

2026 - 2027

MSc Thesis Topics



Cultural Geography (GEO)

Wageningen University & Research



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Writing your MSc thesis with GEO



Many people view writing a MSc thesis as the pinnacle of higher academic education. And indeed, the importance of the thesis work is also reflected by the prominent role it takes within the whole MSc program. After completing compulsory and optional courses in the educational program, the MSc thesis challenges students to set up and carry out a scientific research project in an almost fully self-responsible manner.

The overall goal of the thesis is to further develop research, analytical and presentation skills. The thesis is the culmination of the MSc study program in which the student will have to show that they are able to design and conduct social science research in an academic context and are able to theoretically reflect on a particular field of research relevant to their MSc program.

This brochure presents a list of MSc thesis projects for students who wish to pursue their thesis at the Cultural Geography Group (GEO). GEO motivates students to align their MSc thesis with one of the thesis projects outlined in the brochure. The topics in this brochure appear in random order and are linked to one, or more, of our research clusters: **Landscapes, Mobilities & Place-making, Earth & Environment**. Some of them remain wide open for your own input in terms of context/country/approach etc., while others are more clearly defined. Alternatively, there is the possibility for students to do something different and to develop their own idea for the thesis in the broad field of cultural geography. In that case the student is strongly encouraged to come up with a one-page proposal to the thesis coordinators.

Are you interested in writing your MSc thesis with GEO, or do you have any questions? Feel free to contact our thesis coordinators!

MSc Thesis Coordination



Maria de Wit
Thesis Coordinator MTO
Brightspace
[E-mail](#)



Martijn Duineveld
Thesis Coordinator 'Other Programmes'
[E-mail](#)

Additional Staff & Chair



Phoebe Nyugen
Administration
Proposal presentations
Colloquia
[E-mail](#)



Cheryl van Adrichem
Thesis rings
[E-mail](#)



Edward H. Huijbens
Chair
Examiner MSc theses
[E-mail](#)

People of GEO

When writing your thesis with GEO, you will be supervised by one of the GEO staff members as listed on the People of GEO pages, ideally linked to your and their interest. You are more than welcome to pick a topic from this brochure and work independently. However, if you pick a topic proposed by a PhD Candidate or Postdoc, be aware that there often is less freedom to decide the direction of your thesis as these topics align to their on-going research. You can also recognise these topics by the '(PhD Candidate or Postdoc)' indicator behind the supervisors' name. Ultimately all thesis produced in the MTO programme (under course code GEO80436) will be examined by the chair of the group, prof. dr. E.H. Huijbens, [see here](#). It is also possible to have a GEO staff member (co-)supervise your thesis in other MSc programmes. For this, please contact [Martijn Duineveld](#).

Ana Aceska

Areas of expertise: Governance, heritage, place-making

Interested to learn more about: Anthropology of policy and governance

Methods: Qualitative methods

Cheryl van Adrichem (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Climate change mitigation, tourism transportation, climate-related financial risks

Interested to learn more about: Climate risk response in tourism, climate obstruction, narratives

Methods/Theories: Discourse theory/analysis, governmentality, qualitative methods

Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong

Areas of expertise: Slavery and colonial heritage (tourism), tourism policy, planning and development, qualitative research methodologies

Interested to learn more about: Big data analysis in tourism research, tour guides and tour guiding, emotional labour of tour guides/ tour guiding

Roy van Beek

Areas of expertise: Landscape archaeology, cultural heritage management, wetlands

Interested to learn more about: Human responses to past environmental challenges and opportunities; learning from the past; material and immaterial cultural heritage in wetlands

Methods/Theories: Interdisciplinary research; deep time perspectives; big data analysis

Karolina Doughty

Areas of expertise: Wellbeing, soundscapes, sensory experiences

Interested to learn more about: Urban wellbeing, transformative tourism, sonic tourism

Clemens Driessen

Areas of expertise: Human-animal relations, agriculture, nature conservation, robots, arts&sciences, ecosocial design

Martijn Duineveld

Areas of expertise: Climate obstruction, climate justice, governance

Interested to learn more about: Climate obstruction within tourism, planning- and landscape architecture and big agro

Methods/Theories: Case study research, discourse analysis, qualitative methods, Evolutionary Governance Theory, theories on power, discourse theory

Layla Farmahini Farahani (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Virtual Reality, cognition, emotion

Interested to learn more about: Visualization, physiological signals, extended reality

Edward H. Huijbens

Areas of expertise: Spatial theory, landscape commodification, Anthropocene

Interested to learn more about: Political ecology, conviviality, futuring

Maarten Jacobs

Areas of expertise: Emotion, wildlife, landscape

Interested to learn more about: Equality

Methods/Theories: Emotion theory, psychological theory, survey methods, experimental methods, statistical analyses

Alexander Klippel

Areas of expertise: immersive technologies, spatial cognition, educational spaces

Interested to learn more about: Statistics, environmental psychology, environmental games

Chih-Chen Trista Lin

Areas of expertise: Gender & intersectionality, labour, affect and emotion

Interested to learn more about: Labour environmentalism, countertopography

Methods/Theories: Participatory action research, ethnographic methods, affect theory, biopolitics

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José Meijer (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Landscape perception, outdoor recreation, social practice theory

Katelyn O'Bright (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Greenspace, restorative environments, health and well-being

Interested to learn more about: Health equity, nature/park prescriptions, personalized health

Methods/Theories: Mixed (geospatial, quantitative, qualitative), Stress Reduction Theory, Person-Environment Fit Theory

Meghann Ormond

Areas of expertise: Participatory approaches & methods, adult learning, tourism-migration nexus

Interested to learn more about: The role of intuition in decision-making, participation and democracy, heritage practices and place-making

Methods/Theories: Qualitative methods, especially interviews, oral history and arts-based/creative methods, interpretivist, feminist and post-structural approaches

Karin Peters

Areas of expertise: Public spaces, inclusivity, just cities

Interested to learn more about: Sustainable transitions, urban life

Methods: Qualitative methods

Larissa Platz (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Spatial frictions, narrative-structures, performance

Interested to learn more about: Black geographies, imagination/fantasy

Methods/Theories: Crisis of presence, Black aesthetics, critical museology, politics of representation

Marijn Poortvliet

Areas of expertise: Risk perception, environmental risks, sustainability behavior

Interested to learn more about: Risk cognition, environmental risk perception

Débora Ribeiro Póvoa (Postdoc)

Areas of expertise: Place-making, film tourism, cultural and colonial heritage

Interested to learn more about: More-than-human geographies, transnational mobilities

Methods: Qualitative methods

Antonia Purrmann (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Biodiversity, agriculture, farmers perspective

Interested to learn more about: Sustainable agriculture, decision-making, functional biodiversity

Methods/Theories: Social-ecological system, qualitative methods, landscape approach

Alexandra Rijke

Areas of expertise: Mobilities, in- and exclusion, border/ing practices

Interested to learn more about: Urban design and in/exclusion, heritage practices and place-making

Methods/Theories: Qualitative methods, such as (mobile) interviews and (participant) observations. Open to a variety of theories, mostly familiar with post-structuralism.

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Nina Rosa (Postdoc)

Areas of expertise: Virtual/augmented reality, environmental communication, sustainable behavior

Interested to learn more about: Meaningful experiences

Methods: Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative)

Chizu Sato

Areas of expertise: Feminist political ecology, community economies, transnational feminism

Interested to learn more about: Commoning, socio-ecological well-being, rural revitalisation

Dienke Stomph (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Soil, plantationocene, performance

Interested to learn more about: Epistemic justice, counter-mapping

Jennifer Veilleux

Areas of expertise: Coastal Communities Responses to Climate Change, Arts-based Research, Critical Mapping, Human and Nature Interactions

