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# Programme

## Plant intimacies: Proximity, Care and Violence

Berlin, 19 –21 October 2022

Freie Universität Berlin and Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient

Convenors: Hilal Alkan and Sandra Calkins

## Day 1

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

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Informal get-together, TBA

## Day 2

Thursday, 20 October 2022

Venue: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

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09:15

Opening

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09:30 – 11:00

Session I “Commodified plants”

Chair: Cornelia Ertl

*Sarah Elton “Agencies of intimacy: Plants as food system actors”*

*Hannah Pitt “Getting to know plants as commercial crops”*

Discussant: Franklin Ginn

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11:00 – 11:30

Break

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11:30 – 13:00

Session II “Affect and plantations”

Chair: Nikolaos Olma

*Sandra Calkins “Love and frustration in banana science”*

*Sarah Besky “Intimacy as Affect and Accumulation: Biodynamics on Darjeeling Tea Plantations”*

Discussant: Katie Dow

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13:00 – 14:15

Lunch

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14:15 – 15:45

**Session III “Home and intimate care”**

*Chair: Erin Gilbert*

*Hilal Alkan “Plants as metaphors, plants as companions: Multi-species care and migrant home-making in Berlin”*

*Guilia Carabelli “Making Home with Plants (Pandemic Edition)”*

*Discussant: Sarah Elton*

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15:45 – 16:00

**Break**

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16:15 – 17:45

**Session IV “Emplacing plants”**

*Chair: Sandra Calkins*

*Franklin Ginn “Plants for a cold cosmos”*

*Anne Meneley “The Possibilities of Plants and Publics in Toronto, Palestine, Singapore, and Georgia”*

*Discussant: William Ellis*

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15:45 – 16:00

**Dinner**

*At Kreuzberger Weltlaterne  
Kohlfurter Str. 37, 10999 Berlin*

## Day 3

Friday, 21 October 2022

Venue: L 115 Seminarzentrum, Freie Universität Berlin

09:30 – 11:00

### Session I "Vegetal Hauntings"

Chair: Hilal Alkan

*William Ellis "The hauntology of Kooigoed: treating a plant as a ghost of colonial pasts"*

*Nikolaos Olma "Arboreal Atmospheres: Aftertrees, Phantom Pains, and the Transformation of Tashkent's Urban Natures"*

Discussant: Katharina Lange

11:00 – 11:30

### Break

11:30 – 13:00

### Session II "Plants and purity"

Chair: Giulia Carabelli

*Cornelia Ertl "Weed(ing) - a relational concept for human-plant encounters"*

*Erin Gilbert "Comrade Burdock and the Conviviality of Weeds: More-Than-Human Affective Relationships in the Steppe Ecologies of Andrei Platonov's Chevengur"*

Discussant: Hannah Pitt

13:00 – 14:15

### Lunch

14:15 – 15:45

### Session III "Loss and Resilience"

Chair: Anne Meneley

*Katharina Lange "The Taste of Absence: "Kurdish oil", loss, and memory among Syrian immigrants to Germany"*

*Katie Dow "Squished Strawberries: Saving Seeds and Growing Community in an Hostile Environment"*

Discussant: Sarah Besky

15:45 – 16:15

### Break

16:15 – 16:45

### Publication Plans

19:00

### Closing dinner at Mundvoll

Waldemarstraße 48, 10997 Berlin

## Day 4

Saturday, 22 October 2022

10:30

Private guided tour of the Berlin Botanical Garden (approx. 2 hrs)

(RSVP: [rosa.duemlein@fu-berlin.de](mailto:rosa.duemlein@fu-berlin.de))

Meeting point:

Entrance next to the Botanical Museum, Königin-Luise-Straße 6-8,  
14195 Berlin

*The excursion focuses on two sections of the Botanical Gardens: The section for bromelia, orchids, and tropical crops as well as the section for cacti and succulent plants. Head gardeners for each section will give us a tour, a glimpse into their daily routines and will point out plants they find particularly engaging. Participants are free to explore the rest of the gardens on their own.*

This paper draws from the research I am conducting, which looks into the relationships different waves and generations of migrants from Turkey develop with the plants they grow and care for in Germany, in order to explore the significance of multispecies networks in the processes of migrant home-making. In the context of migration and displacement human and plant migrants share the challenges of acclimatization and adaptation in new contexts. While caring for their plants, migrants invest in settling and turning a foreign place into a home, both for themselves but also for the plants, who sometimes carry the scents, colors and textures of the home that is left behind. For migrants from Turkey, this involves a material exchange of seeds, cuttings and plant transfers in very unlikely conditions between two countries, that is followed by attentive hands-on care practices to help plants survive. While caring for their plants and approaching them as companions, migrants also find in plants the metaphors for their struggles (rooting, being uprooted, branching, blossoming..etc), and therefore the reasons to identify with them. In this talk I will illustrate how this shuttling between the metaphor and care manifests itself in migrants' lives and give them tools to reflect on their transnational condition, all the while opening up a discussion about anthropomorphism and plantification.

