

Interdisciplinary Conference  
& CUSO workshop  
Lausanne, 27-28 September 2019

**“Narratives of (Un)sustainability:  
Assessing U.S. Oil Culture”**

Keynote speaker: Prof. Stephanie LeMenager, University of Oregon



# Welcome to the University of Lausanne!



We are very happy to welcome you to this interdisciplinary conference on U.S. oil culture. As the country starts to grapple with the effects of climate change, it finds itself at a crossroad: should it continue on the perilous petroleum-fueled path, or work on finding its way out? What can the history and nature of the U.S.'s relationship with oil teach us? We hope that these and many more questions will turn this event into an opportunity for intellectual exchange as well as strengthen ties across disciplines and countries as we gather to discuss U.S. oil culture at an important historical junction.

We look forward to meeting you all!

Audrey Loetscher & Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet

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## Interdisciplinary Conference CFP Lausanne, 27-28 September 2019

# “Narratives of (Un)sustainability: Assessing U.S. Oil Culture”

Until newly-elected Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez propelled the “Green New Deal” into the public discourse following the 2018 midterm elections, ecological issues had remained largely absent in American political debate and agenda. Unsurprisingly, the US emerges as a longstanding contributor to the rising concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, one of the leading causes of climate change. The producer of one of the largest carbon footprints, the US ranks among the most unsustainable states. If the “American way of life” were to be replicated on a worldwide scale, its rate of resource consumption and waste production would require close to five planets to sustain itself. Since the end of WWII, the US has accumulated a colossal ecological debt at the expense of future generations, whose access to natural wealth is substantially jeopardized, and developing economies, which rely on a much lower resource supply.

Climate disruption is a symptom of this socio-economic matrix of unsustainability and of the unclaimed “check” or hidden cost of the US and other countries’ dysfunctional modes of existence. Specifically, unsustainability results from the harmful triad consisting of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas), a high-energy society, and economic growth. As Nathaniel Rich explains, “historically, energy use had correlated to economic growth” and Americans had grown accustomed to the idea that “the more fossil fuels [they] burned, the better [their] lives became.”<sup>1</sup> The refusal to address pressing environmental issues by engaging the country in broad, systemic changes (for instance through a national plan for a fossil fuel phase-out) attests to the pervasiveness of oil culture and its coterminous ideology of perpetual growth in American society. That being said, counter-narratives that seek other ways of relating to the environment and of living on earth’s rhythms have emerged in the past years (from the US itself and from elsewhere), and they offer an avenue for moving past the oil predicament.

With Prof. Stephanie LeMenager (University of Oregon, author of *Living Oil: Petroleum in the American Century*), an expert on America’s petroleum culture, as our keynote speaker, we would like to invite scholars from various disciplines to reflect on the narratives surrounding the US oil culture. We conceive of this conference as an opportunity to explore both ends of the spectrum: from narratives of how unsustainability fuels the oil culture by disseminating ideas such as the existence of inexhaustible

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<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Rich, “Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change.” *The New York Times*, 1 August, 2018.

abundance or the possibility of a technological “fix” to all environmental ailments, to narratives of sustainability that demonstrate how American culture could be changed through an awareness of the fundamental incompatibility between a politics of infinite growth and a finite biosphere.

Possible topics could include, but are not restricted to:

- (un)sustainability in American literature / popular culture / public discourse
- the relationship between the oil culture and prevailing US national narratives or myths
- the impact on American culture of rapid technological development based on a seemingly limitless supply of fossil fuels throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- the effect of the oil peak or the 1973 oil crisis on American cultural imagination and literary production
- the role of ecological writing (petro-fiction, cli-fi, eco-gothic, the naturalist essay, nature poetry, ...) in helping US citizens imagine a different future
- narrating the transition: towards a post-carbon America
- Native American perspectives on resource exploitation and on sustainability
- gender and ecology: masculine extractive, exploitive systems vs. feminine regenerative, cyclic approaches
- the public and political role of writers and scholars in helping the US envision a more sustainable culture

Please send a paper abstract of 200-300 words and a short biographical note of 100-150 words by June 30, 2019 to [audrey.loetscher@unil.ch](mailto:audrey.loetscher@unil.ch) and [agnieszka.soltysikmonnet@unil.ch](mailto:agnieszka.soltysikmonnet@unil.ch).

