

Alternet Conference 2022

Session proposal

Name and Institutions of Chairs and Co-Chairs

- Carla Washbourne, University College London
- André Mascarenhas, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
- Bede West, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)
- Carolina Rodriguez, Wageningen University
- Charis Chalkiadakis, University of Twente
- Francesca Leucci, University of Bologna
- Marie Vandewalle, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ)
- Nicolas Dendoncker, ILEE, Université de Namur
- Tania Ploumi, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Tanya M. González-Martínez, Institute for Agricultural and Rural Sciences, Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, Toluca, State of Mexico / National Autonomous University of Mexico

Session title

- Transforming our perceptions of Human-Nature relationships for transformative change

Session abstract

The session is proposed by the team of the 2020-21 Alternet High Impact Action (AHIA) project and hopes to create a space to share work in progress focussed on moving towards new ways of viewing humanity's place within nature. Work of this kind could play a pivotal role in helping to shape the development of more equitable and sustainable environmental decision-making and management and to motivate towards transformative change. It will invite contributions from those working to address the real and current challenge: how to transform our perceptions of our relationship with nature, to help us manage growing global sustainability challenges.

This session will be framed around two main questions:

- how is the relationship between humans and non-human nature viewed by science, policy and society?
- how can we better reflect the interconnectedness and dependencies between humans and non-human nature?

There is a growing weight of academic and practitioner discourse arguing that considering 'humanity' and 'nature' as separate is the origin of most environmental problems, and an increasing unrest with the fact that this view does not appropriately describe humanity's place on the planet. If we do not recognise this explicitly, and the negative relationship with the rest of nature that it can encourage, there is little hope of achieving the transformative changes to environment and society that we need to tackle global ecological change and the escalating climate crisis.

Attitudes towards our connection with nature can significantly influence our behaviour and choices, and shifting attitudes in public and policy discussions is an important part of saving it. The current conception of Human-Nature relationships (HNR) is useful but problematic, in retaining echoes of this sense of separation. Working to recognise its limits and expand its scope can be a leverage point for transformative change. Therefore, improving our knowledge on how HNR is currently viewed by science, policy and society and how this limits our thought

and action is paramount to a sustainable future where humans live in harmony with nature, aligned with the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

Main session theme: How to research transformative changes?

Type of session: presentation, workshop, other

- Blended: ~1hr presentations (assuming ~4-6 x 10-minute presentations) followed by 30-45min workshop session
- Session organising team can propose ~2-3 presentations from the AHIA 2020-21 project “Demonstrating dependencies between humanity and nature towards a sustainable future: A nitrogen case-study” and project team
- Session would be open to other submissions

Intended outputs

- Session summary document which may form the core of a perspective article
- Blog piece on the session and key outcomes tallied with the work of the AHIA N Network project

Duration (2-3 hours)

- 2hrs