Bio: Hilal Alkan is a researcher at Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin. Her research centers around care and gift practices in various realms of social life. Her recent research is about the caring relations migrants form with the plants they grow and the plants that accompany them in the cities they settled. Her inspiration comes from feminist ethics of care and multi species studies. Her articles appeared in the *American Ethnologist*, *Citizenship Studies*, *Migration Letters* and in other collections. She has also co-edited *Urban Neighbourhood Formations: Boundaries, Narrations, Intimacies* (Routledge, 2020) and *The Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary Turkey: Reproduction, Maternity, Sexuality* (IB Tauris 2021).

**Intimacy as Affect and Accumulation: Biodynamics on Darjeeling Tea Plantations**

This paper returns to fieldwork from the mid- to late-2000s during a boom in Demeter (biodynamic) certification of tea plantations in India. It describes one of the longest running Demeter-certified plantations in the famed tea growing region of Darjeeling in India's eastern Himalayas.

Biodynamic farming is akin to organic farming, but with some twists. Compost preparation, as well as a suite of other routine farming practices, are performed in accordance with the agricultural treatises of Rudolf Steiner. Herbal and mineral additives are made in regimented ways and then sprayed onto fields and compost heaps to promote microbial activity and plant vitality. The entrails and horns of cows, which are often stuffed and buried, are employed in the preparations too. All this extra work, in the words of women workers, was oriented to stoking the life of aging tea bushes. Biodynamic preparations were "medicines" for an ailing colonial monoculture made by women, who in Darjeeling, on the edges of the Indian state, were still subject racialized exclusions born of the plantation and colonial occupation. Biodynamics were stoking the life of that very system too.

This paper describes the work of the women charged with biodynamic preparation. It intertwines these descriptions with, first, workers' narratives about the life and life cycles of tea bushes, which are intimately connected to their own. Second, the paper juxtaposes experiences on Darjeeling tea plantations with marketing narratives by tea companies regarding the life cycles and vitality of tea bushes—as well as human-plant intimacy—under biodynamic cultivation. We learn from biodynamic how-to's of past and present that rekindled intimacy not only with plants, but an entire agro-ecology, is engendered through biodynamic agriculture. But what does it mean—in practice—to "put in more than you take out" (as the biodynamic adage goes) of a plantation-form brought into being through indenture, bondage, and exploitation?

Bio: Sarah Besky is a cultural anthropologist and Associate Professor in ILR School at Cornell University. She is the author of *The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India* (2014) and *Tasting Qualities: The Past and Future of Tea* (2020) both with the University of California Press, as well as the co-editor of *How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet* (SAR Press, 2019). Her new research explores the intersections of agronomy, colonial governance, and small-scale farming in the Himalayan region of Kalimpong, West Bengal.

How do humans become with plants? And what does it mean to think about human-plant intimacy? These questions arose from within a cutting-edge research project on banana biotech, a lab-based scientific project that nonetheless involves all sorts of everyday proximity in handling bananas, their genomes, their suckers, their fruit, and individual plants. It is a project that, while spearheaded in Australia, nonetheless largely unfolds in Ugandan laboratories, greenhouses, and trial fields. In Uganda, a proud matooke (banana) republic, scientists, gardeners, and everyday consumers often have a lifelong familiarity with growing and maintaining this widely appreciated food crop. Matooke cultivation reaches far back in history, defining the landscape, climate, and density of population in this area of the Great Lakes. Many people in Uganda articulate a robust historical sense of having grown with plants, where these plants were held with growing persons, homesteads, communities, and even the state. Against this rich historical and cultural archive, the paper examines contemporary intimate relations with plants in professional scientific and everyday settings. It asks what type of politics emerge from attending to such forms of everyday handling and thinking with plants. Highlighting intimacy with banana plants in Uganda doesn't always lend to foregrounding connection, affection, or bonding. Rather intimate ways of handling plants also imply taking them for granted, being indifferent to them, being rough at times, and paying them little attention—intimacy with plants is no less complicated than other intimate relationships. Thinking about the politics of intimacy in this way has important consequences for the type and capaciousness of multispecies politics we are able to envision.