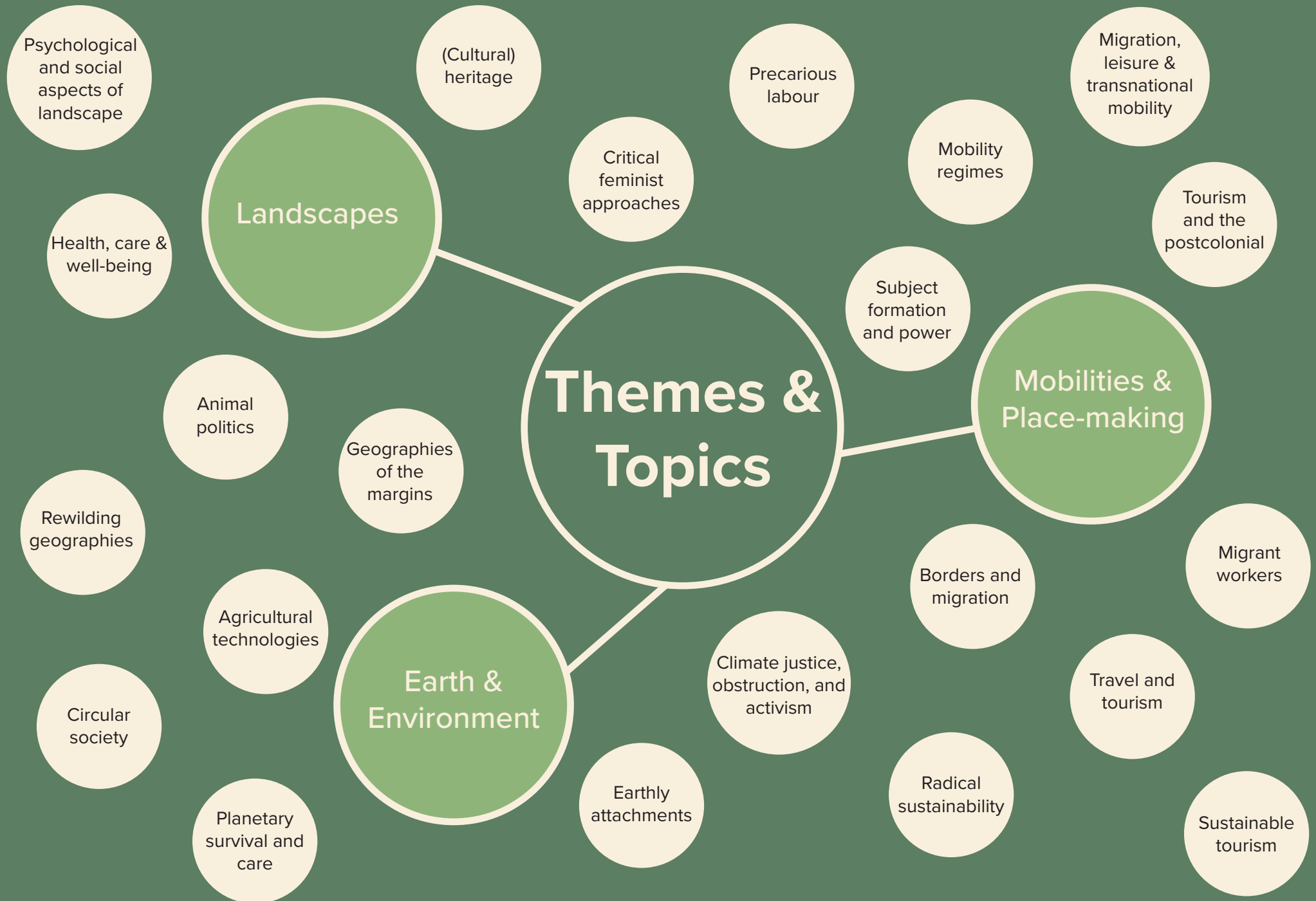
Interested to learn more about: Sense of place, belonging, human and nature interactions

Maria de Wit (PhD Candidate)

Areas of expertise: Emotion, heritage, place meaning

Interested to learn more about: Different heritage contexts

Methods: Quantitative methods



Place-making

This topic opens various possibilities to study the collaborative efforts (by institutions, planners, designers, tourism stakeholders, governments) that aim to craft the characteristics of a place in order to give it a new use, function, norms or meanings. These efforts – which are often highly political – may be top-down or bottom-up, formal or informal. For example, think about the city branding of Wageningen and the ways in which it became a “city of life sciences”!

Supervisor: Ana Aceska, Karolina Doughty, Meghann Ormond, Karin Peters or Alexandra Rijke

Identity, diversity, and senses of belonging

These topics refer to the intense diversification of the population not only in terms of social, economic or ethnic belonging, but more in terms of values, lifestyles and practices. For example, a thesis on these topics may refer to the construction of any form of sense of togetherness, like Dutch, European, youth, migrant, and the processes of marginalization and exclusion.

Supervisor: Ana Aceska, Karolina Doughty, Meghann Ormond, Karin Peters or Alexandra Rijke

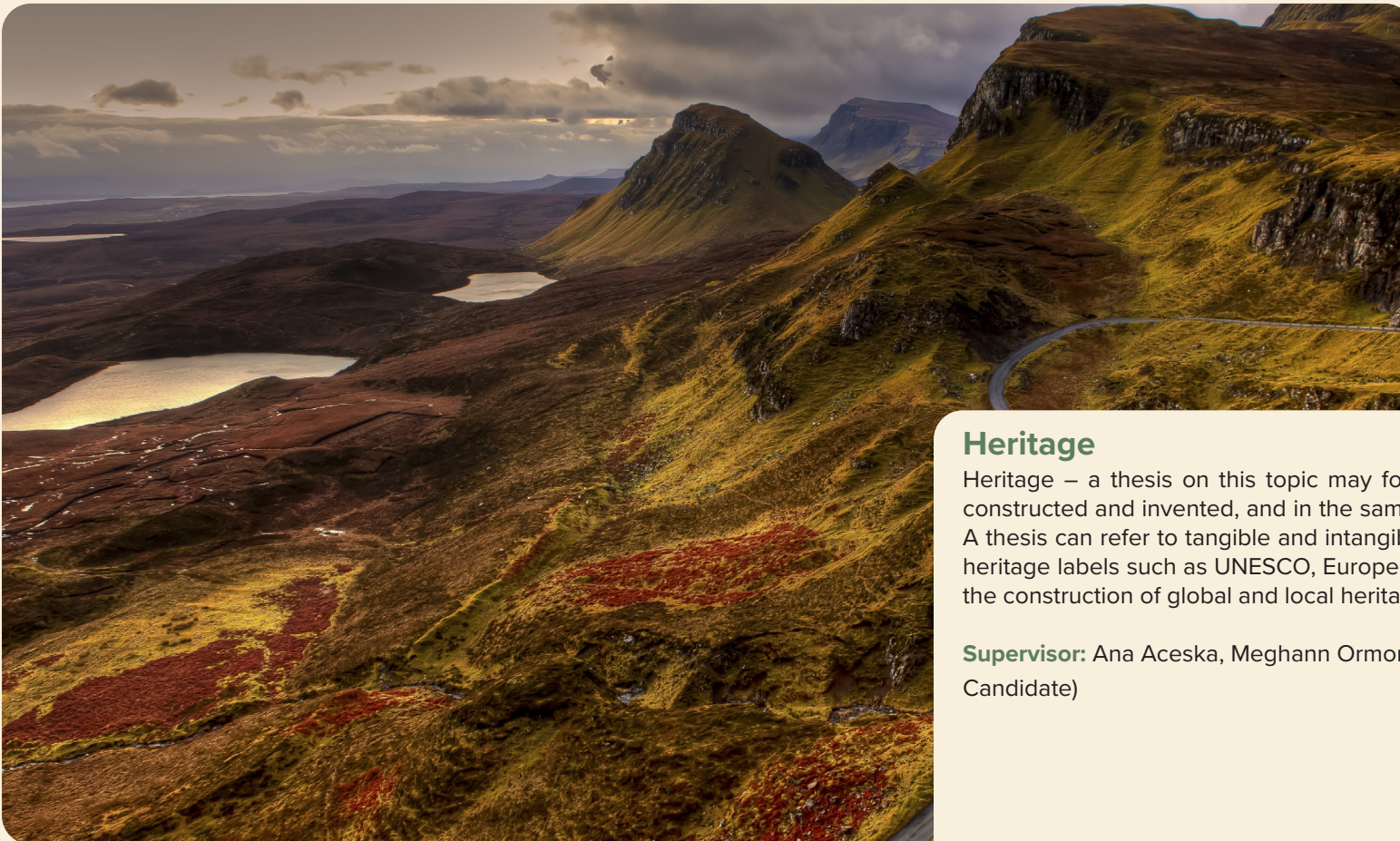


Emotions towards landscape heritage

Emotions are a fundamental and inseparable component of our cognition, underpinning our thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, and actions and giving insight into how people make sense of their environments. Thesis projects under this theme could focus on the diverse ways emotional experiences affect and are affected by landscape heritage. Looking into the emotional experiences of landscape heritage is a promising avenue to further understand emotions' significance, relevance, and practical implications and to further understand the meaning and implications of landscape heritage itself. Within this framework, students are encouraged to explore a diverse range of topics related to human emotions and heritage and have the freedom to choose subjects or heritage sites that align with their interests. Some thesis topics could include:

- Variability of emotional experiences and their impact on the perception of landscape heritage
- Integration of emotions in landscape heritage policymaking
- Influence of narratives on the emotional experience of landscape heritage

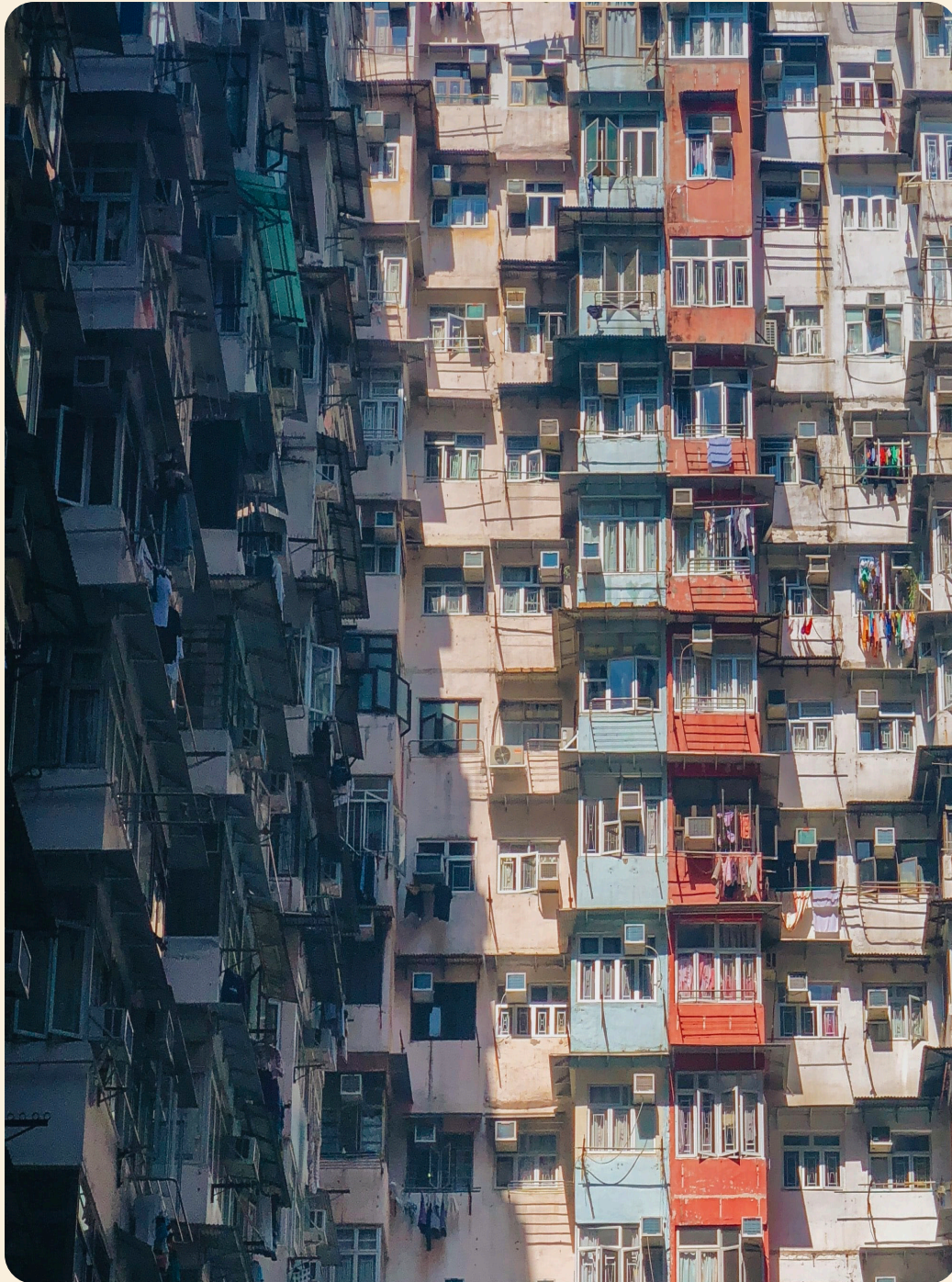
Supervisor: Maria de Wit (PhD Candidate)



Heritage

Heritage – a thesis on this topic may focus on the ways in which heritage can be constructed and invented, and in the same time contested and challenged by others. A thesis can refer to tangible and intangible heritage and it may focus on the various heritage labels such as UNESCO, European Heritage Label or others and their role in the construction of global and local heritage.

Supervisor: Ana Aceska, Meghann Ormond, Alexandra Rijke, or Maria de Wit (PhD Candidate)



Planning and design for urban interspecies play

Urban environments have long been designed and planned as a human habitat, targeted to meet their needs and demands. With a growing attention to urban biodiversity, ecologists, architects and planners have also started to take into account the interests of urban wildlife, which resulted in adapting cities to non-human residents by means of green walls and roofs, animal passages etc. (see Vollaard's 'Making Urban Nature' 2017 for more examples). However, in many cases, planning and design for humans is performed separately from planning and design for animals, and the interactions that result might be uncontrollable or unpleasant. Drawing inspiration from the theory on ludic city by Quentin Stevens, which puts forward play as an important aspect of urban experience, this thesis project aims to explore possibilities for design of playful interactions between human and non-human city residents. The prospective student will investigate the existing ways in which humans and wildlife might be engaging in playful interactions by considering the following questions: is the play mutual and/or beneficial for both sides? which material/cultural/political conditions make the play possible? In the end, the student will propose ways/design solutions to encourage mutually beneficial play between different species in the urban environment.

Supervisor: Clemens Driessen

Urban design and in/exclusion

Thesis projects under this theme will focus on diverse ways in which urban design and/or planning can work towards inclusion and/or exclusion. Students are stimulated to look critically at urban architecture and planning and assess who is being designed for and who is not. More specifically, theses may focus on topics such as hostile architecture, gentrification, and purification in a Dutch or international context.

Supervisor: Karin Peters or Alexandra Rijke

Landscape history and heritage

Landscapes change continuously and over varying temporal and spatial scales. Unraveling the processes and controls behind these changes is essential in order to understand the structure and history of the present-day landscape. This is especially important because strong links exist between landscape character, heritage, and feelings of local and regional identity – which in turn are vital in future landscape development, tourism, and planning. Within the Cultural Geography Group, we work on landscape history and heritage from various interrelated angles and disciplines (e.g. landscape archaeology, historical geography, cultural geography), as well as on a wide variety of topics. Currently we mainly work on wetland environments. We especially welcome topics relating to (1) past human responses to environmental challenges and opportunities in wetland ecosystems, (2) material and immaterial cultural heritage in such landscapes and what they teach us and (3) which environmental and societal threats they are facing.

Suggested literature:

Wollentz, G., van Beek, R., Bønnelycke, C., Dugstad, S. A., Mortensen, M. F., Koivisto, S., ... Groß, D. (2025). Lolland's changing landscapes: insights from long-term interactions between people and the environment. *Landscape Research*, 1–24. [Link](#)

Paulissen, M., & van Beek, R. (2024). Bridging Natural and Cultural Heritage Management: Recommendations for Present and Former Raised Bog Areas. *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 15(2), 195–220. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Roy van Beek



Green and just cities

This thesis topic deals with the ways in which cities are preparing for the future. The city of the future is one that is to be green, diverse, circular, and climate resilient. This topic emphasizes that cities also have a history that needs to be negotiated through when implementing these future visions. Thereby a thesis in this topic will research people's perception and understandings of history and cultural heritage in the city and relate those findings to policy and planning allowing for the co-creation of future green and just cities.

Supervisor: Karin Peters



Queer(y)ing Tourism

Much of the research on tourism fails to question heteronormative and human- and capitalist-centred assumptions. Using a queer ecology lens informed by queer theory, environmental justice, and diverse economies, in this thesis project, students will examine tourist practices of organising human and nonhuman space, time and labour while exploring negotiations of intersecting power dynamics of nature, sexuality, class and subjectivity. This intersectional analysis opens up questions that challenge binary ideas of nature, economy and tourist and leisure practices, offering possibilities for reimagining tourism that foster more socio-ecologically just relationships.

Supervisor: Chizu Sato

Mobility, bordering, & ordering/ othering

In a time of large refugee streams, a rise in popularity of border walls, travel bans and continuous ordering/othering practices within societies, there is an urgent need for critical perspectives that consider how people are forging alternative ways in which to respond to fortified borders and oppositions created between 'us' and 'them'. Thesis projects under this theme address the different levels of freedom of movement as experienced in urban contexts and peripheries by people on the move and expressed in architecture, bordering practices and othering. Examples of topics are:

- Border walls and border crossings
- Refugee mobilities
- Refugee experiences within host societies/asylum centres
- Ordering/Othering
- Mobility regimes expressed in architecture in urban contexts or border areas.