# Conference Program

## Friday, September 27, 2019

12h45-13h30	Registration
13h30-13h45	Opening remarks
13h45-15h00	Keynote address Chair: Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet

**Stephanie LeMenager** – Thinking with Oil and Water

15h00-15h30	Coffee break
15h30-17h00	Panel 1: Acts of Resistance & Sustainability Chair: Audrey Loetscher

**Melanie Meunier** – Rising Youth Climate Activism in the US

**Cécile Heim** – The Unsustainability of Private Property: Resisting American Oil Culture in Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*

**Amy Player** – ‘Plastic, swine bones and lead-207’: Deep time and the post-natural in Robert Macfarlane’s *Underland*

17h00-17h30	Apéritif
19h30	Conference dinner in town

## Saturday, September 28, 2019

09h00-09h30	Welcome coffee
09h30-11h00	Round table “Toward a Post-Petroleum U.S. Society?” Moderator: Christian Arnsperger
11h00-11h30	Coffee break

11h30-12h30

Panel 2: Petro-Myths and Ideology  
Chair: Guido Palazzo

**Moritz Ingwersen** – An Unsustainable Myth: Challenges to the “Ecological Indian” in Indigenous Fossil Fictions

**Sakina Gröppmaier** – Hegemonic Narratives of an Oily Culture: An Examination of U.S. Energy Imaginaries of the Early Twenty-First Century

12:30 -14h00

Lunch break

14h00-15h30

Panel 3: The Aesthetics of Oil  
Chair: Miriam Tola

**Lola Lorant** – Striking Oil in Christo’s barrels: Oil industry and Environment during the Cold War in American Art History

**Boris Vejovsky** – The Aesthetics of Pollution and its Discontents

**Léna Remy-Kovack** – Remember, Resist, Redraw: The Power of Indigenous Visual Art in Recent Pipeline Protests

15h30-16h00

Coffee break

16h00-17h00

Panel 4: Oil Doctrines  
Chair: Stephanie LeMenager

**Ángela López-García** – And God Said, Let There Be Oil: The Church of PetrOleum in Margaret Atwood’s *Maddaddam*

**Christian Arnsperger** – Peak Oil and the Catabolic Decline of the US Economy

17h00-17h15

Closing remarks

17h15

Apéro

# Round table

## “Toward a Post-Petroleum U.S. Society?”

### Guest panelists:

#### **Prof. Stephanie LeMenager**

Stephanie LeMenager’s work on climate change and the humanities has been featured in The New York Times, ClimateWire, Science Friday, the CBC, and other public venues. She is Barbara and Carlisle Moore Professor of English and Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon, where she co-directs the Center for Environmental Futures with Professor Marsha Weisiger. Her publications include the book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*, which defines the 20<sup>th</sup> C United States as the era of “petromodernity,” and *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*, a co-authored collection for teachers interested in bringing climate change into humanities classrooms. Her current book projects include *To Speak of Common Places*, an oral history of Oregon’s public lands, and a meditation on rural American life in the shadow of climate change.

#### **Prof. Guido Palazzo**

Guido Palazzo is Professor of Business Ethics at HEC, University of Lausanne. He studied business administration and philosophy at the University of Bamberg (Germany) and wrote his PhD in political philosophy at the University of Marburg (Germany). In his research he focuses on the mechanisms of (un)ethical decision making in organizations, the fight against organized crime and the impact of storytelling on human behavior. His articles have been published in journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. He is associate editor of the *Business Ethics Quarterly* and sits on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Management Studies*, the *Academy of Management Review* and *Business & Society*.

#### **Prof. Miriam Tola**

Miriam Tola will join the University of Lausanne as Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities in February 2020. She specializes in feminist and decolonial theory, political ecology and the study of activist practices for gender, racial and environmental justice. Her current book project focuses on the potential of the commons as path for making futures in the ruins of extractive capitalism. Her articles on the Anthropocene, the politics of the commons and the rights of nature have appeared in journals such as *Theory & Event*, *PhaenEx*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Feminist Review* and *Environmental Humanities*.

## **Prof. Christian Arnsperger**

Christian Arnsperger, PhD in Economics, is professor of sustainability and economic anthropology at the University of Lausanne, where he co-chairs the Lausanne Center for Anthropocene Studies. His main research focus is on the existential underpinnings of contemporary unsustainability, the possibility of building an alternative, “permacircular” economy, and the societal and cultural requisites for transitioning to a post-growth, post-petroleum world. He has recently published *Ecologie intégrale: Pour une société permacirculaire* with Dominique Bourg (Presses Universitaires de France, 2017). From 2012 to 2017, he was also a scientific advisor for the Alternative Bank Switzerland.

# Collected Abstracts and Short Bio Notes

## **PANEL 1 – ACTS OF RESISTANCE & SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Melanie Meunier -- Rising Youth Climate Activism in the US**

With the mounting frequency of extreme weather events impacting millions of Americans, the blatant anti-environmentalism of the Trump administration may have been the ultimate spark that ignited mass action from the young generation. Growing numbers of students have come to the realization that many Congress members are too beholden to fossil fuel magnates to effect change: the means exist but the political will is too weak.

