Call for Contributions: Special Themed Issue
of <u>ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies</u>

Climate, Arts, and Activism: Critical Inter- and Transdisciplinary Perspectives

Co-edited by **Yvonne Schmidt** (Bern Academy of the Arts), **Susan Thieme** (University of Bern) and **Mirko Winkel** (University of Bern)

All proposals, suggestions, and questions to: yvonne.schmidt[at]hkb.bfh.ch

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The debate about the socio-ecological crisis has moved to the center of society. What conditions and practices are needed for art-science collaborations that will contribute to transforming society towards critical climate and ecological justice? That is the guiding question for the proposed special issue.

This themed issue of the peer-reviewed journal ACME (https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme) on "Climate, arts, and activism: Inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives", calls for contributions that reflect on how art-science collaborations in the field of climate change and ecological justice engage with (trans-)local or international/art communities. It will explore the complexities between art, science, and the so-called public, i.e. the different stakeholders involved in such collaborations. In the context of transdisciplinary research, we ask for a critical reflection on the processes of co-creation, defining problems, roles and responsibilities, identifying relevant stakeholders, understanding and integrating different perspectives, dismantling power relations, challenging dominant systems of knowledge production, and ensuring ethical considerations.

We welcome contributions from different academic disciplines (geography, environmental humanities, sustainability studies, transformation research), artistic research and submissions, design research, and other fields of practice. Proposals are encouraged from regions, cultures, and people that have not been previously featured or addressed in the discourses and scholarship.

Context setting

The mutual rapprochement between art and research in the field of climate change and ecological justice produces a wide range of approaches and innovative hybrids in which artistic processes and expertise come into play at different points. In her book Geography, Art, Research (2021), Hawkins describes an interaction between the so-called creative (re)turn in the geosciences - but also in other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and history - and a simultaneous research turn in the arts (Slager 2020; Coessens/Douglas/Crispin 2009). At the same time, the discourse on artistic research raises the question of how collaboration on an equal footing between artists and scientists not only leads to new artistic practices but also, according to Caduff (2017), develops new scientific methods and challenges hegemonies of

interpretative sovereignty. Looking at the conditions and processes of transdisciplinary collaborations will shed light on power imbalances and the possible contributions as well as obstacles, to contribute to different forms of justice such as climate justice (e.g. Sultana, 2021, 2025), social and epistemic justice (e.g. Lieu et al, 2023)

Some arts science collaborations take place at universities which open their own labs. But cultural institutions are also fostering such projects through specific residencies. A further dynamic is created by new funding schemes that initiate climate art projects and influence the type of artistic and scientific processes, production methods and audiences. Conversely, more and more climate art initiatives are located in non-institutional settings (initiatives, "para-institutions", NPO's).

So far, little attention has yet been paid to the question of which audiences these transdisciplinary collaborations address and actually reach, and how collaboration takes place on an equal footing with different communities, including the more-than-human. In addition, the debate is shifting more and more into the realm of activism, which is increasingly coming under pressure in societies where democracy is at stake. How do actors position themselves in this multi-layered field of tension, what are good practice, and what challenges do art and climate projects face in their efforts to bring about change in the community? We are interested in including examples of failure and what it means to fail in this context.

Contributions

We welcome contributions to this themed issue of ACME within the scope of ACME's topics (see: https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/about). Contributions may be represented in a wide variety of formats to capture and reflect the scope and range of perspectives. The language of the issue is English. We invite journal articles (up to 9,000 words), roundtables, interviews, and visual analyses, as well as creative or multimedia contributions, including poetry, comics, & speculative fiction, performances, or podcasts.

For a detailed list of accepted formats please check:
https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/subformats

Responses to the theme may consider some of the following questions:

- Who is typically addressed in art-science collaborations, who is effectively reached, and crucially, who is overlooked?
- How can we move beyond existing bubbles and actively include communities and stakeholders often excluded from these dialogues?
- What constitutes fruitful failure in collaborative projects?
- How can art-science collaborations move from temporary interventions to sustainable, structural transformations in institutions and communities?
- What lessons can we learn from past successes and challenges to foster lasting impact beyond social media visibility?
- What are the criteria for successful transdisciplinary collaborations?
- Which terms are used in the context of transdisciplinary collaboration and how should they be reframed and reinterpreted?
- How is epidemic justice negotiated?
- What are the implications of the collaborations for the institutions?
- What methods or practices have successfully increased the accessibility of these collaborations to marginalized or non-academic communities?

