



SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

Call for Papers for Workshops

for the Nordic Environmental Social Science Conference (NESS), University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 7-9, 2022. [Link to Conference site](#)

Workshop: Soils as sites of emergency and transformation

Workshop chairs:

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Please send abstracts in using this link: <https://forms.gle/jsqkrDXEnGSQRtVT9>

The Covid-19 pandemic is seen by some as the latest warning against the intensity of intervention of human worlds into non-human processes and spaces. This latest emergency unfolds, however, against the background of the long and accelerating process of human-induced, global planetary and ecosystem change variously debated as the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, or the Plantationocene.

The most lasting, the most fundamental, and the least addressed aspect of this 'slow emergency' and ongoing transformation relates to soils. When (rarely) discussed in the public sphere, soils are framed as an object of concern, and their degrading state is seen as a cause for alarm (as exemplified e.g. by the creation of the EU Mission for Soil Health and Food). In the Nordic context, soil emergencies are particularly noticeable as global heating-related changes in soil functions and states are having sudden and profound effects on lives, livelihoods, and land-use and inhabitation futures.

Such emergency framings which underpin policy and expert concern around soil change can, however, lack historical and ontological reflexivity around the desired human-soil relations. Beyond this emergency framing, soils are also a site of and a source of transformation. Both historically and today, soils are active participants in the making of human societies and of ecologies. Whereas loss of soils has been linked with societal collapse, reciprocal relations of care can transform societies and ecosystems. Moreover, in contemporary thinking in political and social theory (e.g. Bruno Latour's *Down to Earth*, Donna Haraway's thinking on composting), arts (e.g. the *Humus*

economicus project), and in debates about sustainable farming (e.g. regenerative agriculture), relations with soils are a source of inspiration for new models of human-environmental interaction. This new wave of ‘thinking with soils’ works across disciplinary boundaries to reconceptualise humans, environments, and their interactions by acknowledging and interrogating human entanglement with soils.

In this workshop, we invite contributors to engage with the emergent thought on human-soil relations through the framing of emergency and transformation. This may include reflecting on the following questions, and related issues:

- What are new, meaningful and interesting ways for thinking through current and past socio-ecological emergencies in relation to human-soil linkages?
- How do soils or particular relations with soils contribute to the creation of emergencies, and how do they participate in transformations?
- How can we transform current thinking about socio-ecological transformations by thinking with soils? What conceptual, affective, and ethical modes arise from soil engagements?
- What forms of methodological and experimental practice can help us transform our thinking, or those of specific groups?
- What are emergent methodologies for a social science and humanities engagement with soils?
- How are relations with soils and land drawn on and transformed in response to ecological and social emergencies, including economic and health impacts of the Covid19 pandemic?

We invite empirical and theoretical papers related to the theme, as well as artistic commentaries and interventions.

Instructions for Workshop Participants

The NESS workshops follow a standing session format (similar to ECPR), which allows for substantive discussions on research in progress. The conference invites scholars from multiple disciplinary backgrounds in environmental social science. The overall **objective** of the **workshop** is to facilitate and encourage collaboration between younger and more established scholars. Each paper is expected to relate to the theme of the workshop, and the participant submits and presents a paper (or work in progress) for the discussion. Participants should only choose and attend one workshop for the duration of the conference, but you may send abstracts to more than one workshop. Workshop participants will be asked to comment on at least one other paper in the respective workshop, read the other papers and participate in the general discussion of the papers. The ambition with this format is that the workshops allow for in-depth and coherent discussions of the respective themes and provide opportunity for potential joint publications or other continuing collaborations between the participants.

Send your abstract of up to 300 words to all the workshop chairs no later than **December 15, 2021**. Chairs will respond to questions which relate to the workshop theme. For questions of a general nature (i.e. not workshop specific) they should be directed to ness@globalstudies.gu.se

The conference organizers will notify the participants of their acceptance to the workshops by **March 1, 2022**. Workshop papers are to be submitted to the workshop chairs and the other workshop participants at the latest **May 20**. May 20 is also the last day to register for the conference on the website. A workshop schedule including information on presentations, session chairs and discussants will be available on the conference website at the end of May. The workshop format only allows for very short paper presentations (ca. 5 min) and all workshop participants are expected to have read and be able to comment on the papers in the workshop.