Bio: Sandra Calkins is an Assistant Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin. Her work explores the intersections of postcolonial science, agriculture/gardening, multispecies studies, and public health. It appeared in *Social Studies of Sciences*, *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, *Medicine Anthropology Theory*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Anthropology Today*, as well as other journals and collections. She is currently finishing a manuscript entitled "Growing with bananas. Plants, health and humanitarian biotech in Uganda", and directs the DFG-project entitled "Touching Plants. Affective Encounters in the Botanical Gardens and Museum at Freie Universität".



Spring 2020, in the face of widespread national lockdowns, influencers of all kinds took to social media to share new domestic routines that addressed the need to practice self-care by cooking and baking, fitness classes, and plant caring. In fact, hashtags such as #indoorjungle and #quarantineplants/ing started quickly trending on Instagram. This proposed intervention engages with plant caring to explore homemaking practices in times of forced social isolation and extreme vulnerability. It focuses on the roles of more than human beings – and specifically plants – in building worlds. Further, it suggests the need to imagine radical solidarities as inclusive of multi-species experiences and knowledges. Empirically, it reflects on the politics of more than human affective entanglements by looking at homemaking practices with plants that centre on the provision and reception of care.

Drawing on data collected through the care for plants project (2020-) to research humans who embraced (or intensified) their care-work with plants during lockdowns and social isolation, I discuss the roles of plants in making home once the majority of us retracted to indoor living. I introduce the experience of indoor plant carers, gardeners, and vegetable-growers to illuminate the meanings of care as a means of survival in pandemic times. I attend to plant care as the activity of building hope, assigning meaning, and placating anxieties. I expose the agency of plants in building affective bonds with humans and I focus on vulnerability (of plants and humans) to account for care as vital in building multispecies radical solidarities.

Bio: I teach Social Theory in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary, University of London (UK). I research the politics of everyday life, and how we make sense of inconsistencies, creative attempts at navigating crises, and the possibility of building more just and inclusive futures. I have published on grassroots politics and art-activism, empire and the Viennese Coffeehouse, and I am currently studying plant-human relationships during the Covid-19 pandemic. Theoretically, my research brings together and expands conversations on the social production of space (especially the work of Henri Lefebvre), affect, and feminist theory.

**Squished Strawberries: Saving Seeds and Growing Community in a Hostile Environment**

This paper focuses on a case study from my ethnographic research with seed-savers and seed activists in London. I first interviewed Babu Roy, a working-class man of Indian and Kenyan heritage and veteran anti-racist activist, online in June 2020. This was during the first Covid-19 'lockdown' and at the height of protests against the murder of George Floyd, as well as a time in which Babu and a black British friend were repeatedly harassed by police while gardening on his council estate. At the core of Babu's experience – and his analysis of them – are attempts to control the fertility (of plants and people) and social reproduction. The 'hostile environment' (see El-Enany 2020; Goodfellow 2019; Griffiths and Yeo 2021) reproduces racialised categorisations of 'migrants' and 'citizens' and represents an intensified, if not novel, incursion into social reproduction and kinship in which 'problems' of migration are located, and policed, within the racialised migrant family (Erel 2018). Gardening on a council estate and teaching working-class and racialised children how to grow food then becomes an act of resistance, a defiant attempt at care, growth and flourishing in the face of the hostile environment.

This case speaks to broad themes of injustice, inequality and environmental degradation, but also of growth, resistance and community in the face of these harsh conditions (see also Reese 2017). Babu sees growing food as both a way of having fun with children, neighbours and friends and a form of political resistance. This partly reflects his particular social position, but it also relates to his ability to see like a social scientist, 'connect[ing] all the dots together', as he put it himself, asking questions about how and why things are the way they are, in order to come up with ways to resist and change them.

Bio: Katharine Dow is a Senior Research Associate in Sociology and Deputy Director of the Reproductive Sociology Research Group (ReproSoc) at the University of Cambridge. Her main research interests are in the intersections between reproductive and environmental concerns and activism, from a multispecies perspective. She has published articles in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Bio-Societies*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Environmental Humanities and Sociology*; her first monograph, *Making a Good Life: An Ethnography of Nature, Ethics, and Reproduction*, was published by Princeton University Press.

