at the Institute of Evolution and Ecology at the University of Tübingen. In her research, Irimia explores how invasive plant species adapt to changing environments, focusing on long-term ecological and evolutionary processes underlying the adaptation. Irimia completed her Bachelor and Master Studies in Biology and Ecology at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania. For her PhD in Biosciences, she moved to the University of Coimbra, Portugal, and spent one year as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Durham, UK. Prior to her Marie Curie Fellowship, she worked as a Postdoctoral Researcher in Plant Ecology and Evolution at the University of Tübingen.

# TÜBINGEN OR IRRESISTIBLE MEMORIES OF THE LEFT BANK OF THE NECKAR

## Professor Mohammed Ech-Cheikh

Mohammed Ech-Cheikh is a professor of Philosophy at Hassan II University in Casablanca, Morocco; 2022 and 2023 he was a distinguished research fellow at the College of Fellows. He worked on a project focused on Arab philosophy and transcultural philosophy, as well as on learning the German language, which left an important mark on his experience. During his stay in Tübingen, he presented his work to the College of Fellow's Focus Group "Intercultural Studies", and in the Lunch Talks lecture series, asking in his presentation the following question: "Would We Need to Re-read Classical Arab Philosophers?" (26 January 2023). Professor Ech-Cheikh's research not only brings an affirmative answer to that question, but invites us to reflect upon the language in which philosophy each time expresses itself.

**"THE FOREIGN VISITOR NOTICES  
THAT TÜBINGEN IS NOT THE CITY  
TO WHICH A UNIVERSITY BELONGS,  
BUT IT IS THE UNIVERSITY, WITH ITS SIXTY  
DOZEN FACULTIES, WHICH OWNS A CITY!"**

**(MOHAMMED ECH-CHEIKH)**

### "I have a dream": To read German philosophers in their own language

I always loved the German language, even though I consider the idea expressed by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who saw in ancient Greek and modern German the only languages capable of 'philosophising', to be a Eurocentric, even a Germano-centric one. And I still love the language even though Friedrich Nietzsche preferred the French translation of his books to the German original and thought that his philosophical ideas were better understood in French by the French than in German by the Germans.

About twenty years ago, I started learning German: first through a personal effort, and then at the Goethe Institute in Casablanca (Morocco). I had a great passion for German philosophers, but I read their works in French or English. I had an ardent desire to improve my basic German. When I arrived in Tübingen in December 2022, the first thing I thought of enrolling in the German courses offered by the university. But, as Martin Buber happily put it in his famous book *I and Thou (Ich und Du)*, my "existential dialogue" in German with the Germans has been of great comfort to me. It helped me to strengthen my feverish German and to make my rusty one shine with a little brilliance ... that's why I found myself improving my German not in university classrooms, but in the alleys of the city.

One day I was accosted by a duck on the left bank of the Neckar. She seemed very hungry. I remembered that I had Moroccan strawberries in my bag. I sat next to the duck and started feeding her with strawberries. She loved and enjoyed them. I did not notice the lady who was watching the scene in amazement. When my eyes met hers, she smiled beautifully and uttered a German word which intrigued me: "mutig". I ran back to my residence to pick up the German dictionary and look up the contextual meaning of the word: "Brave", I exclaimed. Finally, I learned a German word in its natural environment. I will never forget it.



On another day, the owner of my residence invited me to a dinner which he used to organise with his friends and their wives. During dinner, I felt remorse, for it seemed to me that, ethically speaking, I was imposing on the guests to speak English. But suddenly, in a relaxed atmosphere, habit took over, and everyone started speaking in German about a pressing subject: the war in Ukraine. At this point, the owner apologised to me for this excursion into German and asked me if I had understood what they were talking about. It was then that I formulated my first "natural" German sentence and not "artificial" one as I used to formulate it while doing my German exercises, and it was then that I spontaneously said: ("Sie sprechen über Krieg und Frieden" ("You speak about war and peace"). Everyone laughed: welcome to the German-speaking world!

### A university that owns a city

If you are told that a city has a university or more than one, this seems like ordinary information. But in Tübingen things are different: the foreign visitor realises that Tübingen is not the city to which a university belongs, but it is the university, with its sixty dozen faculties and its large land holdings, which owns a city! The university is at the center, not only from the point of view of its accessibility, but also from the point of view of the land.

*Philosophia ancilla theologiae* ("Philosophy is the servant of theology")

*Theologia ancilla philosophiae* ("Theology is the servant of philosophy")

If one were told that the importance given to theological studies declined with the secularisation movement in Europe, including Germany, after the Age of Enlightenment, this would seem understandable. But if this does not seem to be fully true for Tübingen, as it still has a great tradition of studying and publishing theological works. Tübingen is the city where one has the opportunity to consult the rarest and most out-of-print works of theology, not only in the university library, but also at bookstores. I was glad to find a translation of rare works into French or English to be able to use them in comparative theology and comparative hermeneutics courses that I teach to my Moroccan students: the complete works of Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling, etc.

Throughout my life, first as a philosophy student, then as a professor, wherever I set foot for a seminar or a conference (Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Rome, Toronto, etc.), my first acquaintances were booksellers. Therefore, I sometimes feel like the heir to a long and rich Arab-Muslim tradition that gave great value to scribes, copyists, and booksellers, to such an extent that it reserved monographs and biographies to this category of men of letters and culture. Additionally, some great Arab thinkers were scribes and copyists. Moreover, one of the greatest philosophers of Islam, accused of heresy and unfortunately poorly studied even today, was a copyist and a bookseller.

As for the presence of second-hand booksellers and my friendship with them, Tübingen was no exception. Even more, Tübingen seduced me by offering me books on the streets every day, bearing the sign "Zu verschenken", as if the town were an open-air book fair. I formed an unusual friendship with the bookstore in the city center. The delights of philosophy, theology, and the human sciences seemed to be words that weaved this incredible friendship.

#### **Should we reread the book of Arabic wisdom in Tübingen?**

Among the happy dates that will remain etched in my memory of the one-year stay in Tübingen, three dates stand out most: 12 January, 2023, 26 January, 2023, and 2 March, 2023.

The first date coincided with an invitation from Professor Lejla Demiri of the Center for Islamic Theology to give a presentation on my work, *The Book of Arabic Wisdom*. Among the themes presented at this conference, there is one that is close to everyone's heart in this time of distress caused by the overexploitation of nature: How should we relate to the Other? We remember the debate between two great Jewish philosophers: Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. Both are thinkers who have approached the topic of Otherness. For Buber, the relationship to the Other is a symmetrical one: I respect the Other and he must in turn respect me. For Levinas, this relationship is asymmetrical: I must respect him, even if I don't expect him to respect me in turn. Have the Arab sages reached this level of reflection? For Levinas, the Other is my responsibility.

But who is this Other? He's another human being. For Ibn Arabi, the other – who does not have to be another human being, but can also be a plant or an animal – is my responsibility. Thus, the tree is my responsibility.

The second date is related to an invitation from the College of Fellows to give a Lunch Talk on the topic "Would We Need to Re-Read Classical Arab Philosophers?" at the Evangelisches Stift. In this talk, I have tried to present the Arab philosophers not as they often are – as theologians who were only interested in the relationship between reason and revelation, wisdom and Sharia, and who lived in the mists of metaphysics –, but as philosophers who started from concrete situations to philosophise and who reflected on desire, pleasure, music, life, happiness, joy, melancholy, life and death.

The third is linked to an invitation from PD Dr Niels Weidtmann, director of the College of Fellows, to deepen the ideas expressed in the previous Lunch Talk, and to enrich this warm welcome and fruitful discussion. The discussion invigorated by my colleagues has placed us in a philosophical perspective that breaks out of its disciplinary or Eurocentric straitjacket to embrace a broader, more transcultural view.