American media has focused on Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the recently elected junior member of the House of Representatives, and the Green New Deal but, in fact, it was the Sunrise Movement, a group of former and current students, who convinced her to run for office and who initiated the Green New Deal. Through their experiences with the fossil fuel divestment movement across US campuses and the Occupy Wall Street movement, Sunrise originators learned valuable tools to build a movement that has a strategy and a program for the long-term. They are targeting elected officials, throwing their support behind those who sign the “No Fossil Fuel Money” pledge. By 2020, millennials and Gen Z will surpass baby boomers as the largest voting demographic, comprising about 37% of US voters. If they all vote, they could have a significant impact on climate policy.

Concurrently, 21 young plaintiffs are suing the US federal government, charging that, “through the government's affirmative actions that cause climate change, it has violated the youngest generation’s constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, as well as failed to protect essential public trust resources.” *Julianna vs The United States* was filed in 2015 and recently upheld by the Supreme Court. The case has caught the public’s attention and could have far-reaching consequences if the plaintiffs prevail.

I propose to explore rising youth climate activism in the United States: the inspirations, catalysts, strategies and further mobilization potential.

**Melanie Meunier**, English teacher at Sciences Po Strasbourg, wrote a doctoral dissertation on American environmental politics and now teaches a course based on this theme at Sciences Po and for other departments of the University of Strasbourg. Also in Strasbourg, she has also taught in the English Department, the Law School, the Applied Foreign Languages Department and at ENA (National School of Administration). She participates in conferences each year, giving papers on diverse aspects of environmental issues in the United States. An article on the Obama administration's environmental policy will be published in the summer of 2019. Originally from Vermont, she received degrees from Dartmouth College and Sciences Po Paris before resuming her studies at the University of Strasbourg.

### **Cécile Heim -- The Unsustainability of Private Property: Resisting American Oil Culture in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit***

One of the Euro-American socio-economic and philosophical concepts which lies at the foundation of settler colonialism is private property. This notion that a piece of land can be owned and dominated by men has justified the dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples: since Indigenous peoples did not exploit the land for profit, they were not considered apt to own land. Not only is this perception of dwelling on the land monolithic, but this settler-colonial logic also implicitly equates property with exploitation. By illustrating how the implied connection between property and exploitation becomes particularly evident when the Allotment Era<sup>2</sup> intersects with the Oklahoma Oil Boom of the 1920s, this paper will, firstly, demonstrate that the settler logic of private property enables unsustainability.

The second part of this presentation will be dedicated to an analysis of Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (1990), which follows Osage Elder Bella Graycloud and her community through the 1920s Osage Reign of Terror. The Osage Reign of Terror designates a moment on Osage territory in Oklahoma when the Osages grew increasingly wealthy. This was a consequence of the discovery of oil on their allotments, which forced oil companies to pay Osages rent to pump this oil from their land. However, in the early 1920s, several Osages started to disappear or were found murdered thus freeing their land for rent-free oil-pumping. At the time, no one was convicted of these crimes, but there is now substantial evidence that points to Indian Agents and oil company owners as most likely suspects. A close-reading of the character of Osage Elder and knowledge-keeper Michael Horse will allow us to re-imagine property as non-dominating and non-exploitative, thus creating a more sustainable relation to the land.

**Cécile Heim** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. Her PhD project focuses on re-imaginings of law, violence, and justice in Indigenous fiction and her research interests are Indigenous studies, decolonial studies, feminist theory, critical legal studies, and critical ethnic studies. She is the author of "Neoliberal Violence:

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<sup>2</sup> The 1887 General Allotment Act (also called Dawes Act) broke remaining Indigenous landholdings up into small allotments where one allotment was given to each Native American person. This Act was passed in an attempt to assimilate Native Americans into American society by turning them into small-scale farmers, but it especially allows the government to dispossess Native Americans of considerable amounts of land: within 25 years, Indigenous landholdings was reduced from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934, 20 million acres of which were desert or semi-arid land (Deloria and Lytle 16).

Colonial Legacies and Imperialist Strategies of the Contemporary Western Adventure” published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*. She has also presented at international conferences, such as the annual meetings of the National Popular Culture and American Culture Association, the Northeastern Modern Language Association, the Critical Ethnic Studies Association, and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association.

**Amy Player -- ‘Plastic, swine bones and lead-207’: Deep time and the post-natural in Robert Macfarlane’s *Underland***

In his most recent work *Underland*, Robert Macfarlane explores the subterranean regions of Europe and North America, visiting locations which include the Slovenian karst caves, the glaciers of Greenland, and the oil-rich coastal regions of Norway. As he delves deeper into these ‘underlands’, he unearths narratives from the deep past, and into them reads suggestions of troubling possible futures. Coming to contextualize our impact on the planet in the Anthropocene era in such expansive, geological terms poses profound challenges to the ways we have conventionally framed our wider place on Earth. Viewed through the lens of deep time, our human impact on the planet has been comparatively brief, but we are scarcely beginning to comprehend its lasting effects. When considering what our ‘future fossils’ will be, Macfarlane suggests that ‘What will survive of us is plastic, swine bones and lead-207, the stable isotope at the end of the uranium-235 decay chain’ (77), which will be embedded in the Earth’s strata for millennia to come.