## The hauntology of Kooigoed: treating a plant as a ghost of colonial pasts

Kooigoed looks and acts like a ghost. This plant (*Helichrysum petiolare*) lends itself to being treated like a ghost because it echoes things that we find in the world of spectres. We begin the journey in small Karoo town where a local artist suggests that I look for plants among the remnants of the early summer veld. This is a place where there are only traces, only remnants. The remainders suggest that the Kooigoed plant which seems half-dead may have something to offer us even though it just hovers at the edges of existences. After this first encounter we follow this plant as it carries us through the events and places that it haunts. We suggest that it prowls the edges of ethnobotany and suggest a new ethnography of plants that casts of the helm of its pasts. Kooigoed lurks at the of the theories of critical plants studies where it does not really want to take hold but rather clings to partial connections just like ghosts holds onto the world of the living. Next our journey takes us into the veld and here we glance at the materiality of the plant, that prefigures a ghost, while also looking for its ephemeral shimmer, that shimmer that is own to phantoms. From the veld we move to the garden the place where the original ecology has been forced to retreat from but where Kooigoed physically creeps into so that it may not be forgotten, the spectre has something to say here at the limits of the garden. Lastly we examine several other forms in which Kooigoed haunts the landscape and people of southern Africa. Here there are rituals meant to drive off pahntoms, summon ancestors and where kooigoed produces dreams and vision of a past . All in all smoke of the Kooigoed calls up ghosts that reveal a colonial past from which voices still want to echo.

Bio: Dr William Ellis is a member of the Anthropology department at the University of the Western Cape where he teaches courses on Being human, Environmental Anthropology and the Anthropology of things. He has a keen interest in the study of KhoiSan society and also in the ethnography of plants. His work on KhoiSan studies has mainly dealt with land reform, natural resource management, traditional leadership and most recently included a project working with indigenous herders in the Northern Cape. His work with plants is focussed on plant practices and intimacies, plant knowledge and the ethnography of plants. The work on plants is framed with theoretical work on the "more than human ethnography" and life in the Anthropocene.

What is the nature of plant agency? I research human-plant relations in two disparate sites of urban food systems: the city vegetable garden and produce supply chains. I draw on data generated during two separate qualitative research projects conducted in vegetable gardens in a neighbourhood in transition in Toronto, Canada, as well as in the city's produce supply chains during COVID-19. This comparative exercise elucidates how plant agency is expressed through and within sociopolitical context. Not only is nonhuman agency manifested through the human-plant relationship but this agency becomes interwoven with human intent, reinforcing the norms of the institution within which it is situated. Plant agency is normative.

Bio: Sarah Elton (PhD) is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Toronto Metropolitan University; she also holds an appointment at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Dr. Elton researches the human-ecocystems-health nexus in the city through the study of produce supply chains, urban gardens and one of our most intimate sites of health production as it relates to food, the human gut microbiome. She is currently founding the Food Health Ecosystems Lab at her university.

A considerable amount of the working time of gardeners responsible for the outside areas at the Botanical Garden Berlin is dedicated to the eradication of plant life, namely, weeding, which means the uprooting of plants considered a weed. The exploration of this apparent paradox sheds light on the complexity of everyday encounters between plants and gardeners, on how meaning and value are attributed and on how processes of acting appropriately are informed. Considered a weed can be any plant that grows in a space where it doesn't "belong" or, as many gardeners put it, "even the most beautiful plant is a weed, when it grows in the wrong place at the wrong time". According to this hands-on definition, there is no plant that necessarily is a weed, but there are a number of constellations in which a plant becomes a weed. What are these constellations? How and by whom are they shaped and which possibilities unfold once a plant has been declared a weed? As I see it, weed here is a relational concept, coming into being only in interplay with other vegetal beings, referred to as "actual" plants, and the gardeners who act according to their assessment of the more-than-plant constellations they find themselves in. Starting from, and focusing on, weeds, I reflect on the ways in which gardeners relate to plant beings more generally and how they perceive the close interrelation of fostering and killing plants in their everyday work routines. Decentering the human, I also explore the plants' capacities to act in these weed-making constellations and to affect the gardeners they encounter. Becoming ever more important in times of ecological crisis, a relational concept of weed allows us to examine the dynamics of living and dying together in multispecies entanglements and the cultivation of response-ability involved.