#### **In front of Hölderlin's grave**

Perhaps one of the first things you learn about this city when you are interested in philosophy and literature is that it is the place, where the house and grave of the great German poet Hölderlin are located, as it bears witness to the passage of his great friend, the philosopher Hegel. I remember that the landlady of the apartment I rented was very surprised when she learned one day from me that the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, in that directives to his family, had demanded that one of the members of the family should read Hölderlin's verses at his burial ceremony.





***Cry, the Beloved Country***

This title from the famous novel by South African writer Alan Paton, which is a passionate tale of racial injustice that brought international attention to the problem of Apartheid in South Africa, inspires me to share and insight from a one-day visit to the city of Freiburg. I had been tempted to visit this city because of what I had read about it, the sojourns of philosophers in it, and certain philosophical events and colloquiums that took place there. Yet I had planned, above all, to visit the apartment of the tragically deceased German philosopher Edith Stein and the house of her master Edmund Husserl. What surprised me most of all during the visit was that out of devotion to her master, Edith Stein had taken up residence on the same street.



I contemplated this physical as well as spiritual closeness, this elective affinity, only to realise the veneration that this philosopher, who died under atrocious conditions, had for her master. It was at this moment when I remembered that his thesis was on sympathy! Irony of fate or tragedy of history? I don't know.

Finally, when I am asked to summarise my stay in Tübingen in a few images, I can present the following collage in the form of an anthology of memories: A warm welcome, coupled with a smile as angelic as that of Niels Weidtmann, fruitful meetings and exchanges with Bernd Engler, Stefan Schreiner, Regula Forster, Holger Zellentin, Omar Hamdan, Abdelaali El Maghraoui.

Enriching discussions with sympathetic colleagues in each Thursday's colloquia of the College of Fellows' Focus Group "Intercultural Studies", and in meetings organised by the College of Fellows. A generous welcome of my presentation and of my lunch talk, which I hope has helped to tone down the somewhat dull image that we still tend to have of Arab-Islamic philosophy. Magnificent strolls along the banks of the Neckar and in the city gardens, German mothers proud to talk to their babies carried behind their bicycles, and the smells of coffee and chocolate emanating from the cafeteria of the university library on freezing mornings.

Text: Mohammed Ech-Cheikh  
Photographs: © Mohammed Ech-Cheikh

**Mohammed Ech-Cheikh** is a professor of philosophy at Hassan II University (Casablanca – Morocco). He is interested in the philosophy of values, ethics and political philosophy and tries to find 'lines of flight' outside all dogmatic, partisan, nationalist and centric fences. He is the head of the philosophy department and the coordinator of the Master's course "Philosophy and Society". He has written twenty books on modern Western philosophy and classical Arab-Islamic thought, including a four-volume book on modernity and its critiques and 'The Book of Arabic Wisdom'. His latest book is an introduction to aesthetics, where different philosophers of all Western and Eastern shades give their opinions on the beautiful, the ugly and the sublime.

# EXPLORING DIFFERENT LIFEWORLDS THROUGH ECO-PHENOMENOLOGY

## An Interview with Dr Abiodun Afolabi

Dr Abiodun Afolabi has been a fellow in Intercultural Studies in Tübingen from May 2023 to January 2024, working on a research project titled "Eliciting the Phenomenology of Culture in Global Environmental Ethics". During his stay, he organised the international workshop "Eco-phenomenology: Exploring Eco-phenomenological Concepts and Theories from and for Africa's Ecological Lifeworld".

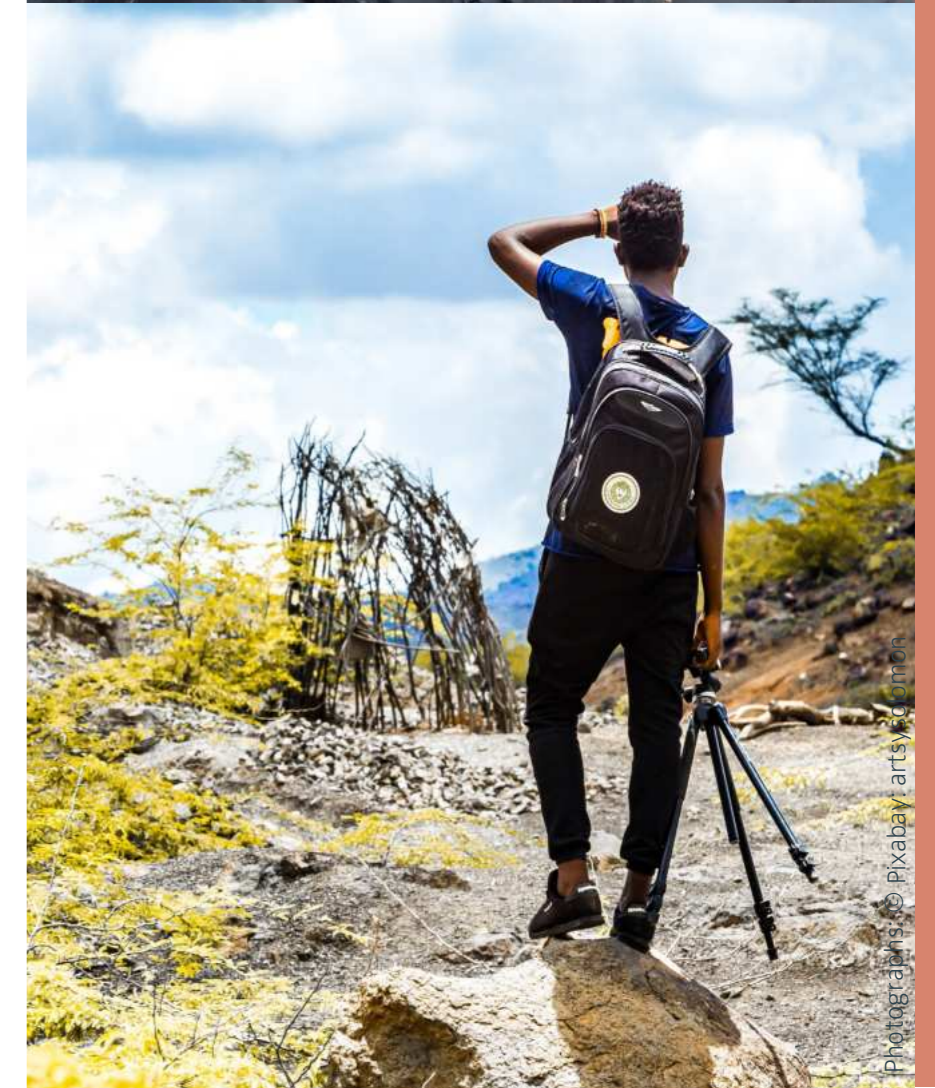
**"PHENOMENOLOGY AND ECO-PHENOMENOLOGY OPEN THE UNKNOWINGNESS ON WHICH ANY FORM OF KNOWING RELIES."**

**(ABIODUN AFOLABI)**

**Your workshop was focused on eco-phenomenology in and from African lifeworlds. Could you explain in short how you understand the concept of "eco-phenomenology"?**

Well, one cannot understand eco-phenomenology without first understanding phenomenology. Phenomenology is a tradition of philosophy that takes the datum of experience seriously. This approach to philosophy insists not on objective knowledge, but on the subjective knowledge found in experience as crucial to understanding reality. Eco-phenomenology is therefore the application of phenomenological methods to interpret experiences related to the natural environment and its constituent species. The African lifeworld is indeed an important site for eco-phenomenology, given its treatment as savage and brutish in the colonial imagery and as a waste or dump site in the current neo-liberal order.

