



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS:

Deep Ecology and Rights of Nature Campus

“Mountains Flow”

2-4 October 2024

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

IDRA Iniziativa per i Diritti delle Reti d'Acqua, THE NEW INSTITUTE Center for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) – University Ca' Foscari of Venice, the Agenda Ecologia of Unione Buddhista Italiana (UBI) and TBA21–Academy are pleased to inform about the open call to take part to the first edition of the Deep Ecology and Rights of Nature Campus – “Mountains Flow”. Selected participants from the bodies of water that flow in the region around Venice and the Po river delta will engage in an intensive training program on legal, artistic and educational tools and strategies for the promotion of Rights of Nature in local contexts and will be involved in the second continental meeting on the Rights of European water ecosystems “The Confluence of European Water Bodies”. The campus has been organized in collaboration with the Embassy of the North Sea and the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN).

CONCEPT

“Mountains Flow”, borrowing the words from Japanese Buddhist priest Dōgen Zenji, is an intensive 3 day Campus on Deep Ecology proposed by THE NEW INSTITUTE Center for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Agenda Ecologia of by Unione Buddhista Italiana (UBI).

In his Sansuikyō (1240), the Mountains (San) and Waters (Sui) Sutra, Dōgen builds upon the wisdom received during his research journey to China, using a highly poetic language to teach that “mountains and waters are the expression of the old Buddhas”. Thus, they are not merely part of the natural world that humans can invest with meanings and poetry, but they are in themselves sutras: they bring messages, speak with their own voice, and constantly act in the world. They are expressions of the

*Oneness of which everything is part. Dōgen offers a teaching to those who study: “We should study the words ‘**Mountains Flow**’ with the Buddhas and the ancestors.*



[...] At one turn, there is flowing; at another, not flowing. If our study is not like this, it is not 'the True Dharma wheel of the Thus Come One'".

This sensitivity, hard to understand but easy to feel for those who have spent time in communion with Mountains and Waters, is what has made Dōgen's text highly relevant - despite being almost 800 years old - in the age of the Great Acceleration of climate, in which rivers and mountains and seas and lands are demanding for humans to listen to their voices. Gary Snyder explains this by calling Dōgen "one of the first ecologists". Not merely a Buddhist priest who loved Nature, but an Ecologist. In his words, Dōgen seems to advocate for a far-reaching mode of listening to Nature, including what we would now call science and the humanities, all the disciplines and senses that humans have.

The Campus departs from such teachings to approach some of the key questions around the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis, searching for modalities of listening to Nature suited to our times. Through Deep Ecology teachings and embodied knowledge moments, we will create two thematic study groups (GROUP 1 – ECOLOGICAL ART AND ACTIVISM; GROUP 2 – LEGAL ACTIONS AND CAMPAIGN) that will have specific focuses, as well as plenary moments in which the whole cohort will come together.

The Campus is hosted by NICHE, University of Ca' Foscari Venice, a leading center for Environmental Humanities in Italy with a specific focus on interdisciplinarity, water issues and the interplay between ecology and arts. Because of the situatedness of the Campus, the didactic methodology adopted is in deep dialogue with the geographies that host it: from the Dolomites to the Lagoon, passing through the river basins of the Tagliamento, Piave, Adige and Brenta.

The Campus leads up to the 2024 edition of A Confluence of European Water Bodies, happening in Venice (3-6 October): a continental initiative that brings together cultural organizations around the demand for a political representation of natural ecosystems. Partner organizations, also participating in the Campus are Embassy of the North Sea, TBA21-Academy, Global Alliance for Rights of Nature (GARN) and Iniziativa per i Diritti delle Reti d'Acqua (IDRA).

Outcomes of the Campus will be presented during the Confluence of European Waters, creating a meaningful moment of exchange between students, communities, institutions and policy issues.



CAMPUS AGENDA

- Venues: Ocean Space, Campo San Lorenzo (Venice); Ca' Bottacin, Calle Crosera (Venice), Piave River
- Dates:
 - Wed 2st October - Fri 4 October 2024
 - DAY ONE: Field trip on the Piave river, facilitated by the activists of the Comitato per le Grave di Ciano and working groups introduction
 - DAY TWO: Plenary lectures by keynote speakers Francesco Martone and Rosa Jijon, and intensive working group activities.
 - DAY THREE: Final restitution at NICHE during the academic day of *A Confluence of European Water Bodies*
 - Thu 3 Oct - Sun 6 Oct *A Confluence of European Waters* continental gathering

DEADLINE FOR CANDIDACIES: 23:59 of Sunday 21st July 2024

Selection outcomes will be published in the first week of September 2024

THE WORKING GROUPS:

- **Composition of the working groups:**
 - max 7 participants for each group. Please express your preference.
 - The call is especially addressed to students (post-graduate, master level and above), artists, activists and practitioners based in and
 - around the Lagoon of Venice; the Brenta, Adige, Piave and Tagliamento river basins; the Po Delta and the Dolomites.
 - Rosa Jijon and Francesco Martone (Arts4TheCommons) will be our keynote speakers and coordinate the works of both groups.

