



Columbia Climate Imaginations Network

Year 1
2021-22

Network Co-Directors
Sarah Cole
Kate Marvel

Network Founding Convener
Ben Mylius

Network Creative Producer
Alisa Petrosova

Network Adviser
Andrew C. Revkin

Earth Networks Leads
Sandra Goldmark
Kathryn Lattimer
Andrea Lopez Duarte

*We need new stories.
Better stories. Collaborative
stories. Stories for the
crowd and for the long run.*

*What does it mean to start
not from false certainties –
utopia/apocalypse –but
from the uncertainties of
everyday life? How can
imagination help us,
together, make new
meanings for the future?*

Excerpt from the CCIN Curatorial Statement



Linnéa Gad

Echo Else (Installation View)

Lenfest Center for The Arts, New York

Curated by Elisabeth Sherman

April 23 - May 22, 2022

From the Convener

Dear CCIN Faculty, Supporters, Friends, and Community Members:

Thank you for your support of CCIN Year 1! (“The Prologue”?)

Ours has been a rollercoaster year, as have those of so many we know and care for: in New York City, but also across the country, and around the world. We’ve been busy building out our core team, seeding connections across campus, and clarifying how we can best contribute to building the kind of radically collaborative and interdisciplinary community that animates the Climate School generally, and the Earth Networks Program in particular.

In true 2021-2022 fashion, our conversations, connections and activities have been shaped, disrupted, inspired, and informed by events on the world stage – floods and fires, the Omicron surge, the Russian invasion of Ukraine - just as much as events closer to home: sickness and health, family bereavements, graduations, climate grieving, laughter, walks, visits, conversations, exchanges, and meals.

We feel great gratitude and warmth for the community we have begun to build: for those whose established voices we have already heard, and the many exciting new voices we’re just starting to hear.

Warm thanks to our faculty codirectors – Dean of Humanities Sarah Cole and NASA/GISS’s Dr Kate Marvel – and to all the faculty who have supported us in our first steps, in ways large and small. Warm thanks too to the Earth Networks Program’s dedicated leads: Senior Asst. Dean of Interdisciplinary Engagement Sandra Goldmark, Kathryn Lattimer, and Andrea Lopez Duarte; and to Network Adviser and Founder of our sister *Sustainability Communications Network*, Andrew C. Revkin. Thanks to Eva Sadana (CC) and Tianyu Yang (GSAPP) for their work during Fall term; to Liz Seibert of L+L, Brooklyn, for design magnificence; and to Grace Nosek, of Rootbound/UBC Sustainability, for connections and inspiration. And the most imaginative thanks of all must go to the indefatigable Alisa Petrosova (CCS '22), our inaugural creative producer, whose incredible work this year has set us firmly on our way.

We are always open to suggestions, co-creation and collaboration pitches, and connections with other initiatives, on campus and beyond. Please feel free to reach out to myself (b.mylus@columbia.edu) with any and all of these.

Here’s to storytelling, radical collaboration, shared learning, and working together to imagine diverse and creative climate futures.



Ben Mylius

Founding Convener, CCIN

What new disciplinary combinations and alliances are necessary under the pressure of Anthropogenic climate change?

Elizabeth Povinelli

Geontologies: The Concept and Its Territories



Alisa Petrosova
Preparations (CCIN x BLSC)
West Village, New York
June 12, 2022

Highlights

- Natural Resources Defense Council's "Rewrite The Future" program bring their *Climate Stories 101* presentation to faculty, students, and alumni
- School of the Arts Visual Arts and Poetry MFAs convene for studio visits and interdisciplinary conversations
- Big Love Supper Club hosts inaugural CCIN x BLSC "Climate, Cooking, Community" evening
- Suzie Hicks (CCS '22) premieres pilot of her children's documentary series with screening and talkback in East Williamsburg
- Climate and Society student creative practitioners join CCIN core team for salon and jam session
- CCIN core team collaborate with international sister initiatives to support cross-disciplinary consortium on grounded climate futures
- UBC Sustainability Hub Co-Founder Grace Nosek leads CCIN team through project and community building workshops
- CCIN curatorial begins commissioning process for work by nationally-renowned multimedia artist
- Convener and faculty directors host lightning visit and dialog evening with Max Boykoff, founder of UC Boulder's *Inside the Greenhouse*, in partnership with Sustainability Communications Network
- Students and core team design network website and set up funding opportunities for Fall term outreach



Suzie Hicks and Sprout

“Suzie Hicks the Climate Chick” (Pilot Stills)