The African lifeworld, for me, is significant for understanding and addressing ecological crises because their situated experiences of dwelling and livelihood of her people are often connected to the flora and fauna of the natural environment. An engagement with the ecological lifeworld has somehow revealed that African people originally appreciated the richness, warmth, and solidarity of the environment in contrast to the faceless anonymity and ice-cold rationality of modern society, which sees mountains and rivers as economic zones of survival and sustenance rather than being infused with meanings. Phenomenology and eco-phenomenology in particular open the unknowingness on which any form of knowing relies. Hence, in Africa, there are neglected ways of relating with land, water, etc. that have potential insights for understanding our place in the world and the environment we inhabit.



### How do you perceive European and African lifeworlds?

From my experience, there are marked differences between both lifeworlds. While the European lifeworld bolsters and rewards individualism in its setup, many societies there understand basic elements of humanity unlike modern African societies. The African lifeworld is primarily built upon communities and her ecological lifeworld has many layers based on the history of her existence. The African perception of and relation with the environment have been muddled in the history of existence. During the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times, the African person is used to different ways of perceiving the environment. In precolonial times, although the people had a crude affection for nature, nature was very close to them, and they treated the environment as an integral part of their existence. In the colonial era, the subjugation by slave masters infused in their consciousness the idea of controlling nature in a wild manner, and this became a way of life. Nowadays, that is in contemporary African societies, at least the ones I am familiar with, people's experience of the environment has been skewed to one that presses for instrumental benefits even when we now know that such an approach is detrimental to our long-term wellbeing. While the understanding of what is wrong with our relationship with the environment seems to be evident in Africa, unlike in Europe, the power to change seems not to be within the power of the people in direct terms.

### How do you experience the German lifeworld from an (eco-)phenomenological perspective?

The German lifeworld presents to me a very detailed understanding of what it means to live with the environment. During my stay, I had the opportunity to visit the Black Forest in the state of Baden-Württemberg, southwest Germany, and I listened to the forest ranger, who shared with us some of the efforts put in place to understand the bio-species and the water ways within that environment. It occurred to me that, for the Germans, the dedication to explore nature does not follow any instrumental concerns. Rather, they seek to understand the intrinsic worth of nature and this cuts across every aspect of their relationship with the environment and its constituent organisms.

There is no better way to practice eco-phenomenology than to open ourselves to the obscure elements of nature that have hindered our expanded mode of dwelling.



Interview: Mădălina Guzun  
Photographs: © Abiodun Afolabi, Pixabay:  
artsysolomon, Alexander Gonschior

**Abiodun Afolabi** holds a Bachelor's and honours degree in Philosophy from Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. He received his M.A. Degree in Philosophy from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and afterwards, he completed his PhD at the Department of Philosophy, Rhodes University, South Africa. Dr Afolabi received the prestigious doctoral scholarship from the Allan Gray Center for Leadership Ethics, Rhodes University, between 2019 and 2021. He is also a Research Associate at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and a faculty member at the Department of Philosophy, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. He is keenly interested in conceptualising and resolving peculiar development and global justice problems afflicting vulnerable people worldwide, particularly in African societies. His research interests are in the areas of applied ethics, climate change ethics, migration studies, global (environmental) justice, biopolitics, and eco-phenomenology.

# LOOKING BACK TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ROMANTIC EMPIRICISM

## An Interview with Dr Dalia Nassar

Dr Dalia Nassar is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney and she was a Humboldt Research Fellow in Tübingen from May 2022 until July 2023 under the same fellowship scheme. Her research sits at the intersection of environmental philosophy, aesthetics, and the history of German philosophy, and the theme she worked on in Tübingen focused on “Romantic Empiricism: Nature, Art, and Ecology from Herder to Humboldt”. She presented her work at the university within the Humboldt Lecture Series 2022–2023, giving a presentation titled “From Romantic Empiricism to the Embodied History of Trees” on 11 January 2023. More than just a site for academic research, Tübingen, for Dalia Nassar, is a place where she returns to in order to gather her ideas within a very specific natural and social ambiance.

“WE HAVE TO DEVELOP A NEW UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE ACTIVITY OF KNOWING, WHICH IS BASED  
ON THIS NEW ECOLOGICAL MODEL.  
TO THINK ABOUT KNOWLEDGE  
AS A COLLABORATION  
WITH THE KNOWN.”

(DALIA NASSAR)

### What is it so special about Tübingen so that you always love to come here again?

I have lived in Tübingen somewhere between five and six years. The first time I was in Tübingen, I was a PhD student. It was the end of September and the weather was starting to cool. I have a strong memory of that time: I felt like I was in an enclosed space where all that mattered were ideas. There was a focused energy in Tübingen. Situated between the mountains, I felt as if I were inside a bubble where I didn't need the rest of the world, and I could only focus on my work. This gave me the license to take time for ideas and let them unfold or develop. The fact that you cannot get to Tübingen with the fast trains, that you have to take the regional trains, gives the town a sort of “end of the world” feel. And a big majority of people in Tübingen are, in one way or another, connected to the university. This gave Tübingen the sense of a community (Gemeinschaft) as opposed to society (Gesellschaft). Here I am using Gerda Walther's distinction (from her PhD thesis on the meaning of community). This, in turn, opened up the possibility for deep and lasting friendships. These friendships, alongside the environment, are what keeps me coming back.



### The landscape seems to be very important for your work. The Humboldt lecture you gave also focused on the connection between trees and the environment. Could you tell us more about this topic?

We think of adaptation as the response of an organism to its environment, and about the environment as a stable thing, being merely “out there”. But the environment is constantly changing. The Romantic Empiricists, on whose ideas I concentrate in my book, were the first to pay attention to the “environment” – called at their time *oikos*, *world* or *context* – and to conceptualise its dynamism. In plants you can observe the dynamism much better than in animals: first, because we tend to integrate them in what we call “environment”. Second, by observing them you notice that the environment is not stable at all and that their relationships with their environments are not purely mechanical.

Trees make our atmosphere one that is suitable for other forms of life; their roots, in turn, are constantly changing (in fact, creating) the soil and interacting with various organisms. If we think about the atmosphere as the outcome of the activities of trees, or of the soil as the outcome of plant (and other organism) activity, then we have to ask ourselves: what actually is the environment? Is it the trees, the various organisms, the atmosphere, the soil? Where does the environment begin and the individual organism end? What becomes clear is that the organism-environment distinction is not at all straightforward, and organisms are makers of their environments just as much as their environments make them. And what we mean by “environment” can no longer be a stable or abstract category, but a dynamic, ongoing interrelating.

### Is your research in any way related to climate change and to our current relation with plants?

My aim is to address current questions from within the framework of Romantic Empiricism. My leading question in the book was: what can we learn from the distinctive approach these historical thinkers developed in their study of the natural world, what are its implications, and how might it be relevant today?

What I came to realize was that they agreed on the value of the arts and artistic practices for cognition: in other words, they came to the conclusion that we can better understand nature, and ourselves within nature, through the arts.

This is especially evident when we consider the fact that our usual conceptual schemes do not adequately represent the dynamic and reciprocal character of the organism-environment relation. Art allows us to think in more dynamic terms, because it is a mode of knowledge that a) requires us to move backwards and forwards, from the particular (e. g., a line in a poem or a chord in a piece of music) to the general (the poem, the symphony), back to the particular, and so on, so as to grasp the moving “whole” and discern how the various parts contribute to it and also gain their meaning through it; and b) requires us to be more viscerally or bodily engaged, because it draws on both our senses and our understanding at once.

The Romantic Empiricists’ wager was that through ongoing experience in the arts (an “aesthetic education”), we become more attuned to the dynamism in nature, and gain a more embodied understanding of our place within nature.