Supervisor: Karin Peters or Alexandra Rijke





What does 'freedom' mean to you?

How we each might respond to this question is very personal – it's based on people's diverse array of privileges and positions within the societies in which they live. Wageningen is well-known throughout the Netherlands as the site of the country's liberation from Nazi occupation, with the capitulation by the German forces being signed at the Hotel De Wereld on 5 May 1945. Today, it's promoted as the City of Liberation, with many events organised around the 5th May Liberation Day anniversary, the Vrijheidskwartier, museum exhibitions and tours that highlight the city's Second World War heritage in enabling the country's freedom from the Nazi regime's oppression. Your thesis can contribute to enhancing our new Freedom Tours Wageningen initiative, which aims to offer a set of co-created interactive guided walking tour routes in Wageningen that - by expanding engagement with the concept and scope of 'freedom' in the past, present and future - build on the important work already being done to honor the city's Second World War heritage. The tour routes, developed and led by Wageningen residents with diverse backgrounds, will promote awareness of the complexities of freedom and how these are negotiated, highlighting both challenges and local initiatives working to ensure and advance the rights and liberties of Wageningen's diverse residents in inclusive ways. Given contemporary tensions both around the globe and at home that are putting our freedoms in jeopardy, tour routes are timely contributions to Wageningen's heritage offerings to help participants – school children, residents and visitors alike – learn about, reflect on freedom and familiarize themselves with initiatives and tools to take action to protect and advance it.

Supervisor: Meghann Ormond



Caring Economies: Tourism, Community, and Rural Well-Being

In many countries, rural populations have been rapidly shrinking and ageing. It is not clear what will happen to the environments created by the interactions of these rural human populations with their environment and other species that live with them. Tourism has been identified and used as one strategy to strengthen the relationships of mutual care that constitute socially, spiritually and ecologically sustainable rural areas. In this thesis project, students will examine relationships between urban tourists and/or the tourist industry and the embodied meaning of good life that emerges from forms of tourism designed to strengthen caring relationships in rural areas. Suggested theories (but not limited to these) are community economies, feminist political ecology, and more-than-human commoning. Students are strongly encouraged to find a case study that speaks well to them on their own.

Suggested literature:

Nakamura, N., & Sato, C. (2023). More-than-human commoning through women's kokorozashi business for collective well-being: A case from aging and depopulating rural Japan. *International Journal of the Commons*, 17(1), 125–140.

Sato, C. (2025). Preliminary notes towards caring economies: Postcapitalist feminist political ecology strategies. 経済社会とジェンダ [Journal of Feminist Economics Japan], 10, 4-31.

Supervisor: Chizu Sato

Moral emotions, national apologies and the slavery past

Are you interested in research on relationships between slavery past and race bias in contemporary society, thus making a contribution toward inclusive societies? And are you interested in applying an experimental and quantitative research strategy to a sensitive topic, and doing research in the context of an ongoing collaborative research program? The topic of the past and its ongoing impact is of increasing contemporary significance. Apologies for the Netherlands' role in slavery has been offered by the Mayor of Amsterdam Femke Halsema (1 July 2022), Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (19 December 2022) and the Dutch King Willem Alexander (1 July 2023). In addition a number of municipalities have also offered apologies as have international (banking) institutions that profited from the slave trade. What are the moral emotions associated with these apologies and are these moral emotions shared across the general populace? Specifically, as topic you can examine whether different stories on the slavery past have different effects on moral emotions (i.e. emotions related to questions of what is good or bad) and attitudes toward interventions related to the slavery past (e.g. national apology, reparations, and national commemoration). If you feel happy about working within a broad theoretical framework, want to make a contribution to an important societal debate and combining a critical social science perspective with experimental methodologies, please contact us.

Suggested literature:

Adu-Ampong, E. A. (2023). The embodied absence of the past: Slavery heritage and the transformative memory work of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101. [Link](#)

Lopez, C., & Márquez, M. G. (2021) Proud but ashamed: narratives and moral emotions about the troubled national past in Spain. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 27(2), 200-215.

Craemer, T. (2009). Psychological 'self–other overlap' and support for slavery reparations. *Social Science Research*, 38(3), 668-680.

Nawijn, J., & Biran, A. (2019). Negative emotions in tourism: A meaningful analysis. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(19), 2386-2398.

Supervisors: Emmanuel Adu-Ampong, Maarten Jacobs & Jeroen Nawijn (Breda University of Applied Sciences)



Farmers decision-making towards Functional Agrobiodiversity (FAB)

This thesis topic explores how farmers make decisions about implementing biodiversity measures, specifically Functional Agrobiodiversity (FAB). Hereby you can think of e.g. field margins that increase biodiversity in agricultural areas, but at the same time they provide ecosystem services to farmers, like pollination and pest control. It is however not clear how the decision-making process takes place and who is involved within and beyond the farm. Understanding these processes could help to implement biodiversity measures more smoothly and effectively in the future.

This thesis topic suitable if you have an interest in agriculture and biodiversity protection, and are excited to do interviews on location with farmers. Good proficiency of the Dutch language is necessary since the case study will be in the Netherlands. If you are interested in the topic but you are not sure if you have a suitable background, you are more than welcome to reach out. I always appreciate new, creative perspectives.

Suggested literature:

Maskell, L. C., Radbourne, A., Norton, L. R., Reinsch, S., Alison, J., Bowles, L., Geudens, K., & Robinson, D. A. (2023). Functional Agro-Biodiversity: An Evaluation of Current Approaches and Outcomes. *Land*, 12(11), 2078. [Link](#)

Bianchi, F. J. J. A., Mikos, V., Brussaard, L., Delbaere, B., & Pulleman, M. M. (2013). Opportunities and limitations for functional agrobiodiversity in the European context. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 27, 223–231. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Antonia Purrmann (PhD Candidate)

Participatory co-design of landscapes, foodscapes, and urban environments - An immersive technologies approach

Collaborative spatial planning is an inclusive approach to co-designing and co-managing land use and development by engaging multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes. It brings together governments, communities, businesses, and other interest groups to ensure that diverse perspectives and needs are considered. This approach emphasizes transparency, dialogue, and shared goals, fostering cooperation in addressing complex spatial challenges like urban growth, environmental conservation, and infrastructure development. By incorporating local knowledge alongside scientific data, collaborative spatial planning creates solutions that are more equitable, sustainable, and reflective of community values. A key benefit of collaborative spatial planning is its ability to balance competing interests and resolve conflicts over land use. For instance, it can help mediate between economic development goals and environmental preservation efforts, creating strategies that support both priorities. The process encourages long-term thinking and adaptability, as stakeholders collectively envision future scenarios and develop plans to address uncertainties like climate change or shifting demographics. Ultimately, collaborative spatial planning builds trust and accountability among stakeholders, leading to more resilient and widely supported outcomes for land use and resource management. Immersive technologies and advances in 3D modeling provide researchers, policy-makers, and stakeholders with a new opportunity to integrate place-like experiences into co-design and decision making processes.

Suggested literature:

Dane, G., Evers, S., van den Berg, P., Klippel, A., Verduijn, T., Wallgrün, J. O., & Arentze, T. (2024). Experiencing the future: Evaluating a new framework for the participatory co-design of healthy public spaces using immersive virtual reality. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 114, 102194. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Alexander Klippel

The power of visions and imagined futures in spatial planning and design

A few years ago, landscape architects from Wageningen University published a vision for the Netherlands in 2120. It received national and international attention and sparked debates about how to live more sustainably and including nature. In this thesis project you study the roles long-term visions, like these, play and could play in society. You will study how collective visions, visualisations, and expectations for the long-term function as productive fictions: although they can never predict the future, they can sort all kinds of reality effects on the present. They can co-shape a desirable, undesirable, utopian or dystopian future, they can be used to persuade certain groups to think differently or help to implement or legitimise certain policies. Also, they can depoliticise governance, help us to rethink taken for granted problems or to include, exclude communities and so on. To get a better understanding in how visions and imagined futures can be useful and effective in spatial planning and landscape architecture you will study the roles of visions and visualisations of the future in shaping the present. Case studies in can be chosen on the local, regional, national or global scale.

