

## **Friday 2 July 2021: 16.00-19.00 (CET)**

### **YOUTH, CLIMATE ADVOCACY, AND VERBAL ART: IMAGINING A DIFFERENT FUTURE**

All welcome. Advance booking required: <https://www.bsr.ac.uk/?p=32529>

Climate advocacy and political activism require imagination. This roundtable, organised by University College London and the British School at Rome, explores how verbal art can inspire behavioural and policy change on a warming planet, with specific attention to the young.

The event takes place under the auspices of the British Embassy in Italy and the Italian Ministry for Ecological Transition and forms part of Italy's [All4Climate – Italy 2021](#) PreCOP26 Programme, promoting 2021 as the Year of Climate Ambition.

With Anthony Costello, Liz Jensen, Sara Marzagora, Arya Matai, Almaaz Mudaly, H  l  ne Neveu-Kringelbach, Isiah Odhiambo, Bernard Okebe, Charline Atieno Opiyo, Harriet O'Neill, Steve Otieno, Aarathi Prasad.

Chair: **Florian Mussnug**, Professor of Comparative Literature and Italian Studies, UCL, and Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Sapienza University Rome.

\*\*\*

#### **WELCOME**

The event will open with an address by **Jill Morris** CMG, British Ambassador to Italy and non-resident British Ambassador to San Marino, who will be introduced by **Harriet O'Neill**, Assistant Director for the Humanities and Social Sciences, British School at Rome.

#### **ORAL TRADITIONS AND RESISTANCE IN ETHIOPIA**

**Sara Marzagora**, Lecturer in Comparative Literature at King's College London, will discuss how Ethiopian scholars have theorised the relationship between oral literature and the environment, especially in the context of development-induced displacement (DID) to the South of the capital Addis Ababa. Dr Marzagora will present songs and poems which articulate the literary relationship between people and territory, and which decry the impact of land evictions on literary creativity, epistemology, and ethics. Her intervention draws attention to the role of oral traditions in mediating people's relationship with their environment and articulating forms of resistance. It also demonstrates the vitality of Ethiopian oral genres and their adaptability to contexts of rapid social change.

#### **COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN KISUMU, KENYA**

In March 2021, eight young people from Kisumu's informal settlements began a programme of training and mentoring by experienced journalists from the Kisumu-based Community Empowerment and Media Initiative, and Nairobi media house Science Africa. Theirs are the voices whose concerns about the future sustainability and resilience of their cities are little heard. When those stories are told, they rarely come from the pen of the residents themselves. In this second part of our event, **Aarathi Prasad**, a researcher in environment

and health, based at the Institute for Global Health, UCL will be in conversation with **Bernard Okebe**, a journalist and programmes coordinator for Community Empowerment and Media Initiative in Kisumu, Kenya, and three young people who live in the city's informal settlements --**Charline Atieno Opiyo**, 23, **Steve Otieno**, 26, **Isiah Odhiambo**, 28. All have become active writers or environmental advocates, helping their communities and government to understand what is really happening around them, and how sustainable solutions can be found.

#### **YOUNG VOICES FROM SOUTH AFRICA: STORYTELLING FOR CLIMATE ACTION**

**Anthony Costello**, Professor at UCL's Institute for Global Health and Senior Advisor for Children in All Policies 2030 will discuss the importance of working across sectors and disciplines with children and young people at the centre for meaningful sustainable development, and why youth voices are leading the way in telling the climate crisis story. Prof Costello will then give the floor to two youth climate activists from South Africa: **Almaaz Mudaly**, a young climate activist, will discuss her work as High School Liaison Officer on the South Africa National Youth Climate Action Plan and why stories and art are an important part of the policy puzzle for climate in South Africa. **Arya Matai**, Head of Student Responsibility Group, will highlight how some young voices are not as loud in the climate debate as others, and discuss her work using storybooks and pictures to educate those without functional literacy in under-resourced urban areas about climate change. Storytelling and verbal art can be a powerful educational tool to empower and inspire action on climate change and this section will bring young people into the centre of this conversation.

#### **RESPONDENTS: LIZ JENSEN AND HÉLÈNE NEVEU-KRINGELBACH**

A response to the presentations will be offered by the British novelist **Liz Jensen**, author of eight novels including the eco-thrillers *The Rapture* and *The Uninvited*, and the Hollywood-adapted *The Ninth Life of Louis Drax*. The second respondent will be **Hélène Neveu Kringelbach**, Associate Professor of African Anthropology at UCL and Vice Dean for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Responses will be followed by discussion and questions and answers from the audience.

\*\*\*

This event is part of a series, *Sustainability as Cultural Practice*, which engages with key topics and challenges in sustainable development and climate politics from the perspective of the arts, humanities, and social and historical sciences.

#### **Other events in this series**

[Coping with climate change in past societies](#)

[Sustainable art practice for a sustainable world](#)

[Translating climate change](#)