

# Environmental Humanities Toolkit for Policymakers

Thinking differently amidst  
climatic and ecological crises



**CEP** CONSORTIUM OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PHILOSOPHERS

## **Consortium of Environmental Philosophers (CEP)**

CEP is an independent deliberative body that works to deepen our understanding of the ideas and values that shape human interactions with the environment, other species, and each other.

[thinkingintheworld.com](http://thinkingintheworld.com)

Corresponding authors:

Seb O'Connor – [fhso@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:fhso@leeds.ac.uk)

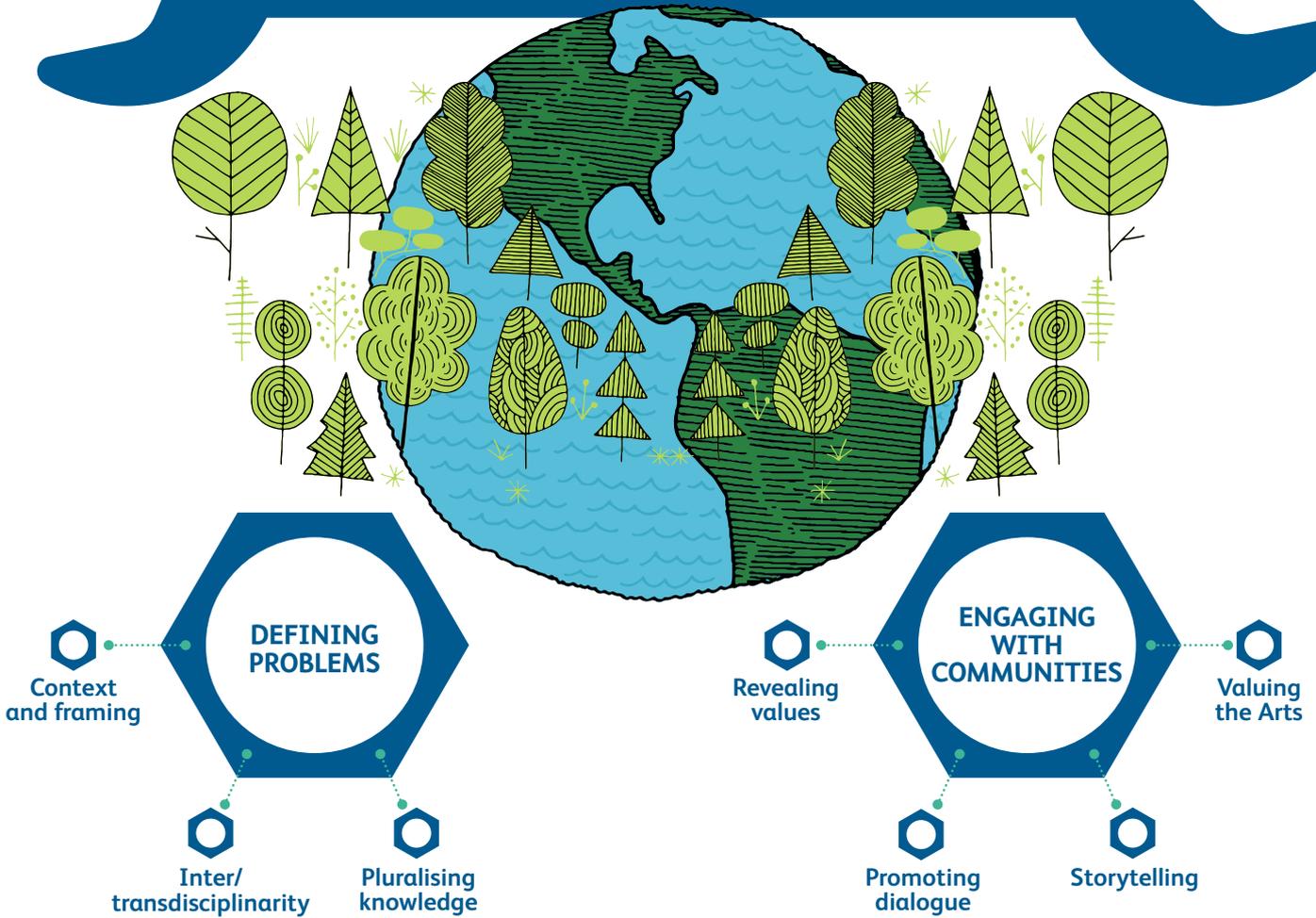
Anna Perdibon – [anna.perdibon@hotmail.it](mailto:anna.perdibon@hotmail.it)

2021

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to key contributions from Tim Ingold, Melanie Challenger, Darcia Narvaez, Don Jacobs (Four Arrows), Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi, Simon James, Aviva Rahmani, Kalpita Bhar Paul, Rebecca Macklin, Marina Zurkow. Thanks to the wider CEP network for generative and hope-filled conversations. And special thanks to Lou Dunn for the design of the toolkit.

# ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES INTERVENTIONS



## CONTENTS

Thinking amidst crisis	2
About this toolkit	2
What are the Environmental Humanities?	3
How can the Environmental Humanities help?	4
<b>1. Defining problems</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Context and framing	
1.2 Interdisciplinary integration and transdisciplinary insight	
1.3 Pluralising knowledge	
<b>2. Engaging with communities</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Revealing values	
2.2 Promoting dialogue and deliberation	
2.3 Storytelling	
2.4. Valuing the Arts	
<b>Further resources</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>14</b>

# THINKING AMIDST CRISIS

The 6<sup>th</sup> IPCC report on climate change has raised the ‘code red’ alert for every ecosystem on the planet; we are living amidst times of escalating climatic and ecological instability.