With regard to trees, my main question is: what can trees teach us? Their interactions with other organisms, the ways in which they enable and support ecosystems, can be regarded as models for living in an ecologically sound way. They also demonstrate how we should shift our approach to the world: precisely because they are actively contributing (making) their worlds (and our world), they cannot be seen as mere objects, but must be recognized as subjects – world-makers. My research on the Romantic Empiricists along with my work with trees has led me to articulate a new normative standard for knowledge, which I call “the ecology of knowledge”. It is normative because it places an obligation on us to develop and practice a new form of knowledge, based on this ecological model, in which the knower regards the known as subject, collaborator, in the work of knowledge. Knowledge is thereby a two-way relationship – a collaboration – in which the “subject” of knowledge places demands upon the knower, and the knower must rise to meet those demands.

**This reminds me of the works of Tim Ingold, which resonates with what you said.**

I think I would agree with much of what Tim Ingold says. We would both recognise the embodied aspect of knowledge as something that we should cultivate. And that connects again with the way in which plants and trees are models for us.

**Is the contemporary philosophy of nature following this trend?**

It’s very hard to answer, because I’m not sure what philosophy of nature is today. There is philosophy of science, environmental philosophy, anthropology, the field in which Tim Ingold works, and there is something called “field philosophy”, as well as plant and animal studies. But there is no clear subfield called “philosophy of nature”. These sorts of ideas are most clearly carried out and practiced within what some call a “more-than-human anthropology”.

**Could one also think about phenomenology?**

Yes, within philosophy, the closest area to the development of the aforementioned ideas is phenomenology, especially in the aftermath of Merleau-Ponty.

**Is there a difference in the way in which people in Germany, in Australia, and in your home country, Jordan, experience nature?**

That’s a great question, for there is a huge difference. In Australia, nature plays an important role in everyday consciousness: most Australians, especially if they grew up living by the water, have a strong connection to the ocean. They feel like half-mermaids because water plays a really important role in their everyday life.

The fact of always being open to the sea, and to the watery element which has a way of always moving, changing, coming in and going out, might tell us something about the character of the Australians, which is very open, friendly, but doesn’t have that strong sense of identity that you see in the South of Germany, where the mountains surround the towns. So the Australian character is very welcoming, but perhaps less interested in big metaphysical questions.

In Germany, you encounter a very different mood. The mood of seriousness, of “Bodenständigkeit”, of “being grounded in the earth”, but this earthiness of southern Germany doesn’t characterise the North, where the water is much more present, like Hamburg.

I noticed how the environment affects my own thinking. When I am in Australia, I have my thoughts spread out a lot more, whereas when I come to Tübingen, everything becomes much more focused. However, Australia was helpful for opening me up to different disciplines and methodologies, and for allowing me to develop a more interdisciplinary research approach, for which there is much more support than in Germany.

I haven’t lived in Jordan for a long time, so my relationship to it is very tenuous. There, because of the desert and the harshness of the heat, few people are interested in nature. Whereas Germans love their forests and Australians love their beaches, the Jordanians fear the deserts and are not keen on being outside, so their reflection on their environment is a different one.

**What could you tell us about the university cooperation in Tübingen and about the College of Fellows?**

I appreciate the College of Fellows as a great space for doing philosophy in an open, interdisciplinary, and intercultural way. I think it provides a context that is really needed within German academic culture, for in philosophy you usually have very little to do with other disciplines. For me, it felt like the right place to be, and it would be great if one day we could initiate a joint programme with Sydney.

*Dalia Nassar is the author of several books, including, most recently, *Romantic Empiricism: Nature, Art, and Ecology from Herder to Humboldt* (Oxford, 2022). She is also the editor of a number of volumes, including an anthology of works by nineteenth-century women philosophers (OUP 2021) and the *Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition* (2024) (both with Kristin Gjesdal).*

Interview: Mădălina Guzun  
Photograph: © Dalia Nassar



# COMPARATIVE NEUROBIOLOGY: UNCOVERING COGNITIVE AND VOCAL CAPABILITIES IN CROWS

## Dr Diana Liao

Crows are known for their remarkable skills – e. g., they can plan for the future by strategically caching food, perform rule-based decision making, and some species cannot just use but construct tools. But research findings from recent years have uncovered even more cognitive capabilities.

Dr Diana Liao, a postdoctoral researcher and a Humboldt Fellow at the University of Tübingen, is inspired to uncover mental structures behind crows' cognition. Together with her colleagues from the Animal Physiology Unit at the Institute of Neurobiology, she published a paper on the crows' ability to understand the complex cognitive principle known as recursion in the journal *Science Advances* in 2022. In February 2023, she presented her research on this topic in a public lecture titled "Vocal Flexibility in Crows" as part of the Humboldt Lecture Series. In May 2024, she and her Tübingen colleagues reported in a study, published in the journal *Science*, that crows are able to control the number of vocalizations produced – put simply: to 'count out loud'. In her piece, she reflects on her research methods and on working with crows in a lab setting.

“EXAMINING SIMILARITIES  
(AND – JUST AS IMPORTANTLY – DIFFERENCES)  
IN CROW'S COGNITIVE AND VOCAL ABILITIES  
COULD REVEAL THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES  
AND CIRCUITS UNDERLYING THE EVOLUTION  
OF COMPLEX COMMUNICATION.”

“I HAVE GOTTEN TO BUILD  
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CROWS  
I WORK WITH AND I WILL REMEMBER  
THEIR DISTINCTIVE QUIRKS FAR LONG  
AFTER I LEAVE THE UNIVERSITY.”

(DIANA LIAO)

From the stridulating chirping of crickets to the chorusing howling of wolves and more, acoustic communication is critical to increasing fitness in many animal species. The most complex and elaborated animal communication belongs to humans, who possess a (presumably) uniquely flexible, symbolic system – language. So, how human speech and language evolved is one of the most intriguing mysteries to me. Since evolution is a tinkerer, fiddling with pre-existing phenotypes to find viable solutions to new changes, it seems logical that human speech evolved from the non-speech vocalisations of our hominid ancestors. Unfortunately, social behaviours and soft tissues of the brain and vocal apparatus do not fossilise well.

Instead, we can take advantage of the comparative approach – investigating the vocal behaviour and associated mechanisms in extant animals – to shed light on this question. One strategy is to study our closest living relatives – nonhuman primates – as a means to reconstruct our own evolutionary history. Another strategy is to study more distantly related species. I was drawn to Germany for the opportunity to investigate the social and vocal abilities of crows at the University of Tübingen. Crows are widely known to be superbly intelligent while having diverged from the primate lineage 300 million years ago, thus having developed a dramatically different brain architecture. And so, examining similarities (and – just as importantly – differences) in their cognitive and vocal abilities could reveal the general principles and circuits underlying the evolution of complex communication. As a Humboldt Fellow, I ran several studies, from seeing if crows could vocally 'count' and control the number of vocalisations produced to whether they could recognise and produce recursive sequences. In these studies, we carefully design behavioural tasks to parse whether these abilities exist and under which constraints they appear to do so. Since we are unable to directly communicate with the crows, having no shared language, teaching them to perform these tasks takes quite a few intermediate steps. However, I am continuously impressed with what they are able to learn, and in this process, I have gotten to build strong relationships with the crows I work with. I will remember their distinctive quirks far long after I leave the university.



Text: Diana Liao  
Photograph: © Diana Liao

Diana Liao is a postdoctoral researcher interested in the evolution of complex cognitive and social behaviours using the comparative approach. She first got interested in cognitive neuroscience during her Bachelor studies at Johns Hopkins University. She then did a PhD at Princeton University studying vocal interactions and development in marmoset monkeys. For her postdoc, she switched animal species and travelled to Germany on a Humboldt fellowship to study the vocal communication and cognition of crows at the University of Tübingen in the lab of Professor Andreas Nieder.

