

The Greening Imaginary: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice

From California to China, self-described “greening” efforts claiming to address inequality and the climate crisis proliferate. But why are such projects—undertaken in the name of ecological sustainability and climate resilience as well as quality of life—being carried out in such a wide range of places with very different histories, ecologies, and cultural repertoires for urban life? Based on a study of a century of greening in Germany’s Ruhr Valley, a polycentric industrial region that has been recurrently “greened” despite its ample open space, this talk offers a sociological explanation of urban greening as a global, contemporary phenomenon. It argues that greening is a social practice made possible by a social imaginary of nature as an indirect or moral good, called urbanized nature; that urban processes, rather than city form, explain greening’s appearance; and that contemporary greening is best understood as fundamentally continuous with past practices. Through an analysis of California cities’ climate action plans, it then highlights the same logics of urban nature at work in contemporary climate adaptation and mitigation efforts and explores their consequences, particularly regarding conceptions of climate justice and equity.

Hillary Angelo is Associate Professor of Sociology at UC Santa Cruz, and is interested in understandings of the environment and their relationship to large-scale spatial and social transformations. Her work offers a social-theoretical perspective on socio-ecological questions through both historical and contemporary research on urban greening, sustainability planning and policy, infrastructure, and climate change. She has published in leading social science and geography journals, including Theory and Society, The Annals of the Association of American Geographers, and The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research. Her first book, How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature and the Making of Cities and Citizens, was published in 2021 by the University of Chicago Press.

April 15, 2022

3:00 P.M.

Online via Zoom

Please register:

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcqcuypjsjGNYQJ3cObuNe_fOQzmkyK2mg

*Sponsored by the Georgia Workshop on Culture, Power
and History*

and the Willson Center for Humanities & Arts



Hillary Angelo
Associate Professor of Sociology
University of California, Santa Cruz