This report comes in the wake of record-breaking heatwaves around the world. Life on Earth is increasingly challenged by the loss of natural habitats, whether due to the destruction of forests, ground desiccation or rising sea levels, with the consequent reduction of biodiversity. For humanity, these are unprecedented times. Levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide are now greater than for the past 800,000 years, and global mean temperatures are the highest the planet has experienced for 125,000 years<sup>1</sup>. All previous human decisions have been made in a climate fundamentally different from the one we have now. The consequences of decisions made today will likely play out in a climate that is yet more extreme.

Scientists have played a vital role in raising the alarm, and we now look to them to find a way through the impending crises. We are urged to ‘listen to the science’, trusting that it will deliver technoscientific ‘solutions’ to the problems we face. However, though scientists are well equipped to observe changes, make predictions and sound concerns, they are less qualified to *imagine* how we might change course, live differently, or enact alternative futures. Yet, as policymakers are coming to understand, there is an urgent need for such imaginative work. As the head of the UK’s Environment Agency recently declared, ‘our thinking needs to change faster than the climate’<sup>2</sup>. It is precisely in this kind of proactive thinking that the disciplines of the Environmental Humanities (EH) come into their own. Working together, these disciplines offer the methods and critical tools for thinking differently. Above all, they are both alert to the variations of human experience – variations that make it impossible to treat all of humanity as a collective ‘we’ – and ready to learn from these variations in charting a way into the future. And they insist that if policymakers and decision-makers are to approach problems in a spirit of openness, generosity and responsibility, then they must learn to think not just *about* but *with* the earth and everything that lives and dwells therein<sup>3</sup>.

This means placing *responsibility* for the world we inhabit before prediction and control. It means being open to ways of knowing founded on our *relations* with other beings, rather than on separating ourselves from them. It means *valuing* these beings for their own sake and for our relationships to them, as opposed to simply the benefits they might bring to us. And it means thinking of *nature* no longer as a world apart from our human selves, but rather as the milieu of our own lives. In helping us to think along these lines, studies in EH can steer a path towards an alternative future. This toolkit introduces some founding conceptual resources.

## ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

As an interdisciplinary field, EH encompasses a range of approaches increasingly invested in rethinking the roots of our climatic and ecological crises. To date, however, work in this field has had little influence in the world of policymaking. There has indeed been something of a ‘stand-off’ between EH researchers, critical of the parameters which limit current policymaking, and policymakers who – while well aware of these limits – remain committed to making tangible differences within them. This toolkit aims to bridge the divide, making it easier for policymakers to draw on EH as a vital source of ideas and expertise that could add extra dimensions to the protocols of conventional decision-making.

In this toolkit we assemble some of the existing work in EH into a digestible format, for use by policymakers who recognise the need to think differently but are at a loss as to what this might look like or where to begin. We synthesise key insights that can be applied across a range of institutions and sectors of society, demonstrating the potential contributions of EH as well as introducing readers to its most promising areas of research.



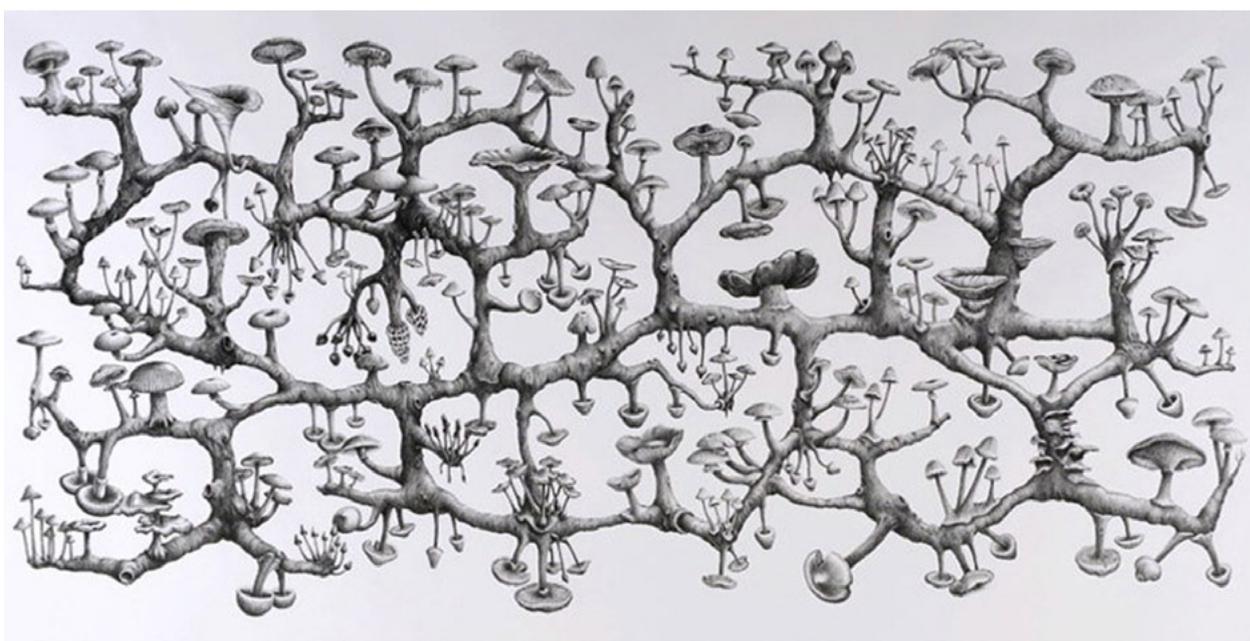
# WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES?