This paper will consider how Macfarlane’s text provides a means to respond to this impact, exploring how his engagement with deep time also relates to wider ideas of a post-natural, or post-human world. Macfarlane has argued that ‘our modern species-history is one of remorselessly accelerated extraction, accompanied by compensatory small acts of preservation and elegiac songs’ (312). To this end, this paper will further address the extent to which his text might serve as a form of compensatory counter-narrative to these damaging forms of extraction, whilst also examining the more sustainable paths Macfarlane’s writing points us towards, situating *Underland* more broadly as a timely and urgent response to our current environmental crisis.

**Amy Player** is a doctoral candidate and graduate assistant at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Under the direction of Rachel Falconer, her PhD research focuses on nature writing in Britain in the Anthropocene era, with a specific focus on the writing of Kathleen Jamie, Robert Macfarlane and Jay Griffiths. Her interview with Kathleen Jamie was published as the introduction to Jamie’s first publication in Italian, *Falco e Ombra* (Interno Poesia, 2019). She has taught BA and MA level courses on British and American literature and Ecocritical theory, and her other research interests include magic realism and intermediality.

## PANEL 2 – OIL MYTHS AND IDEOLOGY

### **Moritz Ingwersen -- An Unsustainable Myth: Challenges to the “Ecological Indian” in Indigenous Fossil Fictions**

Tracing the trope of the “Ecological Indian” from the symbolic erasure of Indigenous presence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the environmentalist movement of the 1970s, this paper will begin by examining the complicities between resource extraction and the dehumanization of North American First Nations as commodity. Fossilized into an exoticizing stereotype, Indigenous epistemological frameworks of land-based knowledge and other-than-human kinship have proven seductive to Western ecological theory from the New Agers to contemporary science studies. Building on contemporary critiques of Gaia theory and Euro-Western ecocriticism by Indigenous scholars such as Zoe Todd or Vanessa Watts, this paper will foreground contemporary interventions by North American Indigenous critics, artists, and writers who complicate the stereotype of the “ecological Indian” and offer more sustainable visions of human-land relationalities that are fundamentally grounded in environmental justice debates and decolonial activism. Against the background of the Standing Rock pipeline protests, the Idle No More movement, and the success of Indigenous land and water protectors, I will contextualize revisions of environmentalism in literary works by Gerald Vizenor, Warren Cariou, and Cherie Dimaline that highlight the entanglements between fossil fuel economies and ongoing structures of colonization and displacement in both the United States and Canada. Through the lens of what I call fossil fictions, my aim is to illustrate how a critical engagement with North American sustainability discourses needs to confront their patronizing history, while accounting for self-determined inscriptions of Indigenous ecological agency as necessary counter-narratives to hegemonic understandings of Petrocultures and the Anthropocene.

**Moritz Ingwersen** is a postdoctoral researcher in North American Studies at the University of Konstanz and a lecturer in media theory at the University of Arts Bremen. He received a joint Ph.D. in Cultural Studies and English from Trent University (Ontario) and the University of Cologne. Building on his dissertation on dialogues between science fiction and science studies, his research and teaching is currently concerned with questions of geological subjectivity in North American literatures. His publications include the co-edited collection *Culture–Theory–Disability* (transcript 2017) and articles on J. G. Ballard, Mark Z. Danielewski, and N. K. Jemisin.

### **Sakina Gröppmaier -- Hegemonic Narratives of an Oily Culture: an Examination of U.S. Energy Imaginaries of the Early Twenty-First Century**

This presentation will examine hegemonic energy narratives of early twenty-first century United States, where the protection and preservation of American culture and values is often connected to an unchanging pattern of energy consumption. Questions regarding what must be done to secure the future of energy were at the fore of hegemonic narratives in the early twenty-first century. After all, it was in 2006 that President George W. Bush famously declared: “America is addicted to oil. ... The best way to break this addiction is

through technology.”<sup>3</sup> Energy security became a central issue for the Bush administration in the 2000s, specifically in relation to oil. Connected to this were predictions of a third oil crisis, that began accumulating when oil price trends started paralleling the volatility of the 1970s, when the first two oil crises had struck the United States. Despite these crises, oil had persisted in its centrality to notions of the American way of life. What’s more, as critical environmental and climate issues became increasingly interconnected with energy, the pressures to transition were high. Perceptions of resource abundance and a high demand for energy per capita have been ever-present in the contemporary history of the United States. But deep-rooted conflicts lie within hegemonic narratives of oil, of transition, and of sustainability, particularly when these are underscored by the necessity to protect American culture and values. This presentation will focus on these narratives, and examine how notions of culture and values have become deeply tied to energy, and especially to oil. What informs these notions of American culture and is tied to perceptions of American values? How have these narratives framed these issues? And on the whole, what are their larger implications?

