

# Conference Speakers

## MIRANDA SCHREURS (Keynote Speaker)

(Freie Universität Berlin)

### European Energy and Environmental Policy in the Lead Up to Rio +20

#### Bio-sketch

Dr. Miranda Schreurs is Professor of Comparative Politics and Director of the Environmental Policy Research Centre at the Freie Universität Berlin. She is also Vice-Chair of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC). Previously, she was Associate Professor at the University of Maryland and remains affiliated to the University of Maryland Law School. Her research is focused on the comparative analysis of international political systems, environmental and energy policy, and the role of civil society, governments and economic actors. Important topics in her work are climate change, air and marine pollution, renewable energy and energy efficiency and environmental movements and parties. Professor Schreurs also studies questions of environmental security and regional cooperation. She has expertise on Germany, the European Union, the United States of America and East Asia (particularly Japan, China and South Korea).

## STÈVE LEVILLAIN

(Department of French and Italian)

### Bidonville Nostalgia: Ecological and Social Space

In *le Gone du Chaâba*, Begag retraces his childhood from the *bidonville* (shantytown) to the *HLM* (housing projects), both spaces still situated at the margin of French society. While the text portrays rather miserable living conditions, the ironical tone of the narrator palliates an environment most readers would consider unacceptable. Whereas the move from the Chaâba to the projects can be seen as an upgrade in the family's quality of life, it is undeniable that Begag reflects with nostalgia on the time of his early years spent in the *bidonville*. Life in the apartment means the destruction of the communal life the family previously enjoyed in the Chaâba. The games little Azouz used to play brought him out of the shantytown and into nature. Two aspects of space directly related to their social and economic contexts emerge. Paradoxically, the typically dreary housing conditions in the *bidonville* translate into a closer connection to the environment while the supposedly material improvement of living in the projects entails a dissociation from the natural world. My analysis focuses on this spatial and ecological contradiction.

## CYNTHIA LABORDE

(Department of French and Italian)

### Raising consciousness through laughter: Gaston Lagaffe and the environment

This presentation will explore how environmental concerns are portrayed in popular culture through the example of the character of Gomer Goof (Gaston Lagaffe) created by Belgium comic artist Franquin in the 1960s. In 2009, Gaston became the mascot of the United Nations' Environmental Program.

## JAMES BOUCHER

(Department of French and Italian)

### The Infernal Automobile: Car Culture in the Fiction of J.M.G. Le Clezio

During the thirty year period of economic boom and state-supported modernization known as the *Trente Glorieuses*, the explosion of car ownership and use in France after the Second World War and the adoption of the industrial model of Fordism imported from the United States had profound effects on spatial and social organization, and on the physical environment. In the fiction of J.M.G. Le Clezio, the car symbolizes a pernicious element that is threatening the natural world and the fabric of civilization. In a period when car sales were roaring, Le Clezio prophetically sounds the alarm concerning this principal agent of environmental degradation and social disintegration, the car.

## WALTRAUD MAIERHOFER

(Department of German)

### Green politics to Gestapo health plans: Juli Zeh's political activism in *Corpus delicti* (2009)

My paper explores Juli Zeh's political activism, especially in her 2009 novel *Corpus delicti* in comparison to her essays *Assault on freedom* (2010). The premise of *Corpus Delicti*, which is set approximately fifty years in the future, is that science and medicine have eradicated colds, cancer, and other diseases. In order to maintain a disease-free society, the state holds far-reaching control over all citizens, which results in a dictatorship. This article argues that Zeh's very obvious agenda is to raise questions about how one appropriately balances the freedom of the individual against the power of the state; in particular, Zeh suggests there is no good reason for the state to restrict individual liberties in the name of societal welfare because these restrictions rarely work out in the ways in which they were intended. She drew these conclusions explicitly in her 2010 collection of essays published under the title *Assault on Freedom* (Angriff auf die Freiheit).

## DAVID HAGAN

(Department of French and Italian)

### Diderot's Cosmology and the Nature of Human Relations

Denis Diderot's materialism places him among those thinkers who must conceive of man's relation to Nature in largely causal terms. Nature produces us as just as she produces every other organism. And yet we seem estranged from Nature and from one another. How is this so? What, in Diderot's view, are some of the intervening factors that mitigate our relation to Nature and to one another? This paper will look at a number of Diderot's writings that deal with his views on Nature and human nature in order to address some of these questions.

## DIMITRIOS LATSIS

(Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature)

### Dwelling, Seeing, Meaning: A Phenomenological Reflection on Cinematic Landscape

This paper endeavors to argue that what is at stake in Merleau-Ponty's mature philosophy of Nature (nothing less than a completely new ontology) is predicated on man's realization of his embeddedness in the natural world, and is an ontology to which art and -to my mind- cinema can offer the 'royal road'. I seek to combine a phenomenological reflection on the aesthetics of landscape and its rapport with cinema as a medium capable of presentation (instead of representation) in an attempt to enlist Merleau-Ponty's late commentaries on art and nature with illustrations from appropriate cinematic examples that, I will posit, work in image and sound to accomplish a new, direct conception of landscape, very much allied to the principles of phenomenology.

## KYLE STINE

(Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature)

### Cinema, Environment, Catastrophe: Is a European Green Politics a Contradiction?

This paper engages the question of green politics in light of theories of technics and industrialization, in particular, how environmental cinema exhibits a short-circuiting, by the calculative management of resources, of any belief in an alternative to capitalistic exploitation of the natural environment. The connection to Europe is a theoretical point about the becoming global of European "heading." In short, my paper asks: Is European "heading," as industrialization, in conflict with the notion of "green politics"? Can we make this a productive contradiction, the ground for a new thought?