Researchers in EH come from disciplines across the arts, philosophy, geography, history, literature, anthropology, sociology, material culture studies, science and technology studies, and more.

While resisting any singular definition, EH serves as an umbrella term that indicates the sheer breadth of environmentally oriented research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Common to this research is an orientation that reflects critically on the parameters of environmental policy and decision-making, including ways of being and knowing, the responsibilities and commitments these entail, and their cultural and political articulations. These are questions that the humanities are well placed to explore.

EH disciplines have not arrived at these questions in mutual isolation; rather, they have always been in dialogue with each other. They now seek to promote further dialogue not just among themselves but with

the natural sciences as well, in a way that would make it possible to rethink not only the human in ecological terms, but also the nonhuman in terms of ethics<sup>4</sup>. In this, however, it is not enough to draw only on academic explorations of human environmental relationships. Many of the foundational concepts of EH in fact have their source in Indigenous ways of knowing and being that have been around for far longer than the disciplines of the humanities – far longer, indeed than the entire project of academic research<sup>5</sup>. With these conceptual resources, EH is equipped to offer critical insights that can unsettle the established patterns of thought that underwrite the expertise of those typically consulted in policymaking, such as economists, scientists and professionals in law and management.



Drawing by Richard Giblett (2008). *Mycelium Rhizome*

# HOW CAN THE ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES HELP?

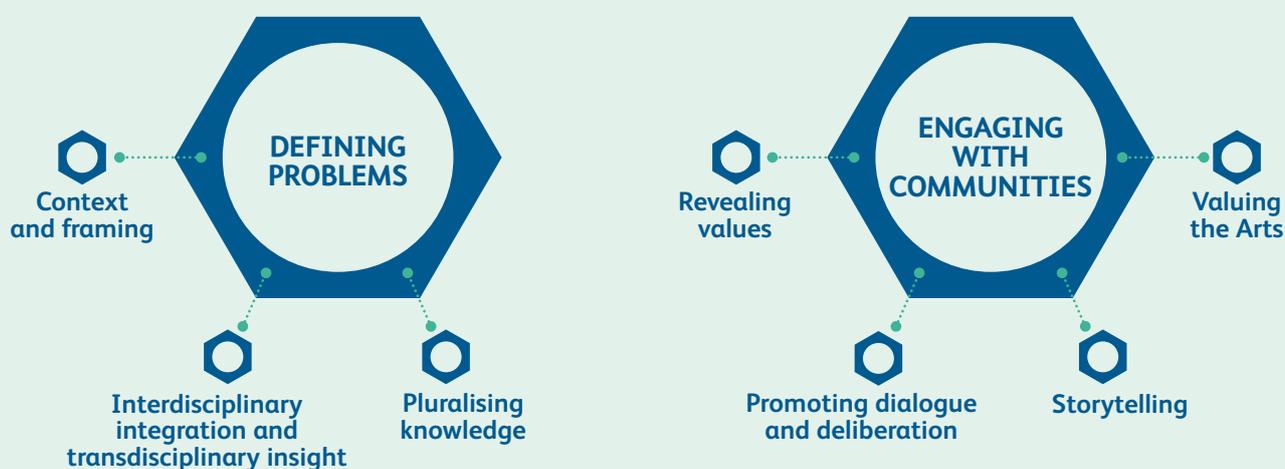
One point of clarification is needed at the outset. This document is not addressed to one particular sector of policymaking, as distinct from others. The starting point for EH is rather that the environment can no longer be regarded as tied to particular arenas of decision-making such as in conservation, agriculture or risk management.

Though these arenas are crucial, and highlight the complexity of human environmental relationships, the contemporary remit of such terms as 'environment' and 'nature' is far broader, covering everything from the minutiae of microbial life to phenomena of planetary reach. The environment cannot anymore be regarded as 'out there', something that we can put in a box and think or make decisions *about*. It has rather forced itself into the very process of our thinking and deciding. Whether our concern be with matters of economy, health, education or infrastructure, we have to think *with* and *through* the environment; not just *about* it.

EH does not claim a unified perspective on how this thinking 'with and through' might occur. It can however offer a range of conceptual resources, which we have distilled here into two main categories:

- 1) resources for defining problems;
- 2) resources for engaging with communities.

These broadly reflect the ways EH can help, but the categories also indicate certain points of intervention in typical cycles of policy and decision-making. However, rather than thinking of these as following one after the other, starting with problem definition and ending with community engagement, we see them as proceeding side by side and continually influencing each other. We ask: how might the framing of a problem constrain ways of addressing it? Whose disciplines (or knowledges) are included or excluded? How can emerging values help in finding common ground and potentially novel solutions when conflict emerges? What other methods might inform knowledge of an issue, or help to approach it in different ways? In the following sections we will introduce thinking along these lines, as well as including 'snapshot' examples of applying these approaches in practice.