5

PEOPLE

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### ABIODUN AFOLABI

Fellowship:  
Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen:  
Mai 2023 – January 2024  
Research Project: Eliciting the  
Phenomenology of Culture in Global  
Environmental Ethics  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Member of the Focus Group  
“Intercultural Studies”, participation  
and organisation of the workshop  
“Eco-phenomenology: Exploring  
Eco-phenomenological Concepts  
and Theories from and for Africa’s  
Ecological Lifeworld”  
(13–15 December 2023)

### PONNI ARASU

Fellowship:  
Global Encounters Fellowship  
Affiliation: Centre for Asian and  
Oriental Studies, Department of  
Social and Cultural Anthropology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
October 2023 – September 2024  
Research Project: Goddess  
Worship as Resistance, Identity  
and Everyday Life within Global  
Encounters of Indentured Tamil  
Women  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Fellow Lunch Talk “Tamil Thanmai:  
A Historical Ethnography of Public  
Political Lives in Tamilnadu (1950-  
70)” (6 December 2023); Global  
Encounters Lecture “Tanty, the  
divine mother and I: Histories and  
Everyday Praxis of finding hope and  
belonging in/as resistance by Tamil  
women in Tamil Nadu and Trinidad”  
(24 July 2024)

### LAURIE ATKINSON

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: English Departmen  
Stay in Tübingen:  
April 2022 – November 2024  
Research Project: Co-creative  
Networks in English Literary Print  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Co-Creativity in  
Early English Literary Print”  
(22 November 2023)

### SMITH B. BABIAKA

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: Department of Microbial  
Bioactive Compounds, Interfaculty  
Institute for Microbiology and  
Infection Medicine  
Stay in Tübingen:  
September 2022 – September  
2025  
Research Project: Discovery of  
Novel Marine Natural Products from  
Sponges  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Natural  
Product-Based Discovery of Novel  
Lead Compounds from Terrestrial  
and Marine Ecosystems”  
(10 January 2024)

### ELEONORA BEDIN

Fellowship:  
Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
Affiliation:  
Institute of Classical Archaeology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
October 2022 – September 2023  
Research Project:  
The Political Side of Motherhood:  
Kybele from a Protective Deity to  
the Great Mother  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Fellow Lunch Talk “The Ancient  
Mediterranean as a Global Stage:  
Tracing the Mother Goddess Across  
Borders” (20 July 2023)

### MOLLY BRONSTEIN

Fellowship:  
Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
Affiliation: English Department  
Stay in Tübingen:  
October 2023 – September 2024  
Research Project: The Ovide  
Moralisé’s Middle English  
Collaborators  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Participation in the Teach@  
Tübingen Workshop  
(24 November 2023)

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### COURTNEY DORROLL

Fellowship: American Council on Education Fellow  
Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies, Alumni Relations  
Stay in Tübingen: April 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Panel discussion “Leadership in Higher Education: A Transatlantic Dialogue” (27 April 2023), hosted by the German American Institute (d.a.i.) in cooperation with Alumni Relations and the College of Fellows

### MOHAMMED ECH-CHEIKH

Fellowship: Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen: 2023  
Research Project: Arab Philosophy and Transcultural Philosophy  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Fellow Lunch Talk “Would We Need To Re-read Classical Arab Philosophers?” (26 January 2023)

### EVA FALASCHI

Fellowship: Global Encounters Fellowship  
Affiliation: Institute of Classical Philology  
Stay in Tübingen: April 2023 – March 2024  
Research Project: Natural Histories in a Global Perspective. Pliny, Oviedo and the Americas: An Ancient Encyclopedia as a Model to Transfer and Transmit Knowledge  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Global Encounters Lecture: “Natural Histories in a Global Perspective. Pliny, Oviedo and America: An Ancient Encyclopedia as a Model to Transfer and Transmit Knowledge” (23 January 2024)

### RITA FELSKI

Fellowship: New Horizons Fellowship  
Stay in Tübingen: April 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Workshop “Postcritique, Recognition, Life World” (23 – 26 October 2023); Public Lecture “How Not To Talk About Experience” (25 October 2023)

### STEFANO FLORIS

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: Biblical-Archaeological Institute  
Stay in Tübingen: June 2022 – May 2024  
Research Project: By the Sea: A Comparative Study of Cremation Rituals as Markers of ‘Phoenician Identity’ from the Levant to Sardinia  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Humboldt Lecture “History of a Punic City, Seen from Its Tophet: a Sardinian Perspective” (7 February 2024)

### GIORDANA FRANCESCHINI

Fellowship: Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
Affiliation: Institute of Ancient History  
Stay in Tübingen: 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024  
Activities at the College of Fellows: Participation in the Teach@Tübingen workshop with a paper on “The Praetorian Prefect John the Cappadocian. Administration and Politics in Justinian I’s Constantinople” (24 November 2023)

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### LORENA GRIGOLETTO

Fellowship:  
Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen:  
May 2023 – April 2024  
Research Project: Nature, Sign,  
Image. Reconfiguration of the  
Imaginary and Scopic Regimes  
in Post-colonial Mexico (1910 –  
1930)  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Member of the Focus Group  
“Intercultural Studies”, organising  
the Workshop “Landscape and  
Imaginary: philosophy, art,  
literature” (20 – 21 June 2024)

### FLAVIA GUERRA CAVALCANTI

Fellowship:  
Global Encounters Fellowship  
Affiliation:  
Institute of Political Science  
Stay in Tübingen:  
December 2023 – November 2024  
Research Project: Oceanic Thinking  
in Migrant Resistance: How the  
Concept of Wet Ontology Can  
Destabilize the Fixed Conceptions of  
Territory and Belonging  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Global Encounters Lecture “Ocean  
Thinking as a challenge to the  
modern territorial imagination in  
International Relations”  
(26 June 2024)

### MĂDĂLINA GUZUN MASOUD

Fellowship:  
Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen:  
October 2021 – September 2022,  
November 2022 – April 2023  
Research Project: The Foreigner  
of Languages: Heidegger and  
Waldenfels at the Encounter of the  
Arabic World  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Member of the Focus Group  
“Intercultural Studies”, organising  
the workshop “Language and  
Foreignness” (September 2022),  
giving the CIVIS workshop lectures  
„Linguistic Non/Belonging:  
Identity and Foreignness within  
Language” (July 2022), “Belonging  
to Language: The Question of the  
Earth” (July 2023)

### LUKAS HOFFMAN

Fellowship:  
Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
Affiliation: German Department -  
German and Comparative Literature  
Stay in Tübingen:  
October 2023 – September 2024  
Research Project:  
Proto-Political Lyric  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Participation in the Teach@  
Tübingen workshops with following  
papers: “Critical Rilke: Adorno’s  
Missed Encounters” (24 November  
2023), “Thinking the ‘End of the  
World’ with Jakob van Hoddis”  
(10 April 2024)

### MELISSA JANE JOHNSTON

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation:  
Institute of Neurobiology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
November 2021 – October 2023  
Research Project: Tempus Fugit:  
Interval Timing in Crows  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Tempus Fugit:  
Interval Timing in Crows”  
(10 November 2021)

### ASIA KALINICHENKO

Fellowship: Philipp Schwarz  
Initiative of the Alexander von  
Humboldt Foundation  
Affiliation: Institute of Physical  
and Theoretical Chemistry  
Stay in Tübingen:  
April 2023 – March 2025  
Research Project: AI-enabled, Novel,  
Reagentless Analytical Method for  
Monitoring Contaminants in Edible  
Oils and Rapid Quality Assessment  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Food Safety  
and Quality Assessment Using Gas  
Sensors and Chemometrics: the  
Edible Oils Case” (10 January 2024)