Bio: Cornelia Ertl completed her MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin. Her MA thesis explores the social and ecological outcomes of the Interoceanic Highway in the Peruvian Amazon region. She currently works on her PhD, which is embedded in a project on affect and human-plant relationships at the Botanical Garden in Berlin. Based on one year of ethnographic research, her work focuses on the affective dynamics between plants and gardeners based on daily routines and sensory encounters and explores the ways of relating to one another and "growing together" that are in play.

Comrade Burdock and the Conviviality of Weeds: More-Than-Human Affective Relationships in the Steppe Ecologies of Andrei Platonov's *Chevengur*

Weeds have figured as the vegetal villains in human narratives for millennia. They commonly represent an agricultural threat: infiltrating fields, receiving care intended for crops, leaching nutrients from the soil, sheltering pests, nourishing pathogens, and crossing boundaries. This paper explores alternative imaginaries by investigating early twentieth century Russian efforts to think with weedy plants and recognize their capacities for active participation in convivial world-making. The plant scientist Nikolai Vavilov theorized a complex relationship of care and adaptive mimicry that allowed weeds to flourish among the grains they evolved to resemble. Recent discoveries expand this network: many weeds enjoy symbiotic relationships with fungi, sometimes so intimately as to permit horizontal gene transfer. The Soviet writer and land reclamation agent Andrei Platonov anticipated contemporary posthumanist discourse on interspecies interdependency, positioning weedy plants such as burdock (*Arctium lappa*), orache (*Atriplex heterosperma*), and nettle (*Urtica dioica*) as ideal comrades in his novel *Chevengur*. Not only do they survive environmental stressors and feed other species during famines, but they also “grow in a fraternal way among the other unauthorized grasses” forming a vegetal “International of grass and flowers.” He elaborates keen affective ties binding humans, weeds, insects, and even pathogens together in close physical proximity, forming an intimate more-than-human-entanglement of the dispossessed. In one passage, a peasant shot by Chekists lies bleeding on the ground and turns to a nearby burdock to grasp a leaf, both seeking the compassion his executioner denies him and “so that he might convey to it the remainder of his un-lived life.” Even in a Russian steppe ecology of the civil war period, where fields lie fallow and humans starve, for the characters in *Chevengur* the proliferation of diverse weeds becomes a model for multi-species resource-sharing, resilience, and conviviality among a community of displaced species—despite propaganda demanding their eradication.

Bio: Erin Gilbert is a PhD candidate in comparative literature at the University of Washington in Seattle. She is working on a dissertation titled “Feral Narratives: More-Than-Human Voices from the Margins of the Twentieth Century.” She earned her MFA in Fiction Writing and Literature from Bennington College. She has been awarded a Society of Scholars Fellowship, a Mellon Summer Fellowship for Public Scholarship, a Soden-Trueblood Graduate Publishing Fellowship, and two Joff Hanauer Endowments. Her creative work has been supported by ecologically informed residencies at The Marble House Project in Dorset, Vermont and SERDE in Aizpute, Latvia.

This paper suggests that growing plants in outer space is a germinal moment of cosmic transformation to come. It maps two geo-historical accounts of plant travel. The first account of plants captures the alignment between technoscientific worlding and the prevailing Western ontology of plants as open, manipulable, pliant: as free labourers in space exploration aboard the International Space Station. Space exploration has from the beginning been a multispecies endeavour, and will continue to be so: corporate Sky Gods of the Anthropocene may rocket into orbit, but long-term survival will require plants for oxygen, food and perhaps other services. This technoscientific alignment is not the whole story, with alter-ontologies emphasising vegetal reciprocity visible through sf worlding. The second account concerns the planetary travels of the kumara, and its alignment with the great Polynesian migrations to the far corners of the Pacific. The paper analyses a debate conducted in the 1870s by Māori experts about the origins of the kumara. That debate concerned not just where the kumara came from, nor who had the best claim to be correct about its origins; more than that, the debate concerned the precise manner in which the root vegetable linked cosmic beginnings and endings. Both accounts show what happens when geosocial formations ally themselves to the vegetal, demonstrating comparable solutions that have emerged from distinct historical-geographic forms of experimentation. The paper is a work in speculative planetology that sees photosynthesis as an Earthly gift and a spark for a New Earth, or for Earth to stretch out and enable other planets to become otherwise.

