

CLIMATE SENSITIVITIES SYMPOSIUM

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ABSTRACTS

Stefan Höhne (Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen)

Surviving Comfort – Imagined Futures of the Cryosphere

Since the early twentieth century, the ever-growing demand for artificial cold has given rise to a complex, globally distributed, energy-intensive system of cold chains and conditioned environments. Together, these systems constitute a critical infrastructure of our interconnected world—what we call an artificial cryosphere: a temperature-controlled, distributed space without seasons.

Originally, climate-control technologies such as air conditioning were promoted through the paradigm of thermal comfort, promising greater vitality and well-being. Today, in the face of climate collapse, they have become life-sustaining systems that, in many regions, secure nothing less than habitability and livability. As access to cooled spaces and refrigeration becomes increasingly unequal and contested, the question of how to sustain—or manufacture—well-tempered urban environments has moved to center stage.

Within such imaginaries of a future cryosphere, one techno-spatial arrangement stands out: the climate dome. Combining the long history of dome architecture with the modern project of creating enclosed atmospheres, climate domes exemplify the contemporary ideal of thermal urbanism. As I will argue, they articulate specific – and highly contradictory – relations between inside and outside, environment and technology, as well as life and death.

Stefan Höhne is a cultural historian and theorist, with a focus on science & technology studies, critical urban history, and spatial theory. In his research, he explores the empirical as well as conceptual relations of urbanization, technology and everyday life in the 20th and 21st century. Often mobilizing a transatlantic perspective, his work has contributed insights into new materialities and infrastructures in social and cultural history and theory.

Stefan has been trained mostly in interdisciplinary academic environments in Europe and the US and received his PhD in 2008 for a [dissertation on the history of New York's subway passenger culture](#). Before becoming senior researcher at KWI, he has held positions as a lecturer and researcher at Humboldt University Berlin, Technical University Berlin, and New York University. He also was Mercator fellow at KWI and held visiting scholarships at Columbia University New York and CRIR in the Freetown of Christiania. From 2019 to 2022, he led the international research project [Governing the Narcotic City. Imaginaries, Practices and Discourses of Public Drug Cultures from 1970 until today](#). (HERA/ EU Horizon 2020). For over a decade, Stefan has been developing empirical and conceptual work on the role of artificial cooling in close



cooperation with Alexander Friedrich. Since September 2024, He has been Principal Investigator in the ERC Synergy Grant Project [Cultures of the Cryosphere. Infrastructures, Politics and Futures of Artificial Cooling.](#)

Lana Uzarashvili (Ruhr University Bochum)

Creating Heat in an Icebound Empire: Soviet Technologies for Artificial Climates and Mediated Landscapes

The Eurasian continent has historically been defined by a predominantly cold climate that covers most of its territory. The warmer regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus were established as climatically resourceful zones where heat could be harnessed to support agricultural production and resort infrastructure for the entire Soviet Union. Nevertheless, even these regions were characterised by low average temperatures, weather fluctuations and atmospheric events that disrupted the smooth operations of extractive enterprises. The Soviet state, with its scientific and managerial apparatus, invested in the artificial heating of plantations, cloud seeding and architectural developments dictated by what Yuriko Furuhashi terms thermostatic desire. These technologies of elemental mediation of bodies, objects, and chemical elements are common across other geographical and political contexts, yet they constituted a particular (geo)political order within the region while employing both meteorological and affective dimensions of atmospheric and thermal control. Focusing on the politics of artificial climates, the lecture will attempt to answer the following questions: What role did heat play in the process of imperial territory-making? How was the local weather modification programme entrenched in Cold War dynamics? What can we learn about the specificities of particular political regimes from the thermal politics that were historically implemented?

Lana Uzarashvili is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Media Studies at Ruhr University Bochum, and a fellow of the DFG Research Training Group, “Documentary Practices: Excess and Privation.” Her research lies at the intersection of media studies and environmental humanities, investigating atmospheric histories and extractivism in the projects of territorial governance.

Laliv Melamed (Goethe-University Frankfurt)

Towards Penetrative Aesthetics: the Subsoil and the Logistics of Audio-Visuality

Tunnels, most likely among the oldest war machines and underground strategies, undermine the common perception that aligns sovereign control with total visibility. The subsoil delimits a threshold of visibility, with that augmenting not only the seen, but the heard and sensed. Scrutinized through an assemblage of warfare optics designed to locate and eliminate underground cavities, the subsoil rearticulates a biopolitical power whose sanctioning of life and death derives from thermal sensing, ultrasound, and electromagnetic radiation. Such audio-visual operations render amorphous, abstract and radiant bodies and environments alike.