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### **SUKHWAN KANG**

Fellowship:  
Global Encounters Fellowship  
Affiliation: Institute of Modern  
History  
Stay in Tübingen:  
June 2023 – May 2024  
Research Project: Transnational  
Huguenot Refugees and their  
Interactions with Host Societies  
Across the Atlantic World from  
the 1680s to the 1750s

### **ABBED KANOOR**

Fellowship:  
Global Encounters Fellowship  
Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen:  
September 2022 – May 2023  
Research Project: Between. On the  
Experience of the Intercultural  
Situation  
Activities at the College of  
Fellows: Member of Focus Group  
“Intercultural Studies”, Global  
Encounters Lecture “Return of  
Ideologies. A Critical Analysis  
in the Light of Intercultural  
Phenomenology” (7 February  
2023), organisation of the  
workshop “Religions in Global  
Encounters: Traditions and  
Ideologies” (23 – 24 March 2023)

### **HYUNJIN KIM**

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: Environmental  
Biotechnology Group, Department  
of Geosciences  
Stay in Tübingen:  
March 2023 – February 2025  
Research Project: Power to Protein  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Fellow Lunch Talk “Acetate to  
Protein: Conversion of Simple  
Chemicals to Feeding the World”  
(1 February 2024)

### **HAN-LUEN KANTZER KOMLINE**

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation:  
Protestant Faculty of Theology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
June 2022 – July 2023  
Research Project: The Idea of the  
New in Early Christian Thought  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “The Idea of the  
New in Early Christian Thought”  
(8 February 2023)

### **KWOK-YING LAU**

Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen:  
July 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
GIP Lecture “Cultural Flesh and  
Intercultural Phenomenology:  
Theory and Practice”  
(19 July 2023)

### **DIANA LIAO**

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: Animal Physiology,  
Institute of Neurobiology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
November 2019 – January 2023  
Research Project: Investigating the  
Behavioral and Neural Foundations  
of Vocal Flexibility in Corvid  
Songbirds  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Vocal Flexibility  
in Crows” (8 February 2023)

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### RICCARDO MARIN

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship

Affiliation: Tübingen AI Center

Stay in Tübingen:

1 June 2022 – present

Research Project: Functional

Shape Matching for Implicit

Representations

Activities at the College of Fellows:

Humboldt Lecture “Connecting the

(Digital) Dots: Studying Relations

in 3D Geometries for Human

Virtualization” (7 February 2024)

### ÀLEX MAS-SANDOVAL

Fellowship: Global Encounters Short Term Fellowship

Affiliation: Institute for

Archaeological Sciences (INA)

Archaeo- and Paleogenetics Group

Stay in Tübingen: Six short stays

from June 2023 – March 2024

Research Project: Social Inequalities

and Population Genetic Structure

across Time and Space

Global Encounters Lecture: Global

Encounters Lecture “The Genetic

Footprint of Racial and Gender

Hierarchies” (12 December 2023)

### TETJANA MIDJANA

Fellowship: Philipp Schwarz

Initiative of the Alexander von

Humboldt Foundation

Affiliation:

Department of General Rhetoric

Stay in Tübingen:

April 2022 – present

Research Project: Rhetoric of

Presidential War Speeches in the

War of Aggression Against Ukraine

Activities at the College of Fellows:

Humboldt Lecture “The Rhetoric

of War Belonging to Volodimir

Zelensky and Vladimir Putin and

Their Special Characteristics”

(13 December 2023)

### NORIHITO NAKAMURA

Fellowship: Intercultural Studies

Fellowship

Affiliation: College of Fellows –

Center for Interdisciplinary and

Intercultural Studies

Stay in Tübingen:

April 2023 – September 2024

Research Project: Kenosis and

Eschatologies in an Intercultural

and Contemporary Perspective

Activities at the College of Fellows:

Member of the Focus Group

“Intercultural Studies”, organisation

of the workshop “Kenosis and

Its Ethics in a Contemporary and

Intercultural Perspective”

(7 – 8 February 2024)

### DALIA NASSAR

Fellowship: Humboldt Research

Fellowship

Affiliation: Institute of Philosophy

Stay in Tübingen:

May 2022 – July 2023

Research Project: Romantic

Empiricism: Nature, Art, and Ecology

from Herder to Humboldt

Activities at the College of Fellows:

Humboldt Lecture “From Romantic

Empiricism to the Embodied History

of Trees” (11 January 2023)

### CARLOS NAZARIO MORA DURO

Fellowship: Global Encounters

Affiliation: Institute of Sociology

Stay in Tübingen:

September 2022 – August 2023

Research Project: Integration

Process of Migrants in the Post-

pandemic Period, Focusing on

Mexican Migration to Germany

Activities at the College of

Fellows: Global Encounters Lecture

“Migration for Love, Education

and Work. An approach to recent

Mexican migration to Germany”

(22 November 2022)

# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### FRANCESCO PADOVANI

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Department of Ancient Studies and Art History/ Department of Classics  
 Stay in Tübingen: November 2021 – October 2023  
 Research Project: Plutarch als Literat: Studien zum platonischen Dialog in der früheren Kaiserzeit  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Humboldt Lecture “Rethinking the Platonic Dialogue in the Early Imperial Age: The Case of Plutarch” (11 January 2023)

### RODOLFO PALOMO-BRIONES

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Center for Applied Geoscience (ZAG)  
 Stay in Tübingen: April 2021 – March 2024  
 Research Project: Assessment of Caproate Production with Defined Cultures  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Humboldt Lecture “Production of Biofuels and Feedstocks with Anaerobic Microbiomes” (9 February 2022)

### MARTIN PÁCHA

Fellowship: Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Institute for Eastern European History and Area Studies,  
 Stay in Tübingen: October 2023 – September 2024  
 Research Project: The Ways towards Religious Freedom between Socialism and Postsocialism in Czechoslovakia  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Participation in the Teach@Tübingen Workshop (24 November 2023)

### MARIKA PULKKINEN

Fellowship: Research Grant by the Finnish Cultural Foundation  
 Affiliation: Center for Religion, Culture and Society  
 Stay in Tübingen: September 2023 – August 2024  
 Research Project: Evoking Shame, Honor, Desire, and Disgust through Vocabulary of Sex Work in the Ancient Jewish Sources and in the New Testament  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Fellow Lunch Talk “Slut-Shaming – Ancient and Modern: Sexual Slander, Shame, and Honor in the Biblical Texts” (24 January 2024)

### RALUCA RĂDULESCU

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship  
 Stay in Tübingen: September – December 2023  
 Research Project: Colonial Sea Voyages in German Literature in the 19th and 20th Centuries  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Humboldt Lecture “Colonial sea voyages in German literature in the 19th and 20th centuries” (13 December 2023)

### ELENA ROBAKIEWICZ

Fellowship: Teach@Tübingen Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Department of Geosciences  
 Stay in Tübingen: October 2023 – March 2024  
 Research Project: Changing Hydroclimate across Africa  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Participation in the Teach@Tübingen Workshop (24 November 2023)



# FELLOWS

## AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### MYKOLA SALTANOV

Fellowship: Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
 Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies  
 Stay in Tübingen: March – November 2023  
 Research Project: The Intercultural Dialogue and the Recognition of the Challenges of Globalization  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Member of the Focus Group “Intercultural Studies”

### OLUSEGUN SAMUEL

Fellowship: Intercultural Studies Fellowship  
 Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies  
 Stay in Tübingen: 1 March 2022 – 31 May 2023  
 Research Project: Building Environmental Justice and Sustainability from within the African Space  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Member of the College of Fellows’ Focus Group “Intercultural Studies”, organisation of the workshop “Engaging Sustainability” (30 – 31 March 2023)