- What strategies exist to sustain the momentum and relationships formed during time-limited arts-science projects beyond their funding period?
- To what extent do arts-science collaborations intentionally adopt activist methods, and how do these approaches influence public perception and credibility?
- What ethical questions arise when blending activism with science and art, particularly regarding objectivity, advocacy, and neutrality?
- How do funding structures influence or limit the activist potential and political neutrality of these collaborations?

Timeline

We welcome **abstracts of 400 words** including a short **biography of the author(s) (100 words each)** to be sent to: yvonne.schmidt[at]hkb.bfh.ch by **15th of October 2025**. Notification on acceptance will be given by 15th of November 25. The deadline for full submissions is on 1st of April 2026. The special issue will be published in 2027.
For questions please e-mail to: yvonne.schmidt[at]hkb.bfh.ch.

Short biographies of the special issue editors:

Yvonne Schmidt is a professor, founder and head of the EcoArtLab and responsible for the research field of art education at the Institute Practices and Theories in the Arts at Bern Academy of the Arts. She teaches and researches on arts-based research, performing arts, transdisciplinarity, performance and disability, art (mediation) and climate change, curating as political practice and the (digital) transformation of cultural institutions. She is co-president of the Swiss Association for Theatre Research and founder of the "Performance & Disability" network of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR).

Susan Thieme is a professor of geography and critical sustainability studies at the University of Bern, researching sustainability and justice questions at the intersections of well-being and health, im/mobility, labour, and education. As founder and co-leader of the mLAB - a collaborative space for science and arts - she is interested in social and transformative learning processes, the potential of transdisciplinary work, and the role of social sciences and arts in social-ecological transformation processes.

Mirko Winkel is an artist, curator and coordinator of the mLAB at the Institute of Geography, University of Bern (mlab.unibe.ch), an experimental space that encourages researchers to develop new forms of collaborative and collective work. He is also an artistic research associate at the EcoArtLab of the Bern University of the Arts (ecoartlab.ch) and member of the Commission for Art in Public Space of the City of Bern. His work includes performances, videos, maps, discussion formats and suggestions for improvement.

About ACME:

ACME: An International Journal of Critical Geographies is an international journal for critical analyses of the social, the spatial, the ecological, and the political, grounded in critical geographic scholarship. We recognize that the scholarship we publish takes place on Indigenous territories across the globe, and that the geographies represented in ACME are themselves formed through imperialism and colonialism. There is diversity in the lands, waters, and Indigenous Nations on whose territories we

depend. As a journal of geography, we also acknowledge the imperial and colonial roots of the discipline, and we seek to publish scholarship in solidarity with global and localized struggles.

We work to make radical scholarship accessible for free as a manifestation of our commitment to collective labor and mutual aid. We are fully open access. We set no subscription fees or article processing charges, we do not publish for profit, and ACME Editors do not receive compensation for their labour.

ACME welcomes work that seeks to build and advance critical frameworks, including, but not limited to, those aligned with anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-authoritarian, Black, feminist, crip, trans, queer, and multi-species perspectives. ACME authors' work most often bridges multiple radical frameworks, which are situated in specific intellectual and political contexts. As such, ACME's mission is to challenge and expand what 'critical' means to interdisciplinary thinking around space and place. We support work that brings together ongoing struggles on the ground with critical scholarship. Thus we understand 'critical' in our journal's name as both contextual and dynamic in its emergence.

ACME is international in scope and is accessed by people from at least 185 countries. The editors especially encourage rigorous creative, academic, and activist submissions from outside the Anglo-Americas, including those presented in formats that go beyond standard academic writing. We publish using Creative Commons licenses, offering authors autonomy and freedom over their work. As a fully open access journal, ACME publishes conceptually bold, theoretically robust, empirically rich, methodologically rigorous, cutting-edge work that spans disciplines and disrupts orthodoxies of all kinds.

For more information: https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/about