Heat based media and infrared protrude as paradigmatic to a military, technological gaze developed to track and penetrate the subsoil. With these technologies, gradation, probability and even speculation



underscore attempts to visualize what remains hidden. An assemblage of media designed to visualize subterranean terrain, prompted a techno-political, settler colonial imagination (Assali 2024; Bille 2020; Gordon and Periugini 2024). Unlike the techno-political paradigm of verticality, that concatenated remote sensing, satellites and drones into a dictum of power that controls from above (Parks 2018; Weizman 2007), this paper ponders: what would be a penetrative sovereign power? Which forms and logistics of sanctioning are made available through thermal accumulation or waves of radiation?

Laliv Melamed is a professor of film studies at Goethe University Frankfurt. She is the author of *Sovereign Intimacy: Private Media and the Traces of Colonial Violence* (University of California Press, 2022). In addition, her work was published in *American Anthropologist Review*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Discourse*, *NECSUS* and *Feminist Media Histories*, among others. Her current research focuses on military optics and forms of civil consent that she explores through the notion of the public secret.

Daniel Wolter (Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg)

Heating Trees and Cooling Samples: Environmental Sensing and Thermo-Spatial Practices

Sensors turned state's evidence in the Anthropocene. In their ability to detect everything and everyone, they are never merely technical, ecological, biological, or geological—never innocent—devices. Sensors, as it were, co-constitute what they detect and thus transform animals, plants, or entire landscapes into sensing entities, which they also monitor and control during sensory detection. Sensing practices can protect ecosystems just as they can exploit raw materials.

Environmental sensing, as a subtype of sensory detection, serves primarily to monitor and control ecological processes within the framework of environmental governance. To this end, life forms and their environments are equipped with sensor technology, leading to interventions at the local level to infer higher-level phenomena and scales from the sensor data collected. It is not uncommon for thermopractices to be employed for this purpose, whether to deliberately simulate environments or as unintended consequences, in the lee of sensory devices.

Drawing on ethnographic research on digital environmental governance, I show how sensors thermally impact the environments they ostensibly co-constitute in everyday life, and what involuntary spatial side effects may arise in fields of sensor-mediated data collection. Place-based approaches can thus help to complicate media-ecological perspectives and situate them within everyday practices.

Daniel Wolter is a postdoctoral researcher at the Just Transition Center at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, where he conducts research on chemical geographies in the post-mining region of Central Germany. Combining ethnography with approaches from media studies and science and technology studies, his research examines environmental remediation as a way to come to terms with the past and drive structural change toward the future.



Su Yu Hsin (artist, Berlin/Taipei)

Contested Heat: Solar Cell, Integrated Circuit, and Post-Extractive Futures

In 1954, Bell Labs produced two inventions that could have reshaped the energy and technological landscape of the twentieth century: the silicon-based solar cell and the integrated circuit. Born from the same grain, these two technologies followed radically asymmetric paths. My performative lecture takes that historical divergence as its starting point and examines the strata of computational landscapes in today's "Silicon Saxony" in Eastern Germany. I propose to read the region's post-extractive landscape through humanity's evolving quest for sunlight: from fossilized energy — coal and uranium — to the conversion of sunlight into information and energy through silicon crystals. Tracing the industrial history of silicon production in Freiberg to the 2018 closure of the German photovoltaic cell maker SolarWorld, my presentation questions the current alignment of tech capital with fossil fascism. After quartz is blasted from rock faces, melted down in the roar of the furnace, and pulled from the molten bath, the contradiction between extractivist productivity and thermal limits recurs across materials, machines, and human bodies alike. As the researcher Grégoire Chamayou has pointed out, the meltdown of Moore's Law began in the mid-2000s, with a tendency toward exponential increases in both electric power consumption and heat generation from transistors. Even as it remains possible to miniaturize transistors to the nanometer scale, the new transistors devote increasing weight and volume simply to manage the device's heat dissipation. The thermal and energy contradictions of scaling up AI result in an exponential increase in power demand. Drawing on archival materials from regional industrial and mineral collections, my presentation not only unveils the silicon value chain but also speculates on post-extractive futures through solarly — an orientation toward the energy of the sun.