# 1. DEFINING PROBLEMS



**The moment a problem is defined in a particular way, it is narrowed down to exclude other possible approaches. This is the first step in recognising that established patterns of thought, geared to coming up with 'solutions', may perpetuate the very problems they are meant to solve, or prevent them from being addressed in different ways. This section will highlight how the ways problems are approached can be an entry point for EH thinking.**

## 1.1. Context and framing

The first way EH can help policy-making is by critically reflecting on how the problem is understood in the first place. This is a matter of contextualising a problem and understanding how it is framed. For example, recognising the difficulty in understanding the gravity of the crises we face, and in order to convey the planetary impact of human activity, many have turned to calling our present geological era the *Anthropocene*. It is a designation that speaks to the idea of 'deep time', giving a sense of the scale of the history of the earth before humans evolved in order to highlight the severity of the present moment. While such framing can be helpful, we

have to be careful in the language we use. It matters who is doing the talking. The Anthropocene isn't the consequence of the actions of one homogeneous and globally distributed population of 'humans'. In reality, the human inhabitants of the planet are vastly unequal in the environmental damage they have caused.<sup>6</sup> A violent and continuing history of colonial extraction has fuelled development in the Global North, while communities across the Global South are experiencing severe climatic events with increasing frequency. According to a recent Oxfam report, the world's wealthiest 10% contribute around 52% of cumulative carbon emissions<sup>7</sup>. Framing a problem simply as 'human-caused' can sweep these inequalities under the carpet, leading to outcomes that are unjust, perpetuating inequalities, and failing to reflect the diversity of existing human environmental relationships.

The key point here is that how a problem is framed can, in turn, define the ways in which it is addressed. Another example concerns the question of how people value the environment. Neoclassical economics, the hegemonic theory in economic discourse, starts from the assumption that people value the environment according to its usefulness (or utility) to themselves. This is both self-interested



and anthropocentric in its framing of why nature matters. Many understandings of environmental problems have been framed in this way – notably the so-called ‘Tragedy of the Commons’, according to which resources held in common are bound to be depleted, due to the unfettered play of individual interests, unless restrictions are placed on access. Many laws and regulations are founded on this premise. Work in EH, however, has shown that the problem is misleading<sup>8</sup>. Thus, Ugwuanyi has shown how a moral lens based in African worldviews and religion, according to which humans are bound to their local environments through relations of kinship and ancestry, resolves the alleged ‘tragedy’<sup>9</sup>. Recasting environmental problems in this way, on alternative moral or ethical grounds, opens up to possibilities of open access rather than restrictive regulation.

## 1.2. Interdisciplinary

The second way EH can help with policy-making lies in its inherently interdisciplinary way of working, and in the discipline-spanning insights that result. Too often, expertise in any one discipline is cut off from the knowledge held in others. For example, decisions about well-being based only on one particular economic theory fail to take account of wider impacts, both human and environmental. The enhancement of human well-being requires an understanding not just of basic human needs, but of how humans are affected by experience (traumatic or otherwise), of how human potential is formed and fostered, and the effects of culture and education on the developing human mind. Enhancing nature’s well-being requires an understanding of how keystone species keep an ecology in balance, and a recognition of the importance of local knowledge and expertise based on lived experience. It is the lack of such understanding that has allowed monocultures to spread around the world, at huge cost to natural biodiversity. In order to comprehend well-being and its promotion in the round, EH can work between and across disciplines. The inter- and transdisciplinarity character of EH- thinking enables it to unpack such value-laden policy terms as ‘resilience’, ‘planetary boundaries’ and ‘social and ecological thresholds’, which are gaining increasing traction in policymaking circles, and to spell out what is at stake in ways that foster dialogue and improve the quality of decision-making.

## 1.3. Pluralising knowledge

Decision-making about the environment is often highly technocratic, with responsibility for decisions devolved to ‘experts’ in a particular field. This, in large part, is due to assumptions about what counts as knowledge. Local knowledge born of intergenerational practice, with its context-specific, place-based understandings of ecosystemic interdependencies, may be contradicted by policies based on more abstract and generalised claims about how ecosystems function on a national or global scale. Modern technoscience, held up as a social panacea, too often ignores the impacts of its application. Many organisations centre their activities and interventions on technoscientific knowledge, believing that to do so ensures ‘neutrality’. This, however, can mask the ethical and often highly political stakes of any given decision, overriding what matters to people in local communities.

Furthermore, to place this one, technoscientific way of knowing centre-stage can marginalise ‘other’ ways (including other ethical and spiritual orientations)<sup>10</sup>. Yet marginalised knowledges, such as those of Indigenous peoples, are now increasingly turned to for answers as to how to live with the earth in a more harmonious way. Indigenous worldviews are often transdisciplinary, understanding humans to be embedded in biocommunities or ecologies of place. As cooperative members of the biocommunity, Indigenous or First Nation communities have learned from the land, understanding ways of living with the earth, becoming responsible partners and future ancestors. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), locally grounded in deep immersion and observation over generations, perhaps for thousands of years, leads to a flourishing biodiversity – as has been noted in many UN reports. Indigenous peoples make up 5% of the world’s population yet these communities live with and look after around 80% of the planet’s biodiversity<sup>11</sup>. As policymaking institutions such as the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) recognize, these ways of knowing and living with the earth need to be better understood and incorporated into policy and decision-making.