Bio: Franklin Ginn is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Geography at the University of Bristol. His research interests are in cultures of nature, environment-society relations and philosophical questions concerning the nonhuman. His previous research projects include green gentrification in Lisbon, religious temporalities and ethics of climate change in Scotland, and plant politics in urban Pakistan. He is currently researching soil cultures in the Himalaya, and the role of nonhumans in space exploration. He is author of *Domestic wild: Memory, nature and gardening in suburbia* (Routledge, 2016), *The Work That Plants Do* (2021) and co-editor of *Environmental Humanities*.

The Taste of Absence: "Kurdish oil", loss, and memory among Syrian immigrants to Germany

In north-west Syria's originally Kurdish-majority region of Afrin, olive trees have long been a source of income and sustenance, a measure of wealth and property, a focus of knowledge and expertise, an object of effort, work, and care. Their cultivation, the associated skills, knowledge and experience, and the particular qualities associated with their produce could be read as place-based markers of social and, in particular, ethnic identities.

Yet what happens when these intimate links between cultivation and local social identity are ruptured by war, displacement, demographic change and forced migration; when familiarity and locality are replaced by exile, absence and destruction? Following the occupation of Afrin by Islamist Syrian militias allied with Turkey in January 2018, the destruction wrought on the region's plants has been a painful and much-discussed issue among exiled and local inhabitants, as stories and images of cut-down trees abound on social media. Exiles juxtapose the short-term gain of cutting trees for firewood, or the careless use of orchards for grazing livestock by herders allied to the occupiers, to the decades of care that have been invested in these trees. Former inhabitants of Afrin who now live in Germany reconstruct their social identities through a range of practices, e.g. elaborate efforts to import oil from one's own trees, to virtually care for one's trees and their fate through long-distance calls, or to seek (inevitably non-satisfactory) replicas of Afrin's olives through produce sourced from other places, such as Italy or Turkey.

Building on fieldwork in Syria before 2011, this paper will briefly outline the historical links between olive cultivation and local social identities in Afrin; secondly, it will draw on participant observation, interviews with (former) inhabitants of the region and published reports to trace efforts to rebuild links to a lost home through consumption, communication, and long-distance care.

Bio: Katharina Lange is an anthropologist with fieldwork experience in Syria (before 2011) and Iraq's Kurdistan Region. Her research on issues relating to rural communities, agrarian practices, local histories and politics of memory has been published, among other venues, in *Economic Anthropology*, *Journal of the Social History of the Orient*, and *Nomadic Peoples*. She is a senior research fellow at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient where she heads the research unit Environment and Justice. She has also (co)curated the online exhibition *Anfaenge und Erinnerungen* ([anfaenge-erinnerungen.zmo.de](http://anfaenge-erinnerungen.zmo.de)), featuring everyday connections between Syria and Germany as they are experienced by Syrian refugees in Germany.



**The Possibilities of Plants and Publics in Toronto, Palestine, Singapore, and Georgia**

This paper explores different moments in plant possibilities, based on my fieldwork in Toronto, Palestine, Singapore and Georgia. The first example is of a collective of street flower gardens on a popular shopping street in west Toronto: RoncyWorks, a volunteer cooperative, which from 2011-2021 had planted the 21 fetching street gardens along the avenue. Each of the gardens was the responsibility of a small group of local gardeners, who were given free rein to plant any pollinator or native species that they chose to. However, in 2021, the corporate Roncesvalles Village Business Improvement Area (RVBIA) elected to uproot and replace these volunteer gardens, in favor of a "cohesive design" where a non-local garden company was granted the right to uproot and replant each garden, planting each of the 21 gardens with the exact same plants. The "structure of feeling" which resulted was one of despair as the volunteers who had labored for free for a decade, exercising their plant creativity, were cast aside. My second example is from my own experimentation with "Covid gardening," a practice I began in my front yard in April 2020 because I could not travel. I was able to observe how my gardening activities changed my relationship with my neighbours in positive (exchanging plants and planting advice) and negative (plants and the house renovations) ways. Both elements of my gardening experience were guided by experiences I had with plants in Palestine, and have irrevocably shaped my understanding of plant politics in Palestine.