Su Yu Hsin is an artist and filmmaker who lives between Berlin and Taipei. She approaches ecology from the point of view of its close relationship with technology. Combining fieldwork with interdisciplinary collaboration, she develops analytical and hydropoetic narratives that examine water as both a carrier of environmental history and a contested medium within technological regimes. Her video installations are exhibited worldwide in museums and International Art Biennials: Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, the Centre Pompidou-Metz, the Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Taipei Biennial 2020 and 2023, ZKM Karlsruhe, Berlinische Galerie - Museum of Modern Art, among others. Her films have been screened at Kurzfilm Festival Hamburg, Taiwan International Documentary Festival, Image Forum Festival and Experimental Film and Video Festival in Seoul, among others.

Ignacio Farías (HU Berlin)

Elemental Urbanism: Wind, Water, and the City as a Critical Zone

This lecture addresses one of the key challenges facing cities today: the disruptive presence of elemental, more-than-human forces that unsettles modern urbanism and calls for new conceptual tools to grasp how such forces refigure the contemporary city. Rather than treating this disruption as a recent irruption, the lecture argues that elemental forces have never been fully domesticated by the modern urban project. What changes under current conditions is not the existence of elemental agency but its visibility, intensity,

frequency, and political salience. The lecture focuses on how urban climate adaptation practices are shaped by specific elements, particularly wind and water, and on how these elements refigure the city. Refiguration, however, is not a symmetrical relation. Elemental forces do not enter into relations with the actors and infrastructures around them on equal terms. Their agency is virtual until actualized in encounter, exceeding what could be derived from the properties of any single entity in isolation. Attending to this asymmetry exposes the limits of flat ontologies and sympoietic imaginaries that treat all relations as fundamentally on a par. The lecture introduces urban critical zones as a way of grappling with the layered, fragile, and unjust criticalities that follow from this asymmetric elemental agency.

Ignacio Farías is Professor of Urban Anthropology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he directs the Georg Simmel Centre for Urban Studies and co-directs the Stadtlabor for Multimodal Anthropology. His research addresses the ecological and infrastructural transformations of contemporary cities, climatological knowledge in urban planning, and forms of more-than-human cohabitation. He currently leads the ERC Consolidator project “Urban Vibrations” and is a member of the Collaborative Research Center 1265 “Re-Figuration of Spaces.”

Noa Levin (Università della svizzera italiana/Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin)

Sharing Heat: Thermal Communities and a Network of Warmth

European cities are increasingly affected by climate change, resulting in extreme weather that often threatens the most vulnerable urban residents. This presentation asks if thermal communities may serve to counter thermal insecurity exacerbated by the climate crisis. It combines theoretical and ethnographic methods to examine the Network of Warmth (Netzwerk der Wärme), a municipal initiative for public heated spaces launched in Berlin during the energy crisis of winter 2022, as a case study. The Network, which included over 400 facilities, provided warm public spaces for residents and led to the foundation of a civil-society crisis association aiming to strengthen the city’s resilience to the climate crisis. The presentation questions whether the Network of Warmth may serve as an example for transforming existing social and cultural institutions into microclimatic commons.

Noa Levin is an Affiliated Researcher at the Academy of Architecture, Università della Svizzera italiana, and an Associated Researcher at the Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin. Her first monograph, *Benjamin, Deleuze and the Baroque: The Early Modern Origins of Media Theory*, was published by Bloomsbury Academic in February 2025. Her research explores the intersections of philosophy of science, media theory and environmental philosophy. She earned her PhD from the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, London.

Nicole Starosielski (UC Berkeley)

Undergrounding the Cloud: Subsurface Heat and the Geothermal “Gold Rush”

A new infrastructure imaginary is taking shape just below the surface of the earth, in the development of Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS). Geothermal energy generation has historically been concentrated in areas with volcanic and tectonic plate activity. Drawing from technologies and practices in the oil and gas industry, EGS “frees” energy from geologic features and from the relative limitations of wind and solar, enabling the generation of energy from earth-heat “almost anywhere” – moving from a semi-centralized to distributed model. As the digital infrastructure industry in the United States faces increasing problems with public pushback and energy bottlenecks, this new approach to thermal resourcing offers the promise of “siting flexibility” and a release of data centers from territorial friction. At the same time, geothermal brine is seen as a critical lithium resource, a source from which the substrates of lithium-ion batteries can be extracted.