The idea of ‘incorporation’, however, can imply a unified and central way of knowing and being on the earth – what sociologist John Law has called the ‘One World World’<sup>12</sup>. Some attempts at knowledge ‘integration’ can lead to the appropriation or co-



option of other ways of knowing and being in order to render a dominant system more sustainable, when that system may itself be the cause of the very ecological and social harms that have triggered escalating crises<sup>13</sup>. It is common for traditional and local ecological knowledge and practice to be romantically idealized, without being considered viable and valuable in themselves. In an urgent search for strategies of resilience and sustainability in the face of the magnitude of challenges facing life on Earth, EH seeks to cultivate a 'polyculture of ideas'<sup>14</sup>. An example of this approach can be found

in the work of Acharya and Prakash, who have shown how the context-specific knowledge of local people in the Gandak river basin in India, can play a vital role in improving the precision of science-based flood forecasting<sup>15</sup>. By fostering the coexistence of knowledge systems, plural ways of engaging and relating with the world can be both acknowledged and respected. EH perspectives can create the space for plural ways of knowing in order to guide and inform decision-making, whilst taking care to avoid the risks of appropriation and co-option that may arise under the guise of integration.



## 2. ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES



### **Undoing or unsettling the entrenched logics of technocratic governance, the dominant approach to environmental decision-making across the world, requires multiple approaches.**

In this section we will highlight some of these approaches, and give some snapshot examples of EH-based interventions. One of the more troubling consequences of technocratic forms of governance is that the process of making decisions excludes the very people for whom they matter most. As a result, communicating decision outcomes to the communities affected by them can be an uphill struggle and a source of contestation. While this exclusion of local people often follows from narrow understandings of what counts as knowledge, it also reveals a lack of understanding of values they hold, a failure to appreciate the depth and diversity of human environmental relationships in local contexts, and an inability to grasp the potentially transformative outcomes of working *with* people to effect positive change. Communicating and engaging with communities on key environmental issues is fundamental to preparing for uncertain climatic and ecological futures.

### **2.1. Revealing values**

Technocratic governance is favoured by decision-makers because it is deemed to be value-free or neutral. This perceived neutrality, however, rests upon an assumed separation of facts and values. Producing facts, it is supposed, must necessarily be a value-free process. The effect of this assumption is to block meaningful engagement with local communities on key decisions, since the values people hold are regarded as extraneous to the matters at hand. However studies in EH have demonstrated conclusively that the ways scientific knowledge is assembled are both political and value-laden – a result that has major implications for both the natural and the social sciences<sup>16</sup>. A key aim of EH research is to uncover the values at stake in decision-making. For example, during the covid-19 pandemic, certain politicians have been quick to shift responsibility for key decisions by claiming to be ‘following the science’. Not only has this approach construed medical science practitioners as wholly unified, it also deflects the focus from what is at stake in the policy approaches proposed to address the pandemic. Prioritising the economy above the health of the more vulnerable in society has even been presented as a necessary ‘trade-off’, as if both could be placed on a single scale of monetary value. Yet, in reality, in every



policy option a plurality of incommensurable values is at stake<sup>17</sup>. As this example shows, it is an illusion to pretend that decisions are based on matters of fact, as if ‘following the science’, and that they are therefore

value-neutral. The aim of the decision-making process should rather be to reveal the underlying values at stake, thus opening them out to further deliberation and dialogue.

## SNAPSHOT 1 Decision-making guided by plural values of nature

One growing trend in environmental policy and decision-making is to appeal to the market to ensure the protection of nature and halt the degradation of ecosystems. This can be seen in the financialisation of nature through concepts such as ‘natural capital’, itself based on the idea of ‘ecosystem services’<sup>18,19</sup>. However, this conceptual framing imposes specific assumptions about why nature matters, namely, that the ‘services’ nature provides are substitutable – that a service provided in one location can be replaced or substituted by the same service elsewhere. A number of critiques from EH have pointed to the anthropocentrism entailed in supposing that nature only matters for the services it provides for humans<sup>20</sup>.

To uncover the values inherent in diverse human environmental relationships, and to understand why nature matters to people in different ways, we need alternative approaches. An example is the Life Framework of Values developed by O’Neill et al. (2008). This framework looks at how people

live *from* nature (how it provides energy, food, shelter, even inspiration), how they live *in* nature (how it serves as a setting for life events, cultural practices and heritage, thus creating a sense of place), how they live *with* nature (recognising their coexistence with other species) and lastly how people live *as* nature (acknowledging that for many, the communities in which they live are part and parcel of the ecosystems in which they are embedded)<sup>21,22</sup>. Uncovering the values people hold across these four categories helps us avoid basing our decisions simply on assumed trade-offs between economy and nature. Instead, it allows us to improve the sensitivity and quality of decision-making so as to reflect plurality and difference. Crucially this entails a shift from technocratic governance, where engagement is a task of explaining *to* the public what decisions have been made, to a form of governance that requires engaging *with* people throughout decision-making processes in order to understand what matters to them and to their communities.