Suggested literature:

van de Mosselaer, F., & Duineveld, M. (2021). Strategic openings: On the productivity of blended long-term perspectives in spatial strategy. A Dutch case study. *Futures*, 130, 102752. [Link](#)

Anderson, B. (2010). Preemption, precaution, preparedness: Anticipatory action and future geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(6), 777-798. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Martijn Duineveld



Futuring Dutch Landscape - Emotional Connections, Values, and Platial Entanglements

No one can foresee the future, but we can create models based on scientific insights that allow us to predict what the future could look like. In some cases, for example, in Urban Planning, we can create precise models, for other environments, such as rewilding projects, some uncertainties remain. In this master thesis project, we are working with visions/models created for Dutch sandy soil environments as part of the CASTOR project. Castor is Latin for beaver. Beavers, like humans, transform land and water systems in river landscapes. CASTOR investigates realistic future landscape configurations, and pathways towards these futures. Pathways towards future landscapes are relevant because current well-intended management actions result in patchworks of interventions. Yet, fragmentation – spatial, temporal and in governance – constrain adaptive capacity, restricting responses to climate change and shifting societal demands. By offering actionable knowledge on future landscapes and pathways towards these future landscapes, CASTOR supports regional adaptation strategies. Because landscape futures are shaped by natural physical processes in interaction with human interventions, CASTOR takes a learning approach – in living labs. Together with WANDER, we have taken the approach of understanding and communicating future landscapes further and have created realistic immersive experiences of the potential pathways. By providing stakeholders with an experiential toolkit we are able to ground communication and understanding of pathways to future landscapes as place-based settings. Stakeholders can jointly experience different pathways into different landscape futures such as an energy landscape, a food landscape, or a rewilding landscape. Providing experiential access to these future landscapes allows for enriching academic discussions about landscapes futures with personalized perceptions of place and emotional responses across different stakeholders. We are looking for a student interested in developing a better understanding of how to measure emotional responses to future landscapes, understanding of how and whether immersive experiences are able to reduce the psychological distance to future landscapes, and which role emotions and place-entanglements play in grounding discussions and decision-making of how a landscape should develop.

Suggested literature:

Chandler, T., Richards, A. E., Jenny, B., Dickson, F., Huang, J., Klippel, A., . . . Prober, S. M. (2022). Immersive landscapes: modelling ecosystem reference conditions in virtual reality. *Landscape Ecology*, 37(5), 1293–1309. [Link](#)

Supervisors: Alexander Klippel & Simona Pedde (SGL)

Media, tourism and heritage

Why do people travel to a destination after seeing it in a movie? How do heritage and tourism institutions incorporate popular culture in their strategies and practices? In what ways do communities perceive, challenge and subvert media, tourism and/or heritage discourses? This thesis topic invites students to critically explore the multiple intersections between the media, tourism and heritage industries, taking into account the various stakeholders involved, e.g. media producers, fans/tourists, governments, tourism and heritage professionals, local communities, etc.

Thesis topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Film, music or literary tourism;
- Popular culture and heritage;
- Place-making strategies;
- Media representation and place identity;
- Community-based media, tourism and/or heritage initiatives;
- Community perceptions of media, tourism and/or heritage discourses and practices.

Students are encouraged to use qualitative methods, such as discourse and content analysis, interviews and (digital) ethnography.

Suggested literature:

Póvoa, D., Reijnders, S., & Martens, E. (2021). A Brazilian Hollywood in the making? Film, tourism and creative city discourse in the hinterland of Paraíba. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(5), 691-706. [Link](#)

Schiavone, R., Reijnders, S., & Brandellero, A. (2022). 'Beneath the storyline': Analysing the role and importance of film in the preservation and development of Scottish heritage sites. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28(10), 1107–1120. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Débora Póvoa (Postdoc)



Heritage, diaspora and roots tourism: geographies of heritage, identity and transnational citizenship in Ghana

Since independence in 1957, Ghana has consistently touted itself as the homeland for the African diaspora. This transnational identity is built on the tangible – slave castles, forts and lodges – as well as the intangible heritage – oral history, transnational knowledge and memory – left behind from the period of the slave trade. Ultimately, Ghana's main goal in linking the heritage of slavery to national and transnational African identity is to ensure that Africans in the Diaspora return 'home' either as temporal but regular visitors – tourists – or as permanent settlers in order to contribute to the economic development of the country. It is however unclear how this process of diaspora return unfold and the challenges involved in resettlements. With over 500 years of history, the various castles in Ghana evoke differing emotions, meanings and interpretation for different categories of people. A MSc thesis project could focus on:

- the kind of discourses and interpretations of slavery heritage provided through roots tourism.
- ethics, authenticity, commemoration and commodification of culture and slavery heritage.
- diasporan return and resettlement, in particular the social meanings of transatlantic Black identities and 'homecoming'.

Suggested literature:

Adu-Ampong, E. A., & Dillette, A. (2023). Commemoration and commodification: slavery heritage, Black travel and the #YearofReturn2019 in Ghana. *Tourism Geographies*, 1-20. [Link](#)

Yankholmes, A., & Timothy, D. J. (2017). Social distance between local residents and African–American expatriates in the context of Ghana's slavery-based heritage tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 19(5), 486-495. [Link](#)

Dillette, A. (2021). Roots tourism: A second wave of double consciousness for African Americans. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(2-3), 412-427. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Emmanuel Adu-Ampong

Migration, tourism and the politics of cultural heritage

Throughout much of the world, migrants have been sorely misrepresented, under-represented or entirely overlooked in dominant, authorised historical and heritage discourse at both local and national levels. Thesis projects related to this theme examine how tourism, another form of cross-border mobility significant to all the places and peoples it touches, has long been instrumental in this repression but also how it can be used to bring about change. What are the differences between history and heritage, and how have traditionally marginalised peoples struggled for their memories, spaces and experiences to be included in official historical narratives and heritage practices? How has tourism specifically been used to support and reify dominant historical narratives and heritage practices, overshadowing a plurality of co-existing yet less visible ones? What's the role of the conventional travel guidebook in essentialising and fixing people and cultures in time and space to facilitate tourist consumption and political objectives? How has tourism contributed both to migrants' exoticisation and to the de-territorialisation and commoditisation of migrant political and cultural heritage? Finally, with a more hopeful take on tourism's productive potential, how can its embodied, experiential and place-based nature be harnessed to facilitate contact with and openness to difference/ the Other, multi-perspectivity and transformative learning?

Supervisor: Meghann Ormond

Crossing borders: the emotional geographies of labor at the intersection of migration and tourism

In 2019, approximately 3.5% of the world's population crossed borders as international migrants (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou 2021). In the same year, 1.5 billion people, thus almost 20% of the global population, also travelled across borders but as international tourists (UNWTO 2024). Migration and tourism intersect in multiple ways at many tourism destinations, to the extent that Salazar's (2020, p. 141) questioned: 'What would tourism be without migration?' and 'What would migration be without tourism?'. While both border-crossing groups aspire to enrich their lives, they are often labelled differently, with sometimes opposing attributes. The intersection of migration and tourism thus continues to inspire discussions over privilege, belonging, in/exclusion in tourism studies and beyond (see e.g., Bloch and Adams 2022; Duncan et al 2016; Marcher et al. 2020; Salazar 2020). For this thesis project we encourage students to explore the implications for social inclusion and belonging, local livelihoods and collective/community flourishing when migrants become part of tourism's workforce and (new) local residents. To explore this nexus of migration and tourism, we especially encourage research that uses emotional geographies to analyze where, why, and with what emotional lexicon and affective intensity people draw the line between border-crossers and perform practices (in)hospitality.

Supervisors: Chih-Chen Trista Lin





Tourism and sustainable development: re-exploring 50 years of experience

For over 50 years, the sustainable development of tourism has been subject to engaged academic and sector attention. In the Netherlands, a small network of committed frontrunners has actively engaged on this theme in numerous conferences, written reports/publications and sector practices ever since, of which an overview can be found [here](#). Many of these frontrunners are about to - or have recently – retire(d). With the disappearance of these frontrunners, we risk losing valuable expertise. As such there is a need to map lessons learned that may inform current thinking and practices related to tourism and sustainable development.

In this thesis project, one or more students can map out lessons learned over the past 50 years, earmark critical moments on a timeline, and engage with frontrunners through interviews. Students are free to select a theme of interest related to the sustainable development of tourism over time. Themes may include – for instance – CO2 reductions, aviation, development aid, nature conservation, sexual abuse or animal care. Another dimension to consider refers to international events that may have influenced Dutch thinking and practices in the past 50 years, or the (development of) the new [ANVR sustainability vision](#).