### HERMÍLIO SANTOS

Fellowship: CAPES Lectureship programme  
 Affiliation: Interdisciplinary Center for Global South Studies  
 Stay in Tübingen: April – August 2023  
 Research Project: Black Heiresses: Biographical Narratives of Three Generations of Black Women in the Same Family in Three Slave Economy Regions in Brazil  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Semester Opening Lecture “Bridging Border Spaces: From Research to Documentary Films” (21 April 2023), Film screening “Infância Falada” (15 June 2023) and “Border Spaces” (16 June 2023)

### SOFIE SCHIØDT

Fellowship: Humboldt Research Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Studies  
 Stay in Tübingen: October 2023 – October 2024  
 Research Project: Drugs, Treatments, and Healers: The Practice of Medicine in Ancient Egypt  
 Stay in Tübingen: October 2023 – October 2024  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: Humboldt Lecture “Medical Practice in Ancient Egypt: Who, What, and How?” (9 November 2022)

### MASATAKE SHINOHARA

Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies  
 Stay in Tübingen: 31 October – 3 November 2023  
 Activities at the College of Fellows: GIP Lecture “An Undecided Dimension of Depth: On the Question of the Place in the Thought of Kitaro Nishida” (31 October 2023)

### HAVVA SINEM UĞURLU

Fellowship: Global Encounters Fellowship  
 Affiliation: Faculty of Protestant Theology  
 Stay in Tübingen: November 2023 – October 2024  
 Research Project: The Source of Knowledge in Practical Theology (in terms of Christian and Islamic Perspective)

## FELLOWS AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### RITU VIJ

Affiliation: Interdisciplinary Centre  
for Global South Studies  
Stay in Tübingen: May 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Global Encounters Lecture  
“De-Pathologizing Precarity”  
(4 May 2023)

### EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

Affiliation: College of Fellows –  
Center for Interdisciplinary and  
Intercultural Studies  
Stay in Tübingen: September 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Masterclass “Anthropology of  
Perspectivism” (26 – 30 September  
2023; Public Lecture “Indigenous  
Multinaturalism from  
a Cosmopolitical Point of View”  
(28 September 2023)

### JANET WARD

Fellowship: American Council  
on Education Fellow  
Affiliation: Alumni Relations  
Stay in Tübingen: April 2023  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Panel discussion “Leadership in  
Higher Education: A Transatlantic  
Dialogue” (27 April 2023), hosted  
by the German American Institute  
(d.a.i.) and College of Fellows

### DANIEL WEISS

Fellowship:  
Humboldt Research Fellowship  
Affiliation: Faculty of Protestant  
Theology  
Stay in Tübingen:  
August – November 2022;  
May – July 2023  
Research Project: Jesus-followers  
and Non-minim in Tannaitic  
Literature  
Activities at the College of Fellows:  
Humboldt Lecture “Revisiting Early  
Jewish-Christian Relations”  
(9 November 2022)

## ASSOCIATED FELLOWS AT THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN 2023

### EVELINE CIOFLEC

Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary  
and Intercultural Studies  
Research Project: The Open Self: a Description of Belonging

### RĂZVAN ȘANDRU

Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary  
and Intercultural Studies  
Research Project: Philosophy in the Global South:  
Multimedial Learning Materials for intercultural philosophy  
in Latin America

### FERNANDO WIRTZ

Fellowship: Postdoc-Scholarship of the Fritz Thyssen  
Stiftung  
Affiliation: College of Fellows – Center for Interdisciplinary  
and Intercultural Studies  
Research Project: Japanese Philosophy of Myth

## 6 COLLEGE OF FELLOWS IN REVIEW

# EVENTS OVERVIEW

## HUMBOLDT LECTURES

11 January 2023

Dr Francesco Padovani (Classical Philology)

“Rethinking the Platonic Dialogue in the Early Imperial Age: The Case of Plutarch”

Professor Dalia Nassar (Philosophy)

“From Romantic Empiricism to the Embodied History of Trees”

8 February 2023

Professor Han-Luen Kantzer Komline (Protestant Theology)

“The Idea of the New in Early Christian Thought”

Dr Diana Liao (Biology)

“Vocal Flexibility in Crows”

22 November 2023

Dr Keyvan Allahyari (English Department)

“Abdulrazak Gurnah’s Oceanic Border Thinking”

Dr Laurie Atkinson (English Department)

“Co-Creativity in Early English Literary Print”

13 December 2023

Dr Tetjana Midjana (Department of General Rhetoric)

“Die Kriegsrhetorik von Wolodymyr Selenskyj und Wladimir Putin und ihre besonderen Merkmale”

Dr Raluca Rădulescu (German Department)

“Koloniale Seefahrten in der deutschen Literatur”

## GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS LECTURES

4 May 2023 | Dr Ritu Vij

“De-Pathologizing Precarity”

27 June 2023 | Junior Professor Dr Carola Lorea

“Covid Demons, Corona Goddesses and Online Rituals: Pandemic Research Modalities on a Post-secular Virus”



## GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS LECTURES

7 February 2023 | Dr Abbed Kanoor

“Return of Ideologies – A Critical Analysis in the Light of Intercultural Phenomenology”

18 July 2023 | Dr René Alberto Ramírez Gallegos

“‘Buen Vivir’ as an uchronic political horizon”

12 December 2023 | Dr Àlex Mas-Sandoval

“The genetic footprint of racial and gender hierarchies”

## GIP LECTURES

31 January 2023 | Professor Daisuke Kamei

“Jacques Derrida and Shūzō Kuki: On Contingency and Event”

23 February 2023 | Professor Mathias Obert

“Als Phänomologe unterwegs in japanischen Gärten”

18 April 2023 | Professor Eric Nelson

“Daoist *wuwei* in the Anthropocene”

9 May 2023 | Professor Fabian Heubel

“Being Between: Comparative and Transcultural Philosophy”

## GIP LECTURES

29 June 2023 | Professor Ali Asghar Mosleh

“Human and the Future of ‘the Earth’”

19 July 2023 | Professor Kwok-ying Lau

“Cultural Flesh and Intercultural Phenomenology: Theory and Practice”

31 October 2023 | Professor Masatake Shinohara

“An Undecided Dimension of Depth: On the Question of the Place in the Thought of Kitaro Nishida”

7 December 2023 | Professor Gregor Paul

“Sind nicht alle Menschen Menschen? Ziele, Methoden und Inhalte Interkultureller Philosophie”

## PUBLIC LECTURES

28 September 2023 | Interdisciplinary Anthropology | Professor Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

“Indigenous Naturalism from a Cosmopolitical Point of View”

25 October 2023 | New Horizons Lecture | Professor Rita Felski

“How Not To Talk About Experience”

9 November 2023 | Science & Innovation Days | Professor Lynne Tirell

“Toxic Speech. Resisting Extremist Rhetoric”

## LUNCH TALKS

26 January 2023 | Intercultural Studies | Professor Mohammed Ech-Cheikh

“Would We Need to Re-read Classical Arab Philosophers?”