I then turn to two examples of plants-in-parks from my 2022 field research. In both examples, parks are designed for people to observe plants rather than tend the plants themselves: the Gardens by the Bay in Singapore and the Shekvetili Dendrological Garden in the Republic of Georgia. I compare the Gardens by the Bay with the Dendrological Garden, also known as the "Park of Giant Trees," for two examples of plant institutions which claim to invite interactions with "nature" but in highly orchestrated and somewhat disturbing ways. Woven throughout are reflections on the emotions that attend both tending and viewing plants.

Bio: Anne Meneley received her PhD in Anthropology from New York University in 1993. She is now a Professor of Anthropology at Trent University in Canada. Her current work is on the anthropology of consumerism, walking (quantified and nature walking), mobilities, cities, olive oil, and human-nonhuman interactions in plant materialities. She has published articles in *American Anthropologist*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *Anthropologica*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, *Ethnos*, *Food, Culture & Society*, *Food and Foodways*, *Gastronomica*, *History and Anthropology*, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, *Political and Legal Anthropology*, *Religion and Society*, and *Social Analysis*.

**Arboreal Atmospheres: Aftertrees, Phantom Pains, and the Transformation of Tashkent's Urban Natures**

In Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, hundreds of large deciduous trees are felled annually. Many are felled by the authorities, who seek to rewrite Tashkent's history by eliminating aspects of the city reminiscent of or associated with its Russian heritage. But their majority is poached by individuals who, often facilitated by state officials, harvest the trees' wood in order to provide the local furniture industry with lumber. The main target of both offensives are oriental plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*), locally known as chinars. A native hardwood species favoured by Tsarist urban planners, chinars were planted at a large scale in the 1960s, when Soviet authorities provided residents with tree saplings to plant and care for. This resulted in transgenerational relations of care and complex affective entanglements, which last to this day and, for many of Tashkent's old-timers, make the felling of specific trees akin to the passing of a family member. Precisely because of these ties, felled chinars become "aftertrees," the tree analogues of both "cadaver" and "ghost," which haunt the everyday lives of their former caretakers. But their felling also alters the urban landscape, as felled chinars are—for political reasons—replaced with blue spruce trees (*Picea pungens*), a coniferous evergreen species, which, despite the authorities' efforts, has failed to adapt to Tashkent's hot climate. Felling also alters the atmosphere and "feel" of Tashkent—the former Soviet Union's greenest city—as the vanishing of chinars' rich canopies exposes pedestrians and park-goers to the scorching sun. As this paper will argue, the resulting sunburn acts as a somatic "phantom pain," which leads to contestations between Russian-speaking "old-timers" and Uzbek-speaking "newcomers," juxtaposes "useful" plane trees with "useless" spruce trees, elicits various types of memory and nostalgic narratives, and serves as an index of the city's post-socialist transformation.

Bio: Nikolaos Olma is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin and lecturer at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. In his doctoral dissertation (Copenhagen, 2018), he explored the nexus of embodied memory and urban infrastructure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Nikolaos previously worked as Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany. He currently works on a book project examining how the inhabitants of a former uranium mining town in Kyrgyzstan negotiate life with radiation.

What happens to human-plant relations in commercial crop growing? How does increasing the scale, number and frequency of plant presences alter the nature of intimacies? What difference does it make that the goal is a profitable crop, where tending is focused on gathering plant material for people to buy? Research with large-scale fruit and vegetable producers suggests complexities around plant intimacies. In this paper I consider how to make sense of relationships in which plants are neither clearly cared for individuals nor killable collectives (Atchison & Head 2013). I share the difference it has made to my practices and thinking with plants to scale-up studies of horticulture beyond the garden. I reflect on how interactions with plants and the people who work with them in these settings pushed me to question what I thought I knew about what social scientists know about plants. A focus on what crop growers know about their plants, and how they seek to maintain a critical degree of certainty about what they will do challenges the idea that they are largely unknowable (Marder 2013). These interactions are different from the affective, personal engagements between gardener and individual plants (Pitt 2017), and do not easily fit how critical plant studies organises these relationships (Lawrence 2021). Such entanglements are problematic for a plant-centred ethical perspective: time and profit take precedence over plants' needs which are only met so they can feed human needs. I share my endeavours to find ethical routes through settings dependent on more-than-human labour, in which human labourers too often face injustice (Gertel & Sippel 2014). I conclude that disregard for horticultural workers' value and rights is partly rooted in historic tendencies to plant blindness, but find this an incomplete resolution to the exploitation of plant and human actors.

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