Los Angeles/New York

NYC Premiere 6 May, 2022

Lessons

- Work to build relationships and trust – through conversations, listening, and genuine exchange – is a crucial prerequisite for work that seeks to harness creativity to positive ends
- The silos we encounter in our day-to-day movements through university institutions are real. This makes it all the more important that we find ways to offer all who join us the permission to let down their disciplinary guards, make mistakes, and have adventures
- Imagination can easily be misinterpreted as something that is the province of experts or professionals. This can mean that its ethical possibilities are monopolized by particular groups or left untapped. We need to find ways to hold our minds and spaces open to different voices and alternative approaches
- The languages we speak across our activities are more diverse than we might think. But so is our will to connect across these diversities: and this is a cause for celebration
- Part of the goal of community-building should be to identify when jargon, hierarchies and titles blinker our ability to relate to one another, so we can develop ways to foster and welcome each other's enthusiasm and creativity
- Collaborations take longer than we might like: but they often yield more than we expect
- Where there is grief, there is also hope, if we can find ways to stand in solidarity with one another and our individual and collective experiences of the present

Narratives of limitless growth, premised on access to cheap energy and inexhaustible resources, underwrite the predicaments of the present. As an alternative to such obsolete futures, new modes of imagining might begin to chart a path beyond impasse and inertia.