## 2.2. Promoting dialogue and deliberation

One of the main aims of EH is to promote dialogue and deliberation, in order to navigate the conflict and complexity surrounding the emergence of uncertain ecological futures. Compared to ‘monologues’, in which advocates speak from a narrow, self-centred perspective which can only be contested on its own terms<sup>23</sup>, EH looks for ways to open up conversations that challenge the assumptions that contestants might otherwise take for granted. Opening the dialogue to plural perspectives and values allows for complex problems to be addressed in potentially novel and unexpected ways. This doesn’t mean accepting a relativism in which anything goes. It means rather that the parameters of decision-making must be shared and agreed upon as part of the conversation. Dialogue can help to bring to the centre perspectives or ways of knowing that might otherwise be treated as marginal, challenging assumptions as to

whose knowledge is relevant to any given situation, and making it possible for problems to be reframed. This is key to facilitating better communication and engagement with decision-making.

For EH, there is a difference between dialogue and deliberation. While dialogue is open-ended and does not necessarily lead to final decisions, deliberation is more evaluative and looks to achieve a consensus on which decisions can rest<sup>24</sup>. As such, it is central to new thinking around the democratisation of decision-making, away from forms of technocratic governance in which expertise is held by a few, towards an inclusive approach that would encourage citizens to work together in order to understand and resolve complex socio-ecological issues and to facilitate policy cycles<sup>25</sup>. Deliberation doesn’t require a fixed framework or approach, and can take place in contexts ranging from formal representative bodies such as citizens’ assemblies to ad hoc gatherings as



informal as an artist-led walk through a forest. One example of a tool for bringing deliberation into policy and decision-making is the 'deliberative guide':

*"A deliberative guide is a sophisticated and community facing document that seeks to name the problem that you want to talk about and frame the discussion by identifying critical options and their*

*respective strengths and drawbacks. Its purpose is not to create experts, but rather to illuminate what is at issue and allow people to make decisions about how to act together."*<sup>26</sup>

DemocracyCo have applied deliberative guides to solving complex problems, leading to innovative policy outcomes, as the snapshot below illustrates.

## SNAPSHOT 2 Deliberation in action – The Dog and Cat Jury

Certain human-animal relations can pose complex social problems, particularly in the case of domesticated animals. In this example, major reforms were underway to curb the huge increases in unwanted pets. The South Australian government commissioned DemocracyCo to design and deliver a Citizens' Jury aimed at reducing their numbers. The Jury was also tasked with deciding whether mandatory desexing could be used to support the reduction. DemocracyCo used a deliberative approach to address the problem. For the Jury, they selected 35 South Australians, of whom roughly half owned a pet, and half did not. The Jury sat for five sessions over a 2-month period. It was supported by a stakeholder group, which oversaw the process and provided the Jury with balanced evidence, while also raising awareness in the broader community about the process and the issues involved. The Jury was hosted by South Australia's Environment Minister, who assured the Jury at the outset about his commitment to bringing its recommendations before parliament so long as they lay within his portfolio. If they did not, he would nevertheless advocate for any proposed reforms.

The Jury wanted to know what led to pets becoming unwanted. They found that two of the major causes were changes in circumstances of employment and domestic violence. As people lost their jobs or fled violent relationships, and moved into rental properties (or worse, became homeless), they could no longer keep their pets. The Jury made seven recommendations for reform, one of which lay outside of the portfolio of the Minister. This latter, recognising the importance of the family pet during times of disruption in peoples' lives, proposed changes in the rental laws in South Australia that would allow pets in rental properties by default. The Jury's recommendations were received positively by the government. Five of the seven recommendations, including allowing pets in rental properties, were adopted, and have now been legislated as part of the South Australia Dog and Cat Management Act. Not only did this deliberative process help to strengthen relationships, respect and understanding between government and key stakeholders, but all the participants also enjoyed it and would willingly do it again.

### 2.3. Storytelling

*'...If anything anchors the diversity of EH projects within its wider discipline of the Humanities... it is a commitment to the world-making power of narrative.'*<sup>27</sup>

People in many communities, especially when they are excluded from decision-making, often feel alienated from debates surrounding both climate change and the environment. They find the notion of climate change too abstract, too removed from their everyday lives, unless or until they face its all too real consequences directly, such as in

catastrophic weather events. Depending on the scale at which problems are framed, they can register differently with people, from the immediate bodily experience of those suffering from asthma due to poor urban air quality, to a more general sense of uncertainty and disorientation brought about by the seasonal irregularities of a warming planet. Being sensible to how certain framings can alienate as well as resonate with people is important for engaging better with communities.

One of the most effective ways of cultivating such sensibility, and of inspiring new ways not just of thinking, but of feeling and acting, is storytelling.



Along with other kinds of art and performance, stories do more than simply ‘engage’ their audiences. They can stir up emotional bonds with both human and non-human others, and with the land, helping to overcome the overwhelming sense of disempowerment and demotivation that people often feel in the face of the sheer magnitude of the ecological challenges facing life on Earth. According to eco-feminist Plumwood, art, writing and storytelling *re-animate* the world – they bring it back to life, allowing nature to speak in the active voice. To rediscover our membership of the ecological community to which we belong, Plumwood argues, we need to extend concepts of agency and creativity into the world of nature, and to open ourselves ‘to hearing sound as voice, seeing movement as action, adaptation as intelligence and dialogue, coincidence and chaos as the creativity of matter’<sup>28</sup>. Storytelling helps connect us with others who are seeking new ways of living, and at the same asks its audiences ‘to be curious and to care about the many relationships, the many ways of being, the many worlds that are disappearing’<sup>29</sup>. EH is well placed to facilitate storytelling as a way of understanding what matters, how things have come to be as they are, and crucially, how we might imagine them otherwise. This can assist communities in expressing what matters to them and in picturing alternative futures, providing a base from which to push policy and decision-making in innovative directions.