**Sakina Gröppmaier** is a doctoral student at the Amerika-Institut at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU). Her dissertation, titled *A Third Oil Crisis? An Energy History Of Crisis And Response In The Early Twenty-First Century*, examines the role of oil in socio-political and cultural energy transitions in contemporary North America, using the so-called third oil crisis as a framework. Her master’s thesis explored the connection between crises and the development of energy security policy in the United States, and was nominated by the Amerika-Institut Alumni Association for best master’s thesis in 2018. She currently teaches undergraduate courses in the fields of energy history and American studies at the LMU. In 2019, she was selected as the student representative for her faculty at LMU’s official bid for Germany’s Exzellenzstrategie. That same year, she chaired the “Challenging the Boundaries of the Transatlantic” panel at the Transatlantic Cooperation student conference, held at the Amerikahaus in Munich. She has also worked as an English language specialist for the Bavarian Academy of Science and Humanities and as a journalist for the political journal *The International*. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Toronto in English and History.

### **PANEL 3: THE AESTHETICS OF OIL**

#### **Lola Lorant -- Striking oil in Christo’s barrels: oil industry and environment during the Cold War in American art history**

From the *Stacked Oil Barrels* in the Cologne Harbor in 1961 to the project in progress of *Mastaba* for Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, accumulations of barrels have been a common artistic language in several artworks by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Some were conceived to be erected in the United States such as *1,240 Oil Barrels Mastaba* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 1968 or the unrealized project *One Million Stacked Oil Drums* for the Houston-Galveston Area, Texas. The aim of this paper is

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<sup>3</sup> George Bush, “State of the Union Address By The President,” The White House – President George W. Bush, January 31, 2006, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/>.

twofold. First it proposes to go in search of comments associating Christo's work with the issue of oil in the narration of American art and criticism and art history that has hardly been concerned with ecology until recent times. Although Christo is not inclined to provide interpretation of his work, the analyses of his artworks based on the iconography of barrels and their seemingly infinite number as well as the sites of their installations obviously refer to the exploitation and circulation of oil in the United States. This paper intends to highlight these aspects by emphasizing on the ecological issue. As suggested by Alan C. Braddock in its scrutiny of the painting *Prospecting* (1864-1865) by David Gilmour Blythe,<sup>4</sup> the international context of oil exploitation should also be taken into account. Therefore, as regard Christo's metonymic representations of black gold, the U.S. international interactions or interdependences, and the global environmental impact will be considered.

**Lola Lorant** is a PhD student in contemporary art history, associated to the research unit "Histoire et critique des arts" at University Rennes 2, France. Her dissertation deals with the European artists of Nouveau Réalisme in the United States during the Cold War (1957-1973). She served as a graduate researcher for the program PRISME focusing on the International Association of Art Critics, held at the Archives for Art Criticism in Rennes from 2015 to 2018. She was the recipient of a Fulbright fellowship at Binghamton University (SUNY) and a travel research grant by the Terra Foundation of American Art in 2017.

### **Boris Vejdovsky -- The Aesthetics of Pollution and its Discontents**

The nefarious effects of pollution caused by unsustainable economies have been widely documented. That the US be one of the main political, economic, but also military and cultural entity responsible for these effects is also something that has been shown beyond reasonable doubt. For climate activists and ecocritics alike, the US degrades and destroys a sustainable equilibrium expressed in CO<sup>2</sup> concentration, the depleting of the ozone layer, the acidification of the oceans, or the melting of glaciers. Much of this data, however, is inaccessible or incomprehensible for a profane public. The latter difficulty is increased by the so-called "merchants of doubt" who take advantage of any uncertainty in the scientific debate to obfuscate these issues and turn them into "ideology" or "mere opinion."

For the ill-informed or dis-informed public the question of pollution and climate change caused by unsustainable economies assumes, as a result, a moral and aesthetic dimension. A long tradition going back to Romanticism has thus opposed the beauty and the virtue of a pristine natural world to the ugliness and degeneracy of a polluted world. The dialectic between sustainability and unsustainability is thus buttressed by the confrontation of two aesthetics: the beauty of the unspoiled world and the ugliness of the polluted world.

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<sup>4</sup> Alan C. Braddock, « "Man and Nature": Visualizing Human Impacts », in Alan C. Braddock, Karl Kusserow, *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*, Princeton University Art Museum; New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 2019, p. 218-224.