The imagination of the earth as a renewable, widely accessible source of heat is driving significant investment in the sector. Companies pioneering EGS are doing so across the globe, but two of these are undertaking significant development—in part to supply data centers—in the US state of Nevada. Legacy geothermal operator Ormat Technologies, founded in Israel but now based in Reno, Nevada, is supplying Google’s data center operations in Nevada with up to 150MW of their geothermal energy. US-based Fervo Energy (backed by Bill Gates) raised \$1.89 billion in its May 2026 IPO, the largest clean energy IPO ever debuted on Wall Street. The company piloted a commercial geothermal installation in northern Nevada and signed an agreement to develop the technology to provide energy for Google’s Las Vegas cloud region.

This talk traces the accelerated development of geothermal resources, lithium extraction, and hyperscale data centers taking place in Nevada. It describes the political economic foundations and imaginations that are situating the subsurface as a thermal resource for future digital systems.

Nicole Starosielski, Professor of Film and Media at the University of California-Berkeley, conducts research on media, environments, and global internet infrastructures ranging from data centers to subsea cables. Starosielski is author or co-editor of over fifty articles and five books, including: *The Undersea Network* (2015), *Media Hot and Cold* (2021), *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructure* (2015), *Assembly Codes: The Logistics of Media* (2021), among others. Starosielski’s most recent projects include *Sustainable Subsea Networks*, which won the Tech Capital Special Recognition Award in 2026 for its contributions to enhance the sustainability of subsea cable systems. In 2025, Starosielski also launched the Certificate in Global Digital Infrastructure at UC Berkeley, the first university program to introduce students to the technical, economic, legal, environmental, and social dimensions of the global Internet’s infrastructure, including both data centers and subsea cables.



Kent Chan (artist, Amsterdam/Singapore)
Casting Weather

What happens when the human desire to predict weather builds into the power to will weather into the world? A compendium to the video, *Weather Casting* (2026), this lecture-performance traces the departure from forecasting the weather to casting it into reality. Tracing the Asia-Pacific monsoon system, *Casting Weather* centres the human relation to all things meteorological in a whirlwind of natural forces, weather deities, and technological interventions. As it threads through modes of observing, summoning, and commanding atmospheric elements, the performance turns into a speculative invocation of weathers to come.

Kent Chan is an artist, curator and filmmaker based in the Netherlands and Singapore. His practice revolves around our encounters with art, fiction and cinema that form a triumvirate of practices porous in form, content and context. He holds particular interest in the tropical imaginary, the past and future relationships between heat and art, and contestations to the legacies of modernity as the epistemology par excellence. His works have taken the form of moving-image, text, performances, and exhibitions.

For the second half of 2026, Kent is an artist-in-residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. In previous years, he was a resident of Gasworks, Art Explora, Pivô Research, Jan van Eyck Academie, MMCA Residency, and NTU CCA Singapore. He has held solo and two-person presentations at Gasworks, CAPC Bordeaux, Kunstinstituut Melly, Bonnefanten Museum, NTU CCA Singapore, and de Appel. His works and films have been exhibited in institutions and festivals including Tate Modern, MMCA Seoul, Liverpool Biennial, Videobrasil, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Seoul Mediacity Biennale, Times Museum, EYE Film Museum, Onassis Stegi, and Bienalsur. He is the 2023 winner of the Paulo Cunha e Silva Award and Impart Art Prize, and 2021 winner of Foundwork Artist Prize. His works are collected by the Kadist Foundation, the Rijkscollectie, Netherlands, Bonnefanten Museum, Frans Hal Museum, Museum de Fundatie, and Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig.

Amelie Buchinger (Academy of Fine Arts Munich)
Remediating Solar Futures: On the Digital Aesthetic Viscourse of Geoengineering in Contemporary Art

As climate mitigation policies fail to curb emissions and global temperatures continue to rise, media artists have increasingly turned to the speculative visions of geoengineering in recent years. My talk introduces the work of film makers and media artists Oliver Ressler, Liam Young, Alice Bucknell, and Ala Roushan & Charles Stankievech, alongside of Kent Chan's *Weather Casting*, and asks how these critically intervene in the (re)emerging visual discourse of climate techno-fixes. Tracing the emerging digital aesthetic viscource of geoengineering across these artistic inquiries, I consider not only their use of digital technologies such as CGI, Virtual Game Engines, or AI but also discuss how they restage geoengineering's techno aesthetic imaginations, critique its speculative and digital cultural logics, as well as retell its recurring (techno) mythologies.