## 2.4. Valuing the Arts

EH creates the space for a range of critical disciplinary approaches and practices to come together to explore issues in ways that open up avenues for thinking, acting and living with the world differently. One of the most important ways is through the arts. The arts foster communication and help to build bridges between people from different backgrounds and with different understandings of the world. Arts-led methods and approaches can help to reframe ways of understanding and engaging with the environment, suggesting alternative solutions to issues at stake, and opening up to new possibilities for research and policymaking<sup>30</sup>. The motivations and feelings they generate can spark the imagination and foster creative thinking, whether this concerns the local knowledge and environmental history of a place, and its value to people and communities, or the intrinsic value and agency of nature. Today, artists are engaging increasingly with issues of environmental change, often in close collaboration with scientists, leading to the co-production of knowledge of considerable potential significance for the wider society. The work of artists can complement scientific findings by ensuring that outputs are critical, creative and engaging, lending them additional legitimacy, attractiveness, relevance and depth. But it can also challenge the legitimacy of scientific findings by casting a critical eye on their underlying assumptions.



Jaladuddin is a retired teacher and lives in Kusumtala village on the Sundarban Islands in India. He regularly talks about local history and the impacts of climate change. © Simon Rawles

### SNAPSHOT 3 Animating communication and communicating animism - Art Science Exhibits Berlin

An eloquent example of close synergy between artistic and scientific research is the independent enterprise Art Science Exhibits Berlin<sup>31</sup>. Founded by the curator mp Warming, Art Science Exhibits Berlin presents work created by artists and scientists, or scientist-artists, intended to promote positive solutions for regenerating ecosystems and reintroducing humans to the ecological community to which they belong. This focus is expressed not merely in the artworks' narratives, but also in their materiality and transportation. Responding to sustainability concerns, especially the CO<sub>2</sub> output entailed in shipping to international exhibitions, Art Science Exhibits Berlin has launched a visionary solution through collaboration with the cargo sailing ship AVONTUUR<sup>32</sup>. The Art/NaturSci Movement by wind was launched on November 2020, with artworks from the founding members of the permanent collections sailing on the AVONTUUR from Hamburg, Germany, to Douarnenez, France. This waterborne travelling collection stands at the frontier of environmental art making, dedicated to ecosystem regeneration.

Included in the permanent collection of Art Science Exhibits Berlin is the latest animation movie by Mongolian-Canadian artist Alisi Telengut, *The Fourfold* (2020)<sup>33</sup>. Her art draws from her own story and heritage rooted in Mongolian culture, as much as from the currently thriving conversations around animism, shamanism, Indigenous knowledge systems, and reciprocal human-environmental relations. Flowing between the shamanic ceremonies in Mongolia and the animated film, between rituals and stories, between sounds and colours, between voices and shapes, and between drawing and weaving, *The Fourfold* celebrates the vitality and animacy of the world. Its engaging and engaged voice creates a deep-listening experience for people of marginalized cultural and spiritual traditions, whilst also communicating the perspectives of non-human inhabitants of the world. Artworks like this, and the research on which they are founded, afford privileged access to different voices and worldviews, and to let nature speak in the active voice. In the world's gift to us, they are the currency<sup>34</sup>.



Still from the film *The Fourfold* © Alisi Telengut 2020

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### Journal articles:

Holmes, et al. 2021. 'Mainstreaming the humanities in conservation'. *Conservation Biology*

Vadrot, A. B., et al. 2018. 'Why are social sciences and humanities needed in the works of IPBES? A systematic review of the literature'. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 31(sup1), S78-S100

Nemains et al. 2015. 'Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities: Toward Critical Posthumanities for the Anthropocene', *Ethics and the Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2015), pp.67-97

### Reports:

O'Neill, J. 2017. 'Life Beyond Capital'. Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity

Saratsi, E., Acott, T., Allinson, E., Edwards, D., Fremantle, C., Fish, R. 2019. 'Valuing Arts and Arts Research'. Valuing Nature Paper VNP22

### Books:

Cohen, J., & Foote, S. (Eds.). 2021. 'The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities'. Cambridge University Press

Gibson, K., Rose, D. B., & Fincher, R. 2015. 'Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene'. Punctum Books

O'Neill, J., Holland, A., & Light, A. 2008. Environmental values. Routledge: London

### Articles:

Schneider-Mayerson et al., 2021. 'Why Ecocriticism needs the social sciences (and vice versa)'. Accessed at: [seeingthewoods.org/2021/07/21/why-ecocriticism-needs-the-social-sciences-and-vice-versa/?fbclid=IwAR0Le8JDAJGGP7SAMStsRUayXg2QZBaZksOyDYgjxG11UfU0-zNkAayyVUo](https://seeingthewoods.org/2021/07/21/why-ecocriticism-needs-the-social-sciences-and-vice-versa/?fbclid=IwAR0Le8JDAJGGP7SAMStsRUayXg2QZBaZksOyDYgjxG11UfU0-zNkAayyVUo)

### Resources for putting deliberation into practice:

Rourke, B. 2014. 'Developing materials for Deliberative Forums'. Kettering Foundation. Accessible from: [kettering.org/catalog/product/developing-materials-deliberative-forums](https://kettering.org/catalog/product/developing-materials-deliberative-forums)