Suggested literature:

van der Duim, R., & Keller, E. (2021). Gaan we (nog steeds) te ver? *Vrijetijdstudies*, 39(3), 11-15. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Cheryl van Adrichem (PhD Candidate)

Tourism's role in regional development in the periphery

What are the challenges tourism faces when it is to be developed in peripheral communities? How are these challenges addressed and dealt with so tourism develops for the benefit of the communities involved and the setting in which it is to take place? Tourism is very often presented as the fail-safe way to diversify and develop an economy, as it is seemingly simple to implement with low or non-existent entry barriers for actors. Thesis projects under this topic will explore how tourism appears in policy and governance action for regions suffering decline through dynamics of peripherality.

Supervisor: Chih-Chen Trista Lin

What travel narratives in the 21st century tell us

Over the past 4000 years travelers left us a wide array of their experiences, fascinations and judgements laid down in notes, reports, books, poems, literature, pictures and paintings. All these written and drawn accounts tell us how the collective image of the world came about and how travelers formed their personal relation to the outer world over the ages. Travel implies a distance to the everyday life, habits and environment. Distance implies crossing borders in many respects: geographical (landscape, nature, climate), cultural (language, dress, built environment), physical (life safety, bodily experience, sexuality), time (sense of time, leisure, the past); but also, a consciousness of the incomprehensible greatness of the world and the infinity of the universe, the finiteness of one's own life, too complex to worry about within the daily routines and chores, (see Lengkeek 2022). Travel narratives of the past cover all these issues. Travelers brought their stories about elsewhere and the unknown. Today, the role of narratives seems to be in reverse, the tourism industry employs readymade narratives and images to attract tourists to destinations.

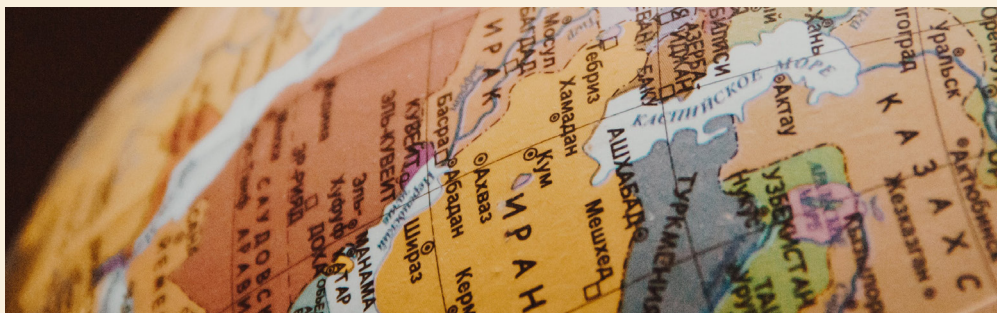
To what extent influence or even define these marketing narratives the personal experiences and reports of tourists?

The project aims to find relevant websites or other sources on social media, where tourists describe their travels. Furthermore, the distinction of relevant categories on the web of travelers (nationality, age, company, ways of travel, special interest tourism etc.). And most important: an analysis of a representative selection of travel narratives according to the issues mentioned above. Finally, comparison of the main issues from the traveler's narratives with marketing stories and images, if possible related to the destinations where the described trips took place.

Suggested literature:

Lengkeek, J. (2022). Het eeuwige leven van reisverhalen. Walburg Pers. (to be translated partially). [Link](#)

Supervisor: Edward H. Huijbens, in collaboration with Jaap Lengkeek



Local government capacity in tourism development policy and planning

The tourism sector is a highly fragmented one with a variety of policy actors playing different roles across varying governing levels. Local tiers of government are increasingly seen as key players in the governance and development of tourism. They are seen as capable of fostering community participation in the decision-making processes of tourism development and also ensure that local people secure positive benefits from the tourism sector.

In many developing countries where tourism is expanding, local governments already struggle to effectively manage local economic development processes. Nonetheless, these local governments are also being called upon to provide governing oversight for tourism development. How are local governments dealing with the new responsibility in coordinating tourism development processes?

A MSc thesis project could focus on:

- An examination of the role of local government in tourism development.
- The use of tourism as a strategy in local economic development planning
- An assessment of institutional capacity of local governments in tourism development and planning

This can be based on review of extensive published literature (on a selected destination) and/or fieldwork in Ghana, Thailand or other destinations.

Suggested literature:

Adu-Ampong, E. A. (2021). Images, instruments and the governance capacity of local governments in tourism development planning. Evidence from Ghana. In Saarinen, J. and Rogerson, J. M. (eds.) *Tourism, Change and the Global South*, Abingdon: Routledge. [Link](#)

Ruhanen, L. (2013). Local government: Facilitator or inhibitor of sustainable tourism development? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 2(1), 80-98. [Link](#)

Churugsa, W., McIntosh, A. J., & Simmons, D. (2007). Sustainable tourism planning and development: Understanding the capacity of local government. *Leisure/Loisir*, 31(2), 453-473. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Emmanuel Adu-Ampong



No Fly Zone: A ‘radical’ agenda for tourism

“Aviation is a big polluter” (Kallbekken & Victor, 2022, p. 673). So, if we want to reach the global goals of stabilising climate change, various socio-economic practices, aviation included, will have to be decarbonised. As such, there is a need to map, understand, and (radically) undo the obstacles for transformative change towards fossil free (alternatives) for aviation. This challenges the technofix and behaviour change discourses that dominate the sustainability agenda within aviation, and it proposes alternatives for long and short distance travels in and beyond tourism. MSc theses could for example focus on the dependency of tourism on aviation, the growth discourse and the degrowth counter discourse, the effects of climate activist campaigns, such as ‘[subvertising](#)’ on tourism and aviation, and much more.

Suggested literature:

Gössling, S., Balas, M., Mayer, M., & Sun, Y.-Y. (2023). A review of tourism and climate change mitigation: The scales, scopes, stakeholders and strategies of carbon management. *Tourism Management*, 95, 104681. [Link](#)

Kallbekken, S., & Victor, D. G. (2022). A cleaner future for flight - aviation needs a radical redesign. *Nature*, 609(7928), 673-675. [Link](#)

Supervisors: Cheryl van Adrichem (PhD Candidate), Bas Amelung (ESA) & Martijn Duineveld, in collaboration with the [Centre for Sustainability, Tourism and Transport](#).



Tourism, cultural memories and the interpretation of slavery and colonial heritage in European cities

In our increasing multicultural societies, the stories we tell of the past can bring us together or pull us further apart. What now counts as heritage is not given but actively produced from the stories from the past that are open to interpretation, misunderstanding and contestations. In a number of major European cities such as Amsterdam, Utrecht, Berlin, Lisbon, Madrid, Barcelona, there are ongoing public debates on how to remember the heritage associated with colonialism and slavery. Increasingly, new forms of tourism practices and performances such as walking tours, public art performances and museum exhibitions are emerging to tell the stories of slavery and colonial heritage in these cities. But how does tourism transform and narrate the past to provide representations that disrupt the cultural memories of slavery and colonial heritage? Which stories are (de)emphasised at such sites and what do visitors think of the stories told? A MSc thesis project could focus on:

- the colonial and slavery era stories that are (re)interpreted and presented on 'free' vs. 'ticketed' guided tours
- the affective responses of tourists to the stories told of colonial and slavery heritage in during tours
- the role of tour guides in generating affective responses of tourists
- the emotional labour of tour guides in (re)interpreting and telling colonial and slavery heritage stories
- the representations of colonial and slavery heritage in national museums such as the Rijksmuseum, the Amsterdam Museum and the Tropenmuseum

This can be based on review of published literature, TripAdvisor Review comments and/or primary fieldwork in any of the major European cities

Suggested literature:

Adu-Ampong, E. A. (2023). The embodied absence of the past: Slavery heritage and the transformative memory work of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101. [Link](#)

Boukhris, L. (2017). The Black Paris project: the production and reception of a counter-hegemonic tourism narrative in postcolonial Paris. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(5), 684-702. [Link](#)

Cain, A. (2015). Slavery and Memory in the Netherlands: Who Needs Commemoration?. *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*, 4(3), 227-242. [Link](#)

Adu-Ampong, E. A., Gootjes, E., Maat, H., & Wijnen, J. (2022). Waarom een confrontatie met ons koloniaal erfgoed onvermijdelijk is. *Oud Wageningen*, 47(2), 22-25. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Emmanuel Adu-Ampong



Human emotions towards wildlife

For various reasons, wildlife raises continuous concerns in society. Many people are interested in wildlife. This interest triggers various types of tourist behaviours, such as safari tourism and whale watching tourism. Wildlife watching is also the most important motive amongst Western people to visit a national park. Wildlife also presents economic concerns such as agricultural damage or revenues from wildlife based tourist industry. Wildlife is relevant to human health and safety, for instance through attacks or zoonotic diseases. And wildlife is important to those who appraise ecosystem integrity.