As its title suggests, in this paper I want to mobilize Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* written at the eve of the Second World War together with contemporary texts by French philosophers Michel Serres and Bruno Latour to propose an alternative reading of the aforementioned aesthetic dialectics. I want to propose that far from being simply the negative pole of our unsustainable culture, pollution might actually fascinate us and possibly attract us. I wish to explore the possibility that moving on toward a more sustainable economy—in particular in the US—might require to confront our profound need and desire to pollute.

**Boris Vejdovsky**, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer (Maître d'enseignement et de Recherche I) at the University of Lausanne (UNIL), where he teaches American literature and American studies. As co-director of the "New American Studies" program, his teaching and research focus on aesthetic, ethical, and political cultural formations of the U.S., the American world and its global influence. His publications include articles on American authors such as Cotton Mather, Herman Melville, Wallace Stevens, Tony Kushner, Ernest Hemingway and Elizabeth Bishop, among others. He is the author of *Ideas of Order: Ethics and Topos in American Literature* (2009) and of *Ernest Hemingway, la vie, et ailleurs* (2011). He is also the editor of several collections of essays and the General Editor of the series *Transatlantic Aesthetics and Culture* (Peter Lang) that has published eight volumes to date. His current research project is titled "Framing the American West"; it explores the aesthetic and political formation of the landscapes of the American West and their political significance.

### **Léna Remy-Kovach -- Remember, Resist, Redraw: The Power of Indigenous Visual Art in Recent Pipeline Protests**

In the midst of compounding environmental crises and frequent political scandals, the Millennial generation is not only rallying at marches and protests, but also on an exploding outlet for activism: social media. Through this new medium, they express their anxiety over climate change and capitalism through memes and adaptations of iconic elements of North American visual culture, such as comic book superheroes and villains. These adaptations are particularly common in the context of protests against pipelines and fracking projects. In the wake of powerful grassroots movements like IdleNoMore, a group that has spearheaded Indigenous activism in Canada since December 2012, Indigenous youth are rallying around an active pan-Indian movement which fights for the respect of treaties, protection of the environment, and Indigenous sovereignty in Turtle Island (Canada and the U.S.) They use stereotypical images such as pictures by Edward S. Curtis and Hollywood westerns, too often deemed iconic representations of Native Americans by White audiences, but which are actually rooted in colonialism and genocide. By turning these images into anti-colonial memes, they reverse racist tropes and communicate the cultural dynamism of their generation. In my presentation, I use examples of cartoons produced in the context of recent pipeline protests in Turtle Island, such as the 2011 Wet'suwet'en Nation eviction of pipeline drillers, the 2013 Elsipogtog anti-fracking protests, the 2014 #NoDAPL movement in the Dakotas, and the most recent actions against the Jupiter pipeline in Texas. I discuss how these new modes of literary and visual expression serve as recruitment tools, and shine a light on the re-generational power of images made by and for Indigenous activists.

**Léna Remy-Kovach** is a doctoral student and adjunct lecturer at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her Ph.D. thesis focuses on the notions of healing and (re)conciliation in contemporary Gothic Indigenous literatures from Turtle Island (Canada and the United States). Her current research projects include the commodification of Indigenous mythologies in Euro-American horror television series, and the imagery of hunger and cannibalism in recent Young Adult fiction by Indigenous writers. She currently teaches Canadian and Indigenous Studies and Native American Detective Fiction. She is the administrator of ENFIS, the European Network for Indigenous Studies. She also created and manages #IndigenousReads, a book club focusing on contemporary Indigenous literature.

#### **PANEL 4: OIL DOCTRINES**

##### **Ángela López-García -- And God Said, Let There Be Oil: the Church of PetrOleum in Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam***

Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy depicts a future where most humans have been erased from the face of the Earth and the remaining ones have to figure out how to survive in a planet that is environmentally collapsing. In the third and last novel of the trilogy, the one that gives its name to the series, *Maddaddam* (2014), Atwood portrays a cult in pre-apocalypse United States called the Church of PetrOleum, where the capitalist exploitation of fossil fuels meets with the validation of Christian religion. Through the sermons of its creator – referred to as the Rev in the text – a multitude of followers, mostly from the higher ranks of society, gather to celebrate the “Age of Oil” and God’s main gift to humankind: petrol. Turning their back to the demise of the environment and how it affects those in less privileged positions, the followers of the Church of PetrOleum perceive Earth as an endless supply of resources that has to be perpetually exploited since God allegedly desired it that way. This presentation will focus on how oil culture is constructed as a religion in the novel and its relation to capitalist exploitation of resources and people. It will also address the creation of an environmentalist cult by the Rev’s son, Adam, that can be read as a reaction to his father’s sermons and education. Ultimately, the presentation will engage with the ecological message that underlies Atwood’s satirical depiction of oil culture in the US, foregrounding the text’s suggestion to its readers to build a more environmentally and socially stable future.