# ENDNOTES

- 1 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), (2021): 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press
- 2 Taylor, 2021, Guardian, 'Climate Crisis Hits Worst Case Scenario Levels – Environment Agency Head', Accessed at: [theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/23/climate-crisis-hitting-worst-case-scenarios-warns-environment-agency-head](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/23/climate-crisis-hitting-worst-case-scenarios-warns-environment-agency-head) Accessed on: 20/08/21
- 3 Clark, Nigel, and Bronislaw Szerszynski. (2021) *Planetary social thought: The Anthropocene challenge to the social sciences*. Polity Press: Cambridge
- 4 Bird-Rose, 'The Ecological Humanities', in Gibson, Bird-Rose, Fincher, 2015, 'A Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene', Punctum Books; New York
- 5 Todd, Z. (2016). An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn: 'Ontology' is just another word for colonialism. *Journal of historical sociology*, 29(1), 4-22.
- 6 Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009, 'The Climate of History: Four Thesis.' Critical Inquiry
- 7 Oxfam Media Briefing, 21 September 2020, 'Confronting Carbon Inequality', Accessed at: [oxfam.org/en/research/confronting-carbon-inequality](https://oxfam.org/en/research/confronting-carbon-inequality) Accessed on: 12/08/21
- 8 E.g. see, Hourdequin's work - Hourdequin, M. 2010. 'Climate, collective action and individual ethical obligations'. *Environmental Values*, 19(4), 443-464.
- 9 Ugwuanyi L.O. 2011, 'Advancing the Environmental Ethics through the African Worldview' *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(4), 107-107
- 10 See, e.g. Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, Alberto Costa (eds.), 2019, *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books
- 11 Garnett, S. T., et al. 2018. A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. *Nature Sustainability*, 1(7), 369-374
- 12 Law, J. 2015. What's wrong with a one-world world?. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 16(1), 126-139
- 13 Latulippe, N., & Klenk, N. 2020. Making room and moving over: knowledge co-production, Indigenous knowledge sovereignty and the politics of global environmental change decision-making. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 42, 7-14
- 14 Kimmerer, R.W. 2018. Mishkos Kenomagwen, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth, in M.K. Nelson, D. Shilling (eds.), *Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*, 27-56 (47)
- 15 Acharya, A., & Prakash, A. 2019. When the river talks to its people: Local knowledge-based flood forecasting in Gandak River basin, India. *Environmental Development*, 31, 55-67
- 16 Sayer, A. 2011. *Why things matter to people: Social science, values and ethical life*. Cambridge University Press
- 17 O'Neill, J., Holland, A., & Light, A. 2008. *Environmental values*. Routledge: London
- 18 O'Neill, J. 2017. *Life beyond capital*. Paper in CUSP essay series on the ethics of sustainable prosperity. Centre for Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, University of Surrey, Guildford
- 19 Sullivan, S. 2013. Banking nature? The spectacular financialisation of environmental conservation. *Antipode*, 45(1), 198-217
- 20 McShane, K. 2007. Anthropocentrism vs. nonanthropocentrism: Why should we care?. *Environmental Values*, 169-185
- 21 O'Connor, S., & Kenter, J. O. 2019. Making intrinsic values work: integrating intrinsic values of the more-than-human world through the Life Framework of Values. *Sustainability Science*, 14(5), 1247-1265
- 22 O'Neill, J., Holland, A., & Light, A. 2008. *Environmental values*. Routledge: London
- 23 Bird-Rose, 'Dialogue', in Gibson, Bird-Rose, Fincher. 2015. 'A Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene', Punctum Books; New York
- 24 Carson, L. 2017. *Deliberation*. Research and Development note. The newDemocracy Foundation. Accessible from: [newdemocracy.com.au/2017/03/22/deliberation/](https://newdemocracy.com.au/2017/03/22/deliberation/)
- 25 Edwards, D. M., Collins, T. M., & Goto, R. 2016. An arts-led dialogue to elicit shared, plural and cultural values of ecosystems. *Ecosystem Services*, 21, 319-328
- 26 Rourke, B. 2014. 'Developing materials for Deliberative Forums', Kettering Foundation. Accessible from: [kettering.org/catalog/product/developing-materials-deliberative-forums](https://kettering.org/catalog/product/developing-materials-deliberative-forums)
- 27 Cohen et al., 2021. *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*. Cambridge University Press, pg. 2
- 28 Plumwood, V. 2013. Nature in the active voice, in G. Harvey (ed.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, 441-453 (450)
- 29 Van Dooren, T. (2015). *Vulture Stories: Narrative and Conservation*, in K. Gibson, D. Bird-Rose, R. Fincher (eds.), *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, 441-453; ( 55)
- 30 Saratsi, E., Acott, T., Allinson, E., Edwards, D., Fremantle, C., N Fish, R. 2019. 'Valuing Arts and Arts Research' *Valuing Nature Paper VNP22*
- 31 [artscienceexhibits.com](https://artscienceexhibits.com)
- 32 [timbercoast.com/en](https://timbercoast.com/en)
- 33 [alitelengut.com](https://alitelengut.com)
- 34 Grimes, R. L. 2002. Performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy: an incantatory riff for a global medicine show. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 149-164

thinkingintheworld.com

© Consortium of Environmental Philosophers, 2021