Emotion is a root cause of human-wildlife relationships. Positive emotions such as joy are crucial for the attraction wildlife presents to humans. And negative emotions such as fear drive many worries and human-wildlife conflicts. Understanding human emotions towards wildlife, then, is a promising avenue to understand the myriad of human-wildlife relationships. This type of knowledge is needed in for instance conservation policy and management or tourism development.

Surprisingly little is known about human emotions towards wildlife. Which emotions do which people feel towards which animals? This broad question allows for a variety of research designs, qualitative and quantitative, as well as contexts, segments of people, and species of wildlife. Similarly, the question how we can explain human emotions towards wildlife (e.g. what mechanisms play a role) merits attention. In addition, the questions what these emotions do, think of explaining conservation support or tourism behaviour, merits attention.

Suggested literature:

Jacobs, M. H. (2009). Why do we like or dislike animals?. *Human dimensions of wildlife*, 14(1), 1-11
[Link](#)

Supervisor: Maarten Jacobs

9000 Pigs – Why humans cannot understand large numbers and what this means for the planet and society

In a recent barn fire, 9000 pigs died. These numbers should be shocking but humans actually fail to understand large numbers. This is a problem because all planetary and many societal challenges can only be solved if we can develop an understanding of large quantities. How do we imagine that there are 269,000 tons of plastic waste floating in the Oceans, that Antarctica sheds an average of 149 billion metric tons of ice per year, that every year about 15 billion trees are cut down, or that there are more than 47 million chicken (poultry) in the Netherlands. In this thesis we are laying the theoretical foundations of these challenges and will develop solutions. While it is not possible to experience large numbers and quantities in the real world, we can create experiences in the virtual world and in doing so turn abstract information into a viscerally accessible format. The literature is full of examples that human's miserably fail to understand large numbers and large quantities. Research did, for example show, that people are able to understand the order of geologic events, but they do not develop an understanding of what it means that millions of years lie between them (Libarkin, Kurdziel, & Anderson, 2007). At the same time, understanding large numbers and quantities is key for success in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, but maybe more importantly, to also develop an understanding of the urgency of planetary and societal challenges. GRS works at the forefront of assessing impact of the Anthropocene on the planet but there are many more examples of large number assessments at WUR. With the developments of high-quality, consumer grade immersive technologies we are now in the position to bridge the gap between abstract large number data assessments and how humans learn and understand efficiently, effectively, and more naturally, that is, through experience. In this project we envision the design of an experiential access to large number / quantities of planetary and societal relevance and to empirically evaluate that modern communication technologies such as virtual reality, can facilitate a deeper understanding of large numbers.

Supervisor: Alexander Klippel





Restorative Environments

Over the past few decades, stress has continued to worsen worldwide and excessive stress can have a negative impact on human health and well-being. This topic focuses on restorative environments, places that help people recover from stress and mental fatigue. Greenspaces, such as forests and parks, are examples of restorative environments that have been linked to the reduction of short-term stress and stress-related illnesses including anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular disease. However, important questions remain: what makes an environment restorative and for whom? This project examines how environmental qualities interact with personal attributes, such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, nature connectedness, and stress level, to shape individuals' restorative experiences. The thesis is open to mixed methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and geospatial approaches.

Supervisor: Katelyn O'Bright (PhD Candidate)

Using augmented reality to create awareness about resources for food production

People are often unaware of how their food is grown, the resources required to produce it, and the relation between food choices and the environment. Research has shown that augmented reality (AR) is a communication medium that has the potential to increase awareness and change behavior in the area of environmental sustainability. We have previously created a handheld AR prototype AwARe that visualizes food resources (animals, feed, crops, water) in one's own kitchen [1]. The kitchen was chosen to achieve strong semantic coupling between the content of the application and place [2]. In this thesis project, we are interested in performing exploratory investigations of the prototype in order to create an improved version that can be used for interventions. Specifically, we would like to know whether/how/why the place in which application is used influences the experience, and whether there are design opportunities to change this experience. Methods can be qualitative and/or quantitative. There is some flexibility in the thesis topic, with opportunities in the direction of immersion, connection with nature, and psychological distance.

References:

[1] N. Rosa, "AwARe: Using handheld augmented reality for researching the potential of food resource information visualization," 2024 IEEE VIS Workshop on Visualization for Climate Action and Sustainability (Viz4Climate + Sustainability), St. Pete Beach, FL, USA, 2024, pp. 10-16. [Link](#)

[2] N. Rosa (2025) Examining semantic coupling in augmented reality. In Proceedings of the ACM EICS 2024 Workshop on Experience 2.0 and Beyond – Engineering Cross Devices and Multiple Realities. ACM (to appear; preprint available [here](#))

Supervisor: Nina Rosa (Postdoc)

The role of agritourism on rural development

In order to diversify income, agricultural producers have since long offered services to tourists. For example, it is a common practice to make camping facilities available on farms (e.g. 'kamperen bij de boer', 'camping à la ferme'). Agritourism has emerged as a serious marketing vehicle in more recent years to offer a holiday experience in rural settings. What are motivations to transform agri-businesses into vacation destinations, and is the term agritourism justified? What are motivations of holiday goers to book these kind of accommodations, and what do they hope to find there?

Supervisor: Marijn Poortvliet



V-CURRENTS: Virtual Collaborative Underwater Realities for Engagement and Novel Teaching Spaces

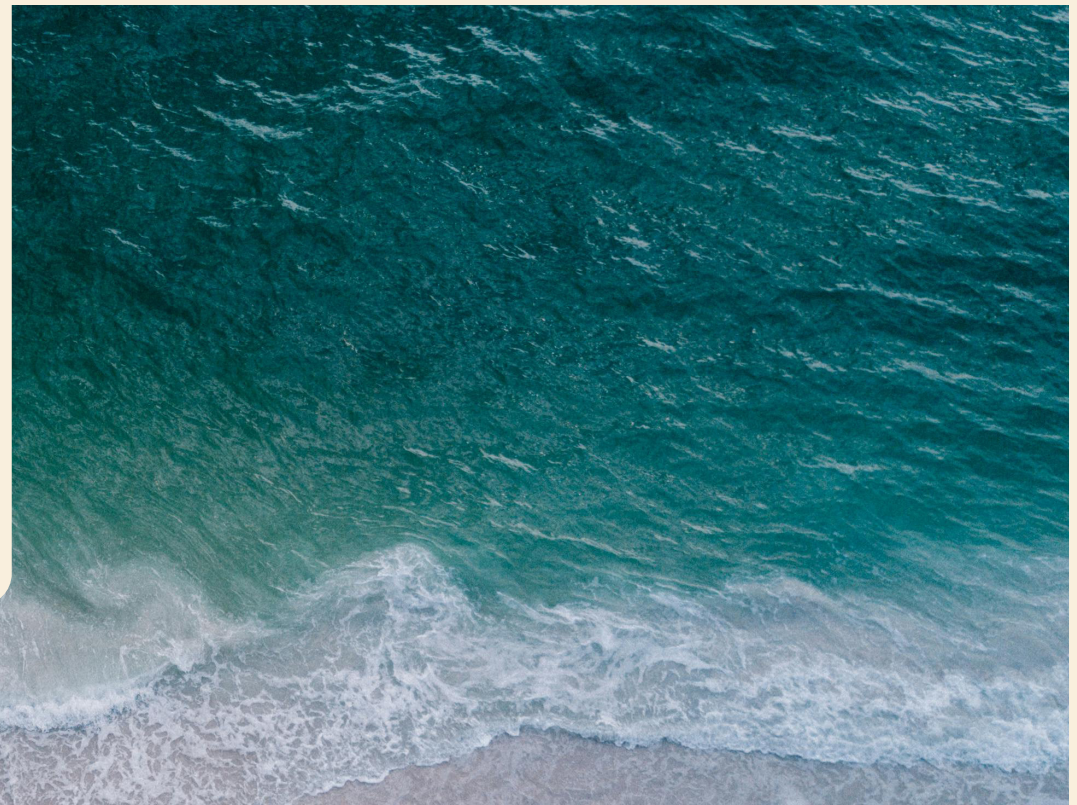
Ocean literacy is essential for fostering a deeper understanding of the ocean's critical role in sustaining life on Earth. It encompasses awareness of how the oceans influence the planet's climate, weather, and ecosystems, as well as how human activities impact marine environments, for example, as part of the energy transition towards renewable sources. By promoting knowledge of ocean processes and their interconnectedness with human health, food security, and economic prosperity, ocean literacy empowers individuals and communities to make informed decisions that support the sustainable use and conservation of marine resources. This is particularly crucial in the face of challenges such as climate change, overfishing, and pollution, which threaten the delicate balance of ocean ecosystems and have resulted in a dramatic loss of biodiversity. Yet, developments such as the energy transition also offer opportunities also for marine ecosystems to flourish and to create new opportunities and spaces for marine fauna and flora. Ocean literacy can inspire stewardship and advocacy for marine environments by highlighting the importance of the ocean in cultural, economic, and scientific contexts. It equips educators, policymakers, and citizens with the tools to address global challenges, from reducing carbon emissions to protecting biodiversity. By fostering a sense of connection to the ocean, ocean literacy encourages actions that benefit both marine ecosystems and future generations. Ultimately, improving ocean literacy is not just about understanding the ocean—it is about fostering a sustainable relationship between humanity and the planet's most vital and expansive resource. Immersive technologies such as virtual reality provide educators, policy-makers, and researchers with an opportunity to paradigmatically change how we learn and communicate about the oceans and advance ocean literacy. Immersive technologies provide place-based education and decision-making even to places that are traditionally not accessible. Adding realistic experiences, interactivity, and collaboration allows for enhancing engagement and connecting people across locations and countries. Immersive experiences can be used in educational settings such as virtual field trips, for training purposes (e.g., diving simulations), for outreach activities and citizen science activities, the visualization of scientific data, or in the context of tourism and recreation.