Amelie Buchinger is a research assistant at the Research Centre for Techno Aesthetics at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and a PhD candidate at Leuphana University in Lüneburg, working on a media cultural history of digital decarbonisation. Her research focuses on environmental media studies, energy humanities, and digital and visual culture. Together with Susanne Witzgall, she organised the online conference “(Re)Imagining Solar Futures” at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich in November 2025. Forthcoming publications: “Tales of Carbon. Reading and Writing (Hi)Stories of CO₂ in the Anthropocene” (in: *Geschichte/n schreiben im Anthropozän*, edited by Anna-Lena Eick, Achim Landwehr, and Tom Vanassche, Wallstein 2026) and the anthology *Technoästhetik. Perspektiven aus Kunstgeschichte, Medientheorie und Philosophie*, edited together with Olivia Liesner, Lorenz Mayr, and Sarah Sigmund, transcript 2026).

Katrin Köppert (University of Art and Design Offenbach)

Sweatbox AI. Thermal Violence and Metabolic Media Aesthetics of Heat

In this talk, I first and in reference to Nicole Starosielski (2021) develop the term Sweatbox AI to capture the thermal violence of AI-based infrastructures. Based on Colossus, Elon Musk’s supercomputer, which trains the AI model behind the Grok chatbot on a site the size of 13 football fields south of Memphis, I examine the racist impact of thermal violence. Second, I, by referring to the aesthetics of operative images using the example of thermal imaging, ask for critical ways of perceiving heat that do not remain within the radiographic episteme of surveillance (Parks 2017)? Thirdly, based on Black media theories (Ferreira da Silva 2018, Bradley 2023, Berry 2025) and in contrast to Hito Steyerl’s approach of “medium hot” (2025), I propose the concept of thermal participativeness: an alternative media theory that understands heat not as a disturbance to be cooled, but as transformative energy.

Katrin Köppert is an art and media scholar whose work focuses on media theories of digital colonialism, critical theories of computation at the intersection of art, design, and visual cultures, digital memory studies, queer art and media studies. She currently holds the professorship in AI and Media Theory at the University of Art and Design Offenbach. Recent publications include “Knowing memes means knowing the internet as irrevocably black as fuck. Memetische Enteignung und/als Emanzipation” (2025) and “Hologrammatiken der Gewalt: Digitale Erinnerung und Computational Blackface” (2026).

Florian Sprenger (Ruhr University Bochum)

Calibrating Bodies to Heat: The Biopolitics of Thermal Comfort Standards

Thermal comfort is a site of biopolitical and thermopolitical regulation. The presentation traces how standardized indoor climate conditions became a globally operative norm from the mid-twentieth century onward. Drawing on the history of architectural environmental control and the physiological research of Danish engineer Povl Ole Fanger, the article reconstructs the development of ASHRAE Standard 55 and ISO 7730 — the two central regulatory frameworks that define thermal comfort through six measurable parameters and two statistical predictors: the Predicted Mean Vote (PMV) and the Predicted Percentage of Dissatisfied (PPD). These standards presuppose a specific body as the normative baseline — predominantly male, white, and of Western physiological constitution — while presenting the resulting thermal

environments as universally valid. By engaging with Foucault's concept of normalization within the security dispositif, the presentation argues that the standardization of comfort zones does not discipline individual bodies directly, but rather governs populations through the medium of their surroundings (milieu). The biopolitical dimension of thermal comfort thus lies in its capacity to regulate metabolic processes across an entire population by designing the conditions of their shared environment. The text situates standardized comfort within the political ecology of energy consumption, gender politics and climate change, asking what an after comfort might entail: a critical revisiting of the conditions under which the artificial environments of modernity became naturalized as indispensable.

Florian Sprenger is Professor of Virtual Humanities at the Institute for Media Studies at Ruhr-Universität Bochum and director of the Virtual Humanities Lab. His research focuses on media theories of technical environments, infrastructures of the digital, and virtual lifeworlds – ranging from autonomous machines and speculative robotics to the conceptual history of environment and situatedness. Within the Collaborative Research Centre 1567 'Virtual Lifeworlds,' his sub-project examines how machines generate and navigate virtual environments. His most recent monograph is *Ich-Sagen. Eine Genealogie der Situiertheit* (August Verlag, 2025).