29 June 2023 | Marie Curie Fellow | Dr Ramona-Elena Irimia

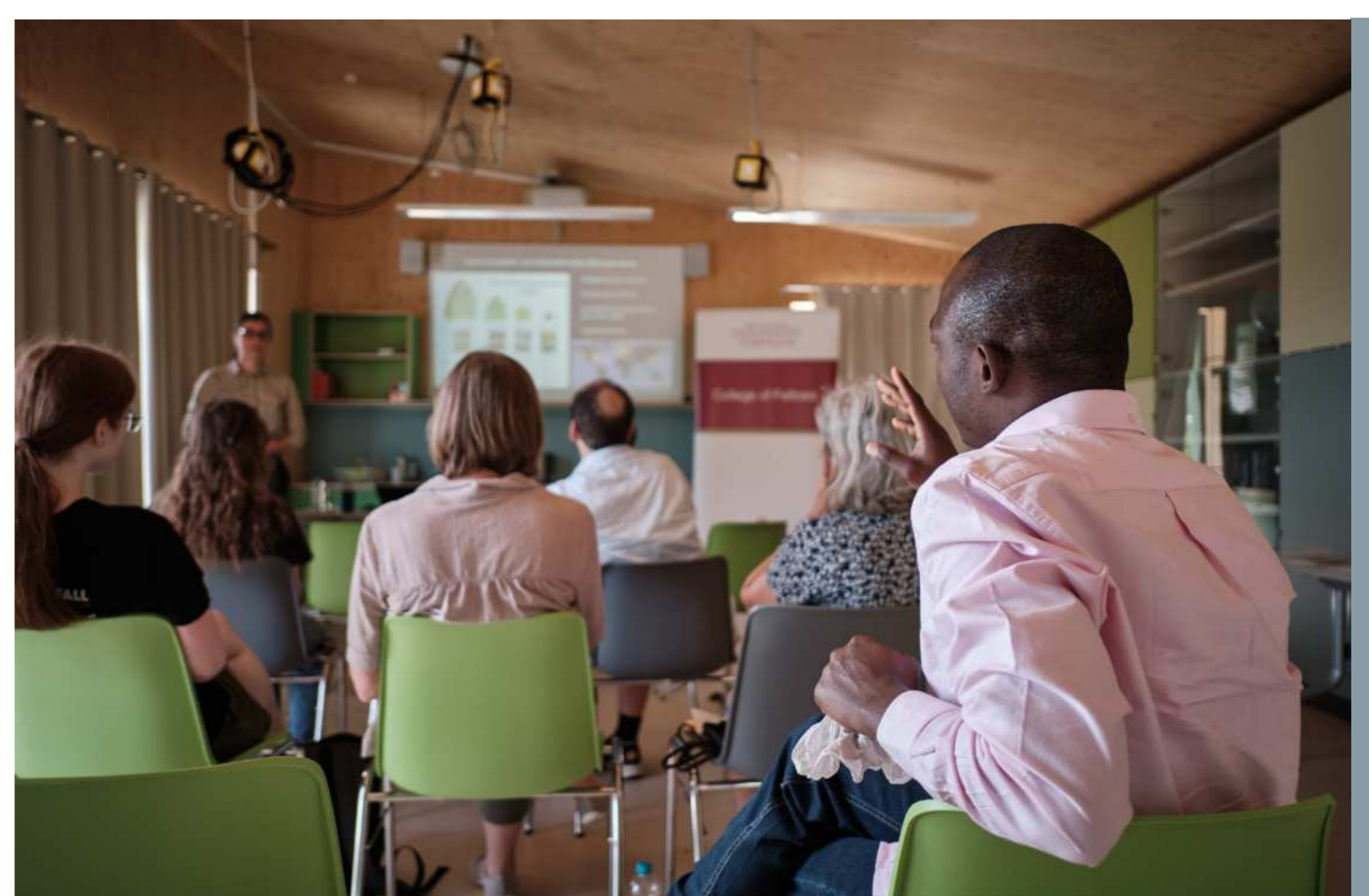
“Using Herbaria to Track Biological Invasions and Plant Response to Climate Change  
– a Case Study of Japanese Knotweed”

20 July 2023 | Teach@Tübingen | Dr Eleonora Bedin

“The Ancient Mediterranean as a Global Stage: Tracing the Mother Goddess Across Borders”

6 Dezember 2023 | Global Encounters | Dr Ponni Arasu

“Tamil Thanmai: A Historical Ethnography of Caste and Gender in Public Political Lives in Tamil Nadu, India”



Above: Lunch Talk with Dr Ramona-Elena Irimia, 29 June 2023, © Patrick Gerstorfer

Below: Lunch Talk with Dr Eleonora Bedin, 20 July 2023, © Sara Bangert



## MASTERCLASSES, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES



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23 – 24 March 2023 | Workshop | Global Encounters  
“Religions in Global Encounters: Traditions and Ideologies”  
Organisation: Dr Abbed Kanoor

30 – 31 March 2023 | Workshop | Intercultural Studies | “Engaging Sustainability”  
Organisation: Dr Olusegun Samuel

26 – 30 September 2023 | Masterclass | Interdisciplinary Anthropology  
Professor Eduardo Viveiros de Castro | “The Anthropology of Perspectivism”

13 – 14 October 2023 | Conference | Intercultural Studies | “Strukturphilosophie im Widerstreit.  
Phänomenologische, historische und interkulturelle Perspektiven”  
Organisation: Dr Niels Weidtmann

23 – 26 October 2023 | New Horizons Workshop  
Professor Rita Felski | “Postcritique, Recognition, Life World”

6 – 10 November 2023 | Conference | Intercultural Studies | “‘Natur’ im Buddhismus und Christentum”  
Organised in cooperation with JDK (Japanisch-Deutsches Kulturinstitut in Kyoto, Japan);  
EKÖ-Haus der Japanischen Kultur e. V. in Düsseldorf

13 – 15 December 2023 | Workshop | Intercultural Studies | „Eco-phenomenology:  
Exploring Eco-phenomenological Concepts and Theories from and for Africa’s Ecological Lifeworld”  
Organisation: Dr Abiodun Afolabi

## OTHER COLLABORATIONS

27 April 2023 | Panel Discussion | “A Transatlantic Dialogue: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on  
Leadership in Higher Education”, Professor Frankie Augustin (South Carolina HBCU), Dr Courtney  
Dorrol (Furman University), Professor Dr Janet Ward (Yale), Professor Monique Scheer, Professor  
Astrid Franke  
Organised in cooperation with d.a.i., Alumn Relations, Fellows of the American Council on Education

3 – 4 May 2023 | International Research Symposium | “Figurations of the Precarious:  
New Directions in Global South Studies”  
Organised in cooperation with Interdisciplinary Centre for Global South Studies

20 – 22 June 2023 | Conference | “Discourses of Unity in Ireland and Europe”  
Organised in cooperation with Professor Maurice Fitzpatrick (Guest Professor Irish Studies in winter  
2022/23) and the Chair of Modern English Literature at the University of Tübingen

15 June 2023 | Film Screening | “Infância Falada”  
Organised in cooperation with Professor Hermílio Santos and Kino Arsenal

16 June 2023 | Film Screening | “Border Spaces/ Grenzräume”  
Organised in cooperation with Professor Hermílio Santos, Baden-Württemberg Center for Brazil and  
Latin America and Kino Atelier

10 – 14 July 2023 | German-French doctoral programme | “Neue kritische Theorien und  
dezentralisierte Epistemologien/ Nouvelles théories critiques et épistémologies décentrées”

3 – 7 July 2023 | CIVIS Workshop | “Language and Identity in an Intercultural Perspective”



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## SEMESTER OPENING EVENTS

21 April 2023 | Semester opening of the College of Fellows | Summer 2023 | Lecture and discussion  
Professor Hermílio Pereira dos Santos | "Bridging Border Spaces: From Research to Documentary  
Films"

27 October 2023 | Semester opening of the College of Fellows | Winter 2023 | Lecture and discussion  
Jan Willem Duyvendak | "The Return of the Native. Navigating between nostalgic nativism and  
hopeful liberalism"



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## IMPRESSUM

### Annual Report 2023

#### Publisher

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(Niels Weidtmann, director)

#### Editorial Team

Niels Weidtmann, Yanti Hölzchen, Sara Bangert, Mădălina Guzun, Kristína Janačková,

Cora Hartmann, Rosalie Fayner

#### Cover

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V.i.S.d.P.: Niels Weidtmann



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