GROUP 1: Ecological Art and Activism by Embassy of the North Sea and TBA21–Academy

- This group will work **in English**.



- o Mentors: River Sisters (Anna Chmiel), Embassy of the North Sea (Leon Lapa Pereira), Jakob Kukula
- o Inhouse facilitators: Pietro Consolandi

Research questions:

- o How to use art as a funnel for policy-shifting works able to influence worldviews and policies?
- o Can art create meaningful bonds in communities and with more-than-humans?
- o How to understand river basins as more-than-human ecosystems and address them as such in research, art, legal activism and policy?

GROUP 2: Legal Actions and Campaign Group by GARN & IDRA

- o This group will work **mainly in English**, even though some of its focuses will be **partially in Italian**, due to the case study of the Piave river.
- o Mentored by: IDRA (Massimiliano Montini and Daniele Marra), GARN (Léa Serrana Corbière),
- o Inhouse facilitators: Silvia Francescon

Research questions:

- o How can communities push for a legal-driven change?
- o What are the tools we already have? Which are the possible approaches?
- o Case study of the Grave di Ciano: how can law making and campaign mobilization help this case, and similar ones across Europe?

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION:

- Being a student, artist, activist and/or practitioner based in and around the Lagoon of Venice; the Brenta, Adige, Piave and Tagliamento river basins; the Po Delta and the Dolomites.
- English proficiency is necessary; Italian proficiency for those participating in the Legal Actions and Campaign group is welcome.
- A deep interest in topics of ecology.



- Previous studies or experience in one or more of the fields of Environmental Humanities, Philosophy, Anthropology, Art, Buddhist Studies, Environmental Law and Political Science.
- Students from Master's level and above are welcome to apply, or practitioners and activists at a similar level of experience (3 or more years).
- Previous involvement in projects related to the rights of nature, indigenous rights / knowledge, ecological conservation, buddhist practice or ecologist activism is a plus.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The campus is free and a certificate of participation will be issued after the course. Students from outside Venice will have to provide for their own accommodation and travel, while lunches will be provided by the organizing entities. To apply, please fill in the following form.

Required attachments

- Motivation letter (max 500 words)
- CV
- Portfolio OR at least a relevant short piece of writing (essay, article, thesis chapter or similar) OR track record of previous activist projects.
- Which group would you be most interested in?
 - In case we cannot accommodate you in your first choice group, would you be interested in joining the other one?

Registration and other information

Requests for participation can be submitted at the following Google Form link: <https://forms.gle/tL39kx4jxDWDVD39>

Request for information must be sent at the following addresses: idra.acqua@gmail.com



Related links:

NICHE: <https://unive.it/pag/44234/>

UBI Agenda Ecologia: <https://gategate.it/ecologia/>

Ocean Space: www.ocean-space.org/it/about

TBA21: <https://tba21.org>

Confluence of European water bodies:

www.embassyofthenorthsea.com/events/confluence-of-european-water-bodies-2024/

TRAINERS' (mentors, facilitators, overall coordinator) & KEYNOTE SPEAKERS' AFFILIATION AND SHORT BIO:

Leon Lapa Pereira (he/him), is a cross-disciplinary performance researcher, who creates experienceable ecologies bridging humans and more-than-humans. He uses anthropomorphising methods to translate relational worlds and biological processes into movement, robotic agents, and performances. Through transformative practices, such as authentic relating, embodiment exercises and movement he gestures new ways of interspecies empathy and compassion. As a teacher of Hugging Architecture at the Interfaculty of the Royal Academy of Art in Den Haag, he offers students to experiment with their own bodies in live-choreographies and public interventions. Next to this, he co-founded [WASTELAND Festival](#) and combined his research interest with his activist ideologies, which led to co-developed the [Network of European Waterbodies](#). Currently, he is researching the topic of ecology for the [Manifesta15 in Barcelona](#).

Arts for the Commons (A4C) is a collective exercise launched by **Rosa Jijón** and **Francesco Martone** in 2016, meant to provide a platform for artists and activists exploring the connections and synergies between visual production and efforts to reclaim the commons, address outstanding issues related to human migration, borders, social and environmental justice, liquid citizenship. By creating opportunities for exchange, mutual action and sharing, **A4C** not only operates as a platform but attempts to create a new common, a synthesis between arts and political engagement.