Benjamin Sprick & Katharina Alsen (Hamburg University of Music and Theatre)
Gonna Make You Sweat. Towards Thermoceptive Theatre Studies

»Ich bin in der Hitze, die ich selbst erzeuge, wie praktisch!«
Elfriede Jelinek: *Sonne / Luft / Asche* (2022)

Unlike other media forms, heat has not yet fully entered contemporary theatre. With a few exceptions, theatre productions take place in thermally controlled environments. Sweating is usually confined to the stage, while audiences remain in comfortably cooled spaces. This reproduces longstanding scenarios of bourgeois affect control (Kohpeiß 2023), forcing the senses into a regulated aesthetic order.

Drawing on concepts from Critical Temperature Studies, this paper envisions a theatre (studies) of thermoception. Decoding thermoceptive affect economies can uncover clichéd and power-laden meanings in theatrical contexts, opening up new readings and dimensions of bodily experience.

This approach proposes a 'theatrology' of sweating as a particular mode of politico-aesthetic intra-subjectivity (Beregow 2024). It draws on aspects of a »methexis of the senses« (Nancy 2010) – that is, their »participation, contagion (contact), contamination, metonymic contiguity rather than metaphorical transfer«. Such sensory participation resonates with immersive theatre practices, in which spectators can become co-actors, dissolving the classical separation between stage and auditorium. One may be made to sweat or encounter sweat (and its odour) as a purported »marker of authenticity« (Schütz 2022). This suggests that temperature is not a pre-social or pre-discursive phenomenon, but must be understood in terms of its socio-material structures.



Katharina Alsen is a research associate at the Theatre Academy of the Hamburg University of Music and Theatre (HfMT). She studied German literature, theology, and philosophy at the University of Hamburg as well as art history and visual culture at the University of Oxford. Subsequently, she was a fellow at the International Research Training Group »InterArt« and a junior fellow at the DAAD network »Principles of Cultural Dynamics« at Freie Universität Berlin. Extended research stays have taken her to the University of Copenhagen, the University of Iceland in Reykjavík, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, among others. Her research interests include contemporary immersive theatre forms, theories of intimacy, and insects in art.

Benjamin Sprick is a research associate in applied aesthetic philosophy at the Hamburg University of Music and Theatre (HfMT), where he also works as a postdoctoral researcher in the ARTILACS (Artistic Intelligence in Latent Creative Spaces) graduate research group and coordinates the artistic-research doctoral programme Dr. sc. mus. He is also a trained concert cellist. Since winter 2024/25, he has held a teaching position in artistic music research at the Lübeck University of Music. His work focuses on a »critique of instrumental reason« as well as the political kinetics of an algorithmic capitalism that is increasingly proving to be authoritarian.

Sensing Gaia research collaboration: Paul Heinicker (University of Potsdam) & **Merle Ibach** (Bern Academy of the Arts) & **Patrick Salz** (designer, engineer and musician, Basel)

How does heat diagram? Planetary Diagrams Beyond the Visual

What if heating were understood not only as a physical process to be measured and controlled, but as a diagrammatic operation through which planetary change inscribes and renders itself perceptible? Bringing the conceptual framework of planetary diagrams into dialogue with design research project “Sensing Gaia” and its sonic intervention “Listen Back”, the talk proposes heat as a diagrammatic medium for media-ecological analysis. Planetary diagrams approach large-scale systemic transformations through operative and speculative configurations that dissolve and relink relations, asking how the planet itself may be read as an archive of transformation. Heat is particularly revealing in this regard: geochemically bound to molecular movement, deformation, melting, dispersion, and combustion, it rearranges material relations and stores transformations in matter. Focusing on “Heatwave”, one of four tracks in the audio essay “Listen Back”, we explore heating through thermoception and sonic perception. Rather than mapping climate change from a distance, the work approaches Earth as a living archive in which thermal processes register planetary transformation. Reading heat diagrammatically also draws attention to how thermal transformations are unevenly registered and endured, making questions of vulnerability and climate justice part of how planetary change becomes perceptible.

Sensing Gaia is a design research collaboration founded in 2019 that investigates how the Earth “writes” its own climatic stories and how these processes can be sensed, mediated, and reconfigured through design and media practices.



Dr. Paul Heinicker is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam and co-lead of the Volkswagen Foundation–funded project “Border Values: Operational Relationship of Climate and Migration”.

Dr. Merle Ibach is a design ethnographer and postdoctoral researcher at the Bern Academy of the Arts.

Patrick Salz is a sound artist, designer, and engineer working at the intersection of ecological sonification, field recording, and experimental music.