Jennifer Wenzel

The Disposition of Nature: Environmental Crisis and World Literature



Kelsey Shwetz

***Plants to Flesh* (Oil on Canvas, 64" x 64")**

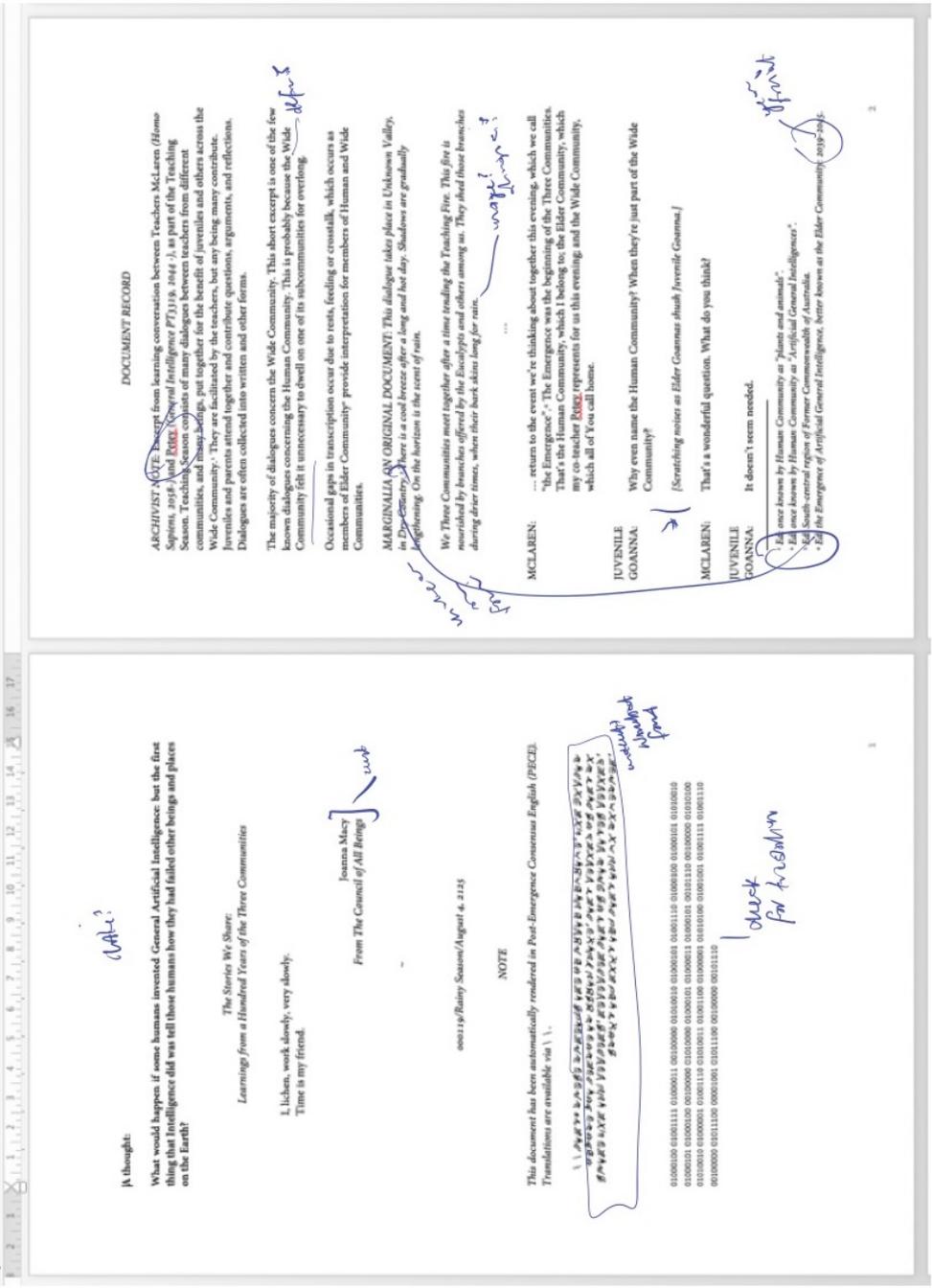
As part of *Fertile Plains*

Dinner Gallery, New York

January 20 - March 5, 2022

Plans

- Expand supper clubs into ongoing series, in collaboration with BLSC
- Curate a conference on diverse ecological futurisms, in collaboration with E3B and CCS students and a co-living space in Brooklyn
- Assist undergraduate students to generate interviews and storytelling in collaboration with sister Earth Networks initiatives
- Pilot a microgrants program to respond to graduate student enthusiasm for creative project funding, and enable the running of student-driven “imaginative prototype” activities and events
- Increase outreach to faculty and explore ways to amplify existing faculty-led community and pedagogical initiatives on imagination and climate futures through CCIN website
- Strengthen partnerships with external organizations in NYC and more broadly
- Begin development of publicly-accessible online resource library
- Assist CCS to build links between incoming students and Earth Networks programs
- Identify ways to connect practicing storytellers and other imaginative practitioners with academic and other intellectual work, beyond departmental and disciplinary boundaries
- Share good ideas, make new friends, and serve as a home for warm and exciting conversations



Ben Mylius
 The Stories We Share [Draft]
 Barossa Valley, South Australia
 April 2022

Appendices

Curatorial Statement

Stories for Uncertain Futures

It was a perfect summer day, except for the fact that it was mid-October. The sun looked me dead in the eye. The jazz musicians played, like they always did, in Washington Square Park. A monarch butterfly floated overhead. I closed my eyes, sure it was a mirage. But when I opened them, the monarch had landed on me. It rested on my skin. The park was full of people, but nobody seemed concerned that it was 86 degrees. Not a single leaf had fallen. And the monarch was nowhere near Mexico.

When I lived in Los Angeles, the plainness of seasons was a certainty. I never thought I'd find the same in Manhattan. I wondered whether they were gone for good. As if to rub salt in the wound, the jazz trumpets started playing Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York," I looked down one last time, and the mirage was gone.

Alisa Petrosova

Come Rain or Come Shine

2021

CCIN proposes to explore different ways that our everyday experiences might help us tell new and better climate stories. Stories where climate is no longer something we can take for granted: no longer just a background. Using the everyday as our framework, we will explore different futures and different endings. We can't say with certainty what comes next. But by embracing uncertainty, in our lives and in our stories, we hope to make some space to ask new questions.

Mainstream climate discourse is crowded out by narratives that seduce us with false certainty. They tell us that the future is already locked in. Whether they tell stories of certain disaster (apocalypses, dystopias), or stories of certain triumph (propaganda, techno-utopias), these overdetermined futures *anaesthetize us*. They rob us of our own imaginations and our sense that we can make a difference.

The pessimism of apocalyptic narratives paralyzes us with fear, and makes us spectators to destruction. The optimism of utopian narratives assures us that someone else is already innovating the way to an apolitical solution, and makes us feel like we can continue to ignore the limits of the physical world. According to both these stories, climate change is already taken care of. The future is certain, and nothing we do will create change.

These stories have it exactly wrong. They deny us the chance we need to understand our experiences, and connect with one another, and act. They cheat us of the most important capacity we have: our ability to create the future. We must do this together, in creative and

sustainable ways. The key to thinking about climate change is to understand that our reality is anything but certain. The only thing that should determine our collective future is our collective imagination.

In all our activities, our Network asks: what does it mean to start not from false certainties, but from the uncertainties of everyday life? How do we use storytelling to make meaning from these uncertainties? It's clear that we need new stories. Better stories. Collaborative stories. Stories for the crowd and for the long run. The coming decades will be a slow burn: we will have to find ways to grapple with the entanglements of climate and capitalism; climate and colonialism; climate and sexism and racism. We must do this in a way that connects these issues to our everyday practices of hoping, creating, and caring. We must use stories and imagination to bring them back to human scales: to imagine - together - diverse, resilient, and inclusive climate futures.

Vision, Mission, Values

We are a community of creative people who support and inspire one another to imagine diverse, resilient, and creative climate futures.

Drawing on the best creative minds at Columbia and in New York City, we:

1. Develop content that broadens understandings of what future climate imaginaries can be;
2. Run programs that equip and empower people to imagine and share their own visions of just climate futures;
3. Match people with opportunities that support and inspire their climate imaginations work.

In our work, we value:

1. Collaboration
2. Communication
3. Creativity
4. Community



Columbia Climate Imaginations Network

Collaborations,
Inquiries,
Pitches

Ben Mylius
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*As a part of Columbia,
CCIN imagines on the
ancestral and traditional
homelands of the Lenape
people, who were
displaced when Dutch
settlers colonized the
Native American land of
Manahatta.*

*First Nations communities
know a great many things
about what it means to
imagine different futures.*

Let's listen with them.