**Ángela López-García** is currently a PhD student at the University of Murcia (Spain). Her research is mainly focused on North-American and Canadian female authors of Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction and the relationship between gender and the environment in their writing. Her research also deals with the development of the radical feminist movement and the environmental movement in the US from the 60s onwards, and their influence in the authors’ texts. Prior to entering a PhD program, López-García was a postgraduate student at the University of St Andrews (Scotland), where she acquired the degree of MLitt in Women, Writing and Gender.

##### **Christian Arnsperger -- Peak Oil and the Catabolic Decline of the US Economy**

This presentation is prospective and conjectural. It will attempt to project a future for the economy of the United States—and hence also for the global economy—based on the

twin assumptions of (i) 'peak oil' and (ii) 'catabolic collapse'. These two assumptions are both firmly rooted in the technical literature on petroleum extraction and on the history of complex civilizations. Together with the now incontrovertible worsening of climate change, they imply that due to its massive over-reliance on fossil fuels, the U.S. economy is set to follow a path along which increasingly unsustainable infrastructures of mobility and consumption (along with the geopolitical necessities they spawn) lead to the gradual breakdown of what, at least since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, has become known as 'America'.

I will suggest that it is perhaps the drying-up of oil resources (after a dark period of final petroleum extraction and combustion), more than any utopian movement of the past half-century, that is more likely to usher in new countercultures on American soil. With the gradual demise of the U.S. petro-economy, and hence also the U.S. petro-culture, and with rapid de-globalization taking place, what used to be visionary, political aspirations of a more communal, bioregional America (often fueled, as in the 1960s, by an unconscious reliance on gasoline and myriad other 'oil products') might well become hard-nosed, pragmatic necessities. I will conjecture that ideas—both technological and societal—merely toyed with during the 1960s and '70s counterculture era when petroleum was still massively abundant, might well become the mainstay of a set of emerging local subcultures, initially populated by largely incompetent citizens and forced by Nature to run on renewable energies.

Strangely enough, for all the currently pervasive talk (fueled mostly by Silicon Valley imaginations) of searching for a 'new frontier'—possibly in outer space or through the ushering-in of posthuman species—there is virtually no place in U.S. culture for an imaginary of a post-petroleum, low-energy 'frontier'. The denial that oil will one day run out and that all components of U.S. society are petroleum-dependent through and through has led to a collective blindness: Americans fail to envision *how, once unburdened of its reliance on a fallacious nonrenewable resource that has been destroying its very foundations, their culture could finally move closer to the vision its great environmentalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had for it, and develop a relationship to the land closer to the ways of inhabitation long cultivated by its indigenous populations*. Post-petroleum catabolic collapse, for all the hardships it is likely to bring, might open up a new countercultural era in which renewed versions of so-called 'traditional' lifeways gain new traction—not out of some idealistic *élan* but out of sheer necessity.

**Christian Arnsperger**, PhD in Economics, is professor of sustainability and economic anthropology at the University of Lausanne, where he co-chairs the Lausanne Center for Anthropocene Studies. His main research focus is on the existential underpinnings of contemporary unsustainability, the possibility of building an alternative, 'permacircular' economy, and the societal and cultural requisites for transitioning to a post-growth, post-petroleum world. He has recently published *Ecologie intégrale: Pour une société permacirculaire* with Dominique Bourg (Presses Universitaires de France, 2017). From 2012 to 2017, he was also a scientific advisor for the Alternative Bank Switzerland

# Meals

## Da Nino – Lunch

Lunch on Saturday will be served in the restaurant Da Nino on campus.

Where:

In the building Unithèque (see the map on the next page).

When:

On Saturday, 12:30-14:00.

Budget:

The set menu, water, and tea or coffee is paid for. Everything else needs to be paid by participants.

*Bon appétit!*

## Café du théâtre – Conference Dinner

The conference dinner will take place at the Café du théâtre in town.

Where:

Avenue du théâtre 12; 1005 Lausanne.

When:

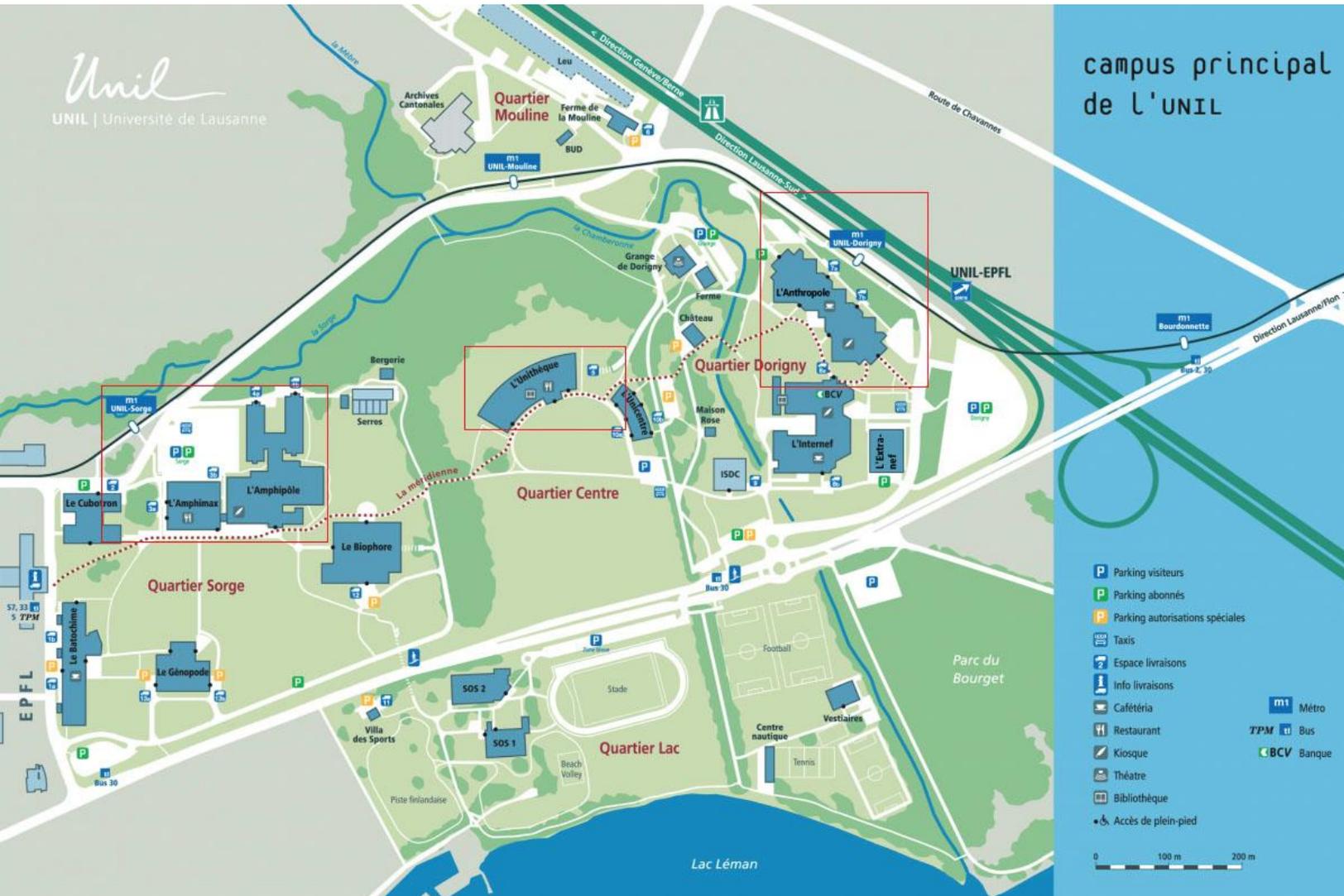
Friday night, starting at 19:30.

Budget:

The food, wine, water, and tea or coffee is paid for. Everything else needs to be paid by participants.

*Bon appétit !*

# Campus Map Unil & Directions



ON FRIDAY, SEPT 27, and on SATURDAY, SEPT 28, we will be in the building Anthropole, which is on the very right of the map. The metro stop to get to this building is Unil-Chamberonne.

On FRIDAY, we will be in **room 3185** (Anthropole).

On SATURDAY, we will be in **room 5033** (Anthropole).

LUNCH on Saturday will be served at the restaurant Da Nino, which is on the far right of the building Unithèque in the middle of the map.

# Wifi Network

## **You can use the following wifi networks:**

guest-unil

→ The access code is ENGDEP2019

eduroam

→ If you are a member of an eduroam partner institution

In case you experience any trouble, here is a detailed description to establish a connection.

## **To find the wireless "guest-unil" network:**

1. On your device, turn on the wifi icon.
2. View the available wireless networks.
3. Select the Wifi network "guest-unil" and connect (various "neighbor nets" may also be listed, but you can ignore these).
4. There might be a dialog box asking you to confirm your network connection saying "connecting to an unsecured network", click "Connect Anyway."
5. A connection status dialog appears, while a network address is obtained and initial connection established.
6. When the Wireless Network Connection window displays "Connected", you can close this window and proceed to the next step.

## **The next step is to log into the network as a guest:**

1. Start a web browser and try to connect to any valid HTTP Internet site. The wireless network login page automatically appears.
2. When the login page appears, enter the text of your guest pass key (ENGDEP2019) and click "Envoyer."
3. When the browser displays your original webpage, your connection is active.