Jakob Kukula (DE) is a multidisciplinary artist and designer. Born and raised in Berlin, the city's thriving scenes and rapidly changing urban structures exert a lifelong influence on him and his work. After finishing his product design studies at Bauhaus University in Weimar, NY, and Amsterdam, he returned to Berlin, working for Studio Olafur Eliasson and finishing his Master Thesis at KHB Weißensee. Currently, he is exploring a Planet-Centric Design practice,



questioning the relationship between humans and nature, trying to find ways to regenerate, and suggesting ideas for a social and planetary transformation.

Anna Chmiel is an artist based in Krakow, she is part of River Sisters, a collective of women activists and artists formed by Cecylia Malik in 2018. Rivers Sisters come together to save and support Poland's largest river, the Vistula. Each member of the

collective represents her beloved river and aims to give it a voice. The first women's call was created as a happening. It turned out that the topic of rivers and waters was so urgent that in five years time, the art project developed into an art-activist community. The Rivers Sisters defend the wild and unregulated rivers of Poland and Europe. They create social campaigns, happenings, actions, protests, art workshops and exhibitions.

Massimiliano Montini is Associate Professor of European Union Law at the University of Siena, where he also teaches Sustainable Development Law. He is co-founder and co-director of the interdisciplinary research group on Regulation for Sustainability (R4S) at the University of Siena. He is a fellow of the C-EENRG Research Center at the University of Cambridge and a life member of Clare Hall College, Cambridge. He is a member of numerous international research groups pertaining to environmental law and sustainable development, such as the Ecological Law and Governance Association (ELGA), the United Nations Knowledge Network "Harmony with Nature," the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, and the European environmental lawyers' group Avosetta.

Léa Serrano-Corbière is coordinator of GARN's European Hub and its Francophone network. She completed a Master's degree in transdisciplinary political science entitled "risks, science, health and the environment" at Sciences Po Toulouse, which focused on risk management and adaptation to climate change (2018-2023). She is specializing in environmental law at the University of Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne. Her Master's thesis is focused on the translation of science by law in the area of pesticides. She is actively involved in the MerMed project for the rights of the Mediterranean Sea bioregion.

Daniele Marra is a civil lawyer. He has been a patron of the Supreme Court of Cassation since 2017 and has been involved in cases aimed at obtaining compensation for health damages suffered by workers and heirs due to the violation of occupational safety regulations. In recent years, attending a second-level master's degree in environmental law and specializing in asbestos and pollution compensation judgments, he has imprinted his profession in a broader dimension, researching measures of protection and action for citizens in environmental cases as well.



Silvia Francescon is an expert in international relations that has been working on biodiversity and climate change since 1995. Currently, Silvia directs the ecology program of the Italian Buddhist Union, is a Researcher on deep ecology and rights of nature at NICHE, Cà Foscari University of Venice, and Senior advisor on foreign policy at ECCO, the independent think tank on climate change. Previously, Silvia has been the Director of the Rome office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, coordinator of the G8 task force at the Italian Prime Minister Office, negotiator of international agreements at the Italian Ministry for the Environment, and Italian coordinator of the United Nations Millennium Goals Campaign. She also worked on environmental policies at the OECD in Paris, the WTO in Geneva and the European Commission in Brussels, and has advised several governments engaged in multilateral processes. Silvia holds a Masters in International Environmental Law from SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, London and a Degree *cum laude* in Law. She is regularly invited by companies, public administration and organizations to hold masterclasses on women empowerment and co-founded Women in International Security-Italy and EquALL.

Pietro Consolandi is a researcher and artist based in Venice, he is founder of art and ecology collective Barena Bianca. He is OCEAN / UNI Research Lead at TBA21–Academy, and a Research Fellow at NICHE, University Ca' Foscari in Venice, where he inquires the possibility of implementing Rights of Nature in Europe especially from a cultural point of view, in dialogue with the [“Confluence of European Water Bodies”](#) project. In this research, he focuses on the Lagoon of Venice and the hydrologic basin of Northern Italy as a specific case study and field of action also through the nurturing of the IDRA network. More broadly, his artistic and research practice stems from the lagoon as a living entity with agency, and seeks to deepen the interconnection between this body of water and its inhabitants – humans or otherwise – from a biological, sociological and sentimental point of view. From here, systems of kinship can be developed with other wetlands and communities with similar ecosystems, needs and desires.

Amalia Rossi - (project overall coordinator) is Fellow Researcher at the New Institute - Center for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She teaches Cultural Anthropology, Visual Anthropology and Ecosophy at the New Academy of Fine Arts (NABA) in Milan and Rome. PhD in Contemporary Anthropology (University of Milan Bicocca), expert in political ecology and in sociology of migrations and of ethnic relations, she has conducted research in Italy and Thailand and has worked as administrative consultant on international protection for national and European agencies.