Supervisors: Alexander Klippel & Tinka Murk (MAE)

Mapping Water Rights in Indigenous Communities

Indigenous-led movements for legal Rights of Rivers, grassroots Water is Life, and adjudicating water and riparian land rights in settler-colonial legacy countries are contemporary trends that function to reindigenize (to protect and restore) holistic river, lake, and groundwater and related ecosystems. To reindigenize landscapes and hydrosapes, Indigenous Communities are creating alliances with scientists, practioners, lawyers, policy-makers, and a host of activist allies in the grassroots and NGO/not-for-profit industrial complex. These movements employ sophisticated and simple tools to include treaties, lawsuits, countermaps, art, negotiated agreements with governments and extractive industries, and land and water management plans. The prospective student(s) will investigate these trends across continents through community countermaps, storytelling, literature, multi-media platforms, and interviews. The resulting research can be useful in understanding the extent of Indigenous-led Movements water rights and how these movements may be transforming and resisting climate changes.

Supervisors: Edward Huijbens & Jennifer Veilleux

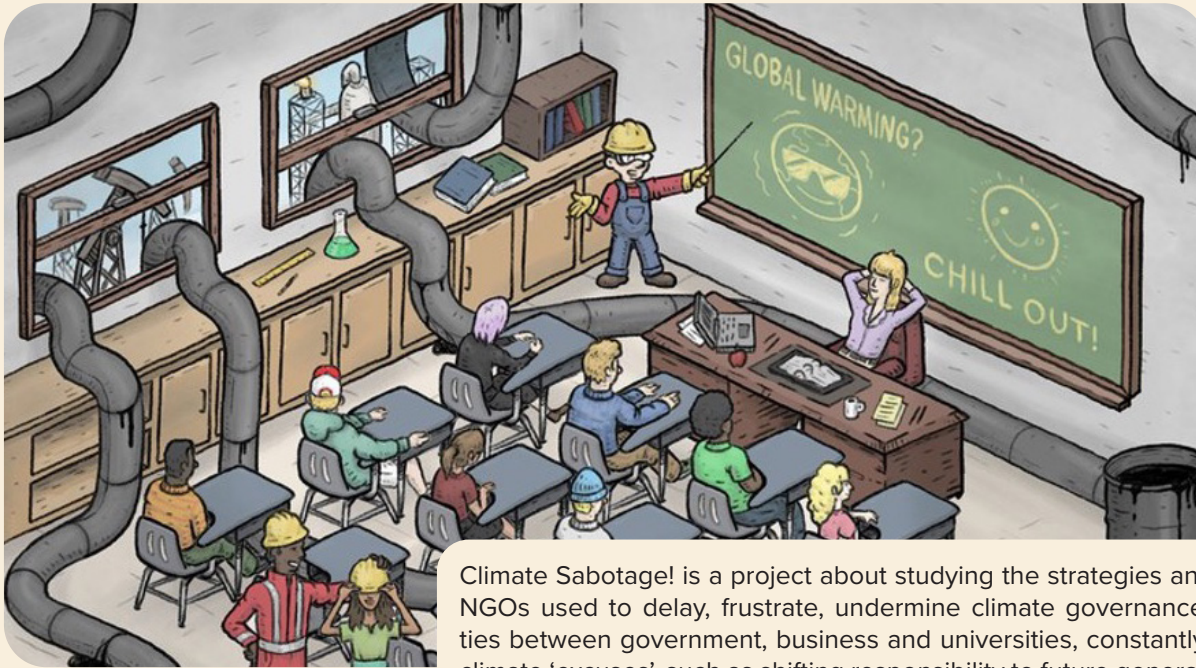


Coastal Delta Communities' Responses to Climate Change

Come join an international team focused on researching coastal communities' responses to environmental disruption. We focus on estuaries and deltas of freshwater and saltwater interactions creating dynamic and complex human and more-than-human communities, where relationships and lifeways are increasingly under threat by environmental disruption. These are dynamic spaces experiencing intensive and subtle alterations due to climate change are home to close to half of the global human population and support some of the oldest community-shaped traditions and relationships. The intricate systems of everyday living in coastal deltas are rich and diverse. The communities engage in lifeways connected to agriculture, fishing, travel and navigation, energy, hunting, tourism, art and craft, import/export, boating, and innovation. Our team is examining how the relationships these communities currently enjoy through their everyday are at risk of altering significantly to the point of being unrecognizable due to the changes in sea-level, intensified storms, salinization of soils, flood, drought, and economically- or politically- related changes in response to these natural phenomena. The prospective student will be interested to contribute to this ongoing work and be open to using traditional and new research methods to better measure community-level responses. If you have a background in or just an interest in learning more about how to create maps, conduct network analysis, build storymaps, conduct ethnographies or communication analysis to better understand everyday climate resistance/adaptations, conduct policy analysis, engage in slow and intentional research processes with communities, co-design research with communities, discover geographic drift, employ auto photography and other art-based research methods, or want to bring your unique research approaches to this work, please join us. We are currently working in the Wadden Sea, Long Island Sound, and the Gulf of Mexico.

Supervisor: Jennifer Veilleux





Climate Sabotage! (In the City / By Big Agro / Within Tourism / In the fields of planning and design)

How big business and related actors frustrate and delay effective climate governance and action and how to undo this.

Climate Sabotage! is a project about studying the strategies and tactics of urban companies, governmental organizations, politics, and NGOs used to delay, frustrate, undermine climate governance and action. This includes greenwashing, lobbying, maintaining close ties between government, business and universities, constantly producing and reproducing misinformation about climate change and climate 'excuses', such as shifting responsibility to future generations, to other countries, and being overly optimistic about and investing in the promise offered by CO₂ removal and storage and other (sometimes) misleading technofixes. Scientists refer to these practices as "climate obstruction." It involves the intentional strategies and tactics to hinder or obstruct policies and actions that align with the current scientific consensus on what is necessary to prevent dangerous human impacts on the climate system. The project looks at and analyses the different obstructions and/or can also focus on countering obstruction, like the fossil ad ban currently gaining traction in cities. This project is especially relevant for constructive-critical students, who like to make a difference for a more climate-just and sustainable society. And if you now think: 'using the word 'sustainability' is often part of the problem', you are the person fit for the project.

Suggested literature:

Kohl, U., & Andersen, J. (2022). Copenhagen's struggle to become the world's first carbon neutral capital: How corporatist power beats sustainability. *Urban Planning*, 7(3), 230-241. [Link](#)

Ekberg, K., Forchtner, B., Hultman, M., & Jylhä, K. (2023). *Climate obstruction: how denial, delay and inaction are heating the planet*. Routledge. [Link](#)

Plets, G., & Kuijt, M. (2022). Gas, Oil and Heritage Well-oiled Histories and Corporate Sponsorship in Dutch Museums (1990-2021). *BMGN - the Low Countries Historical Review*, 137(1), 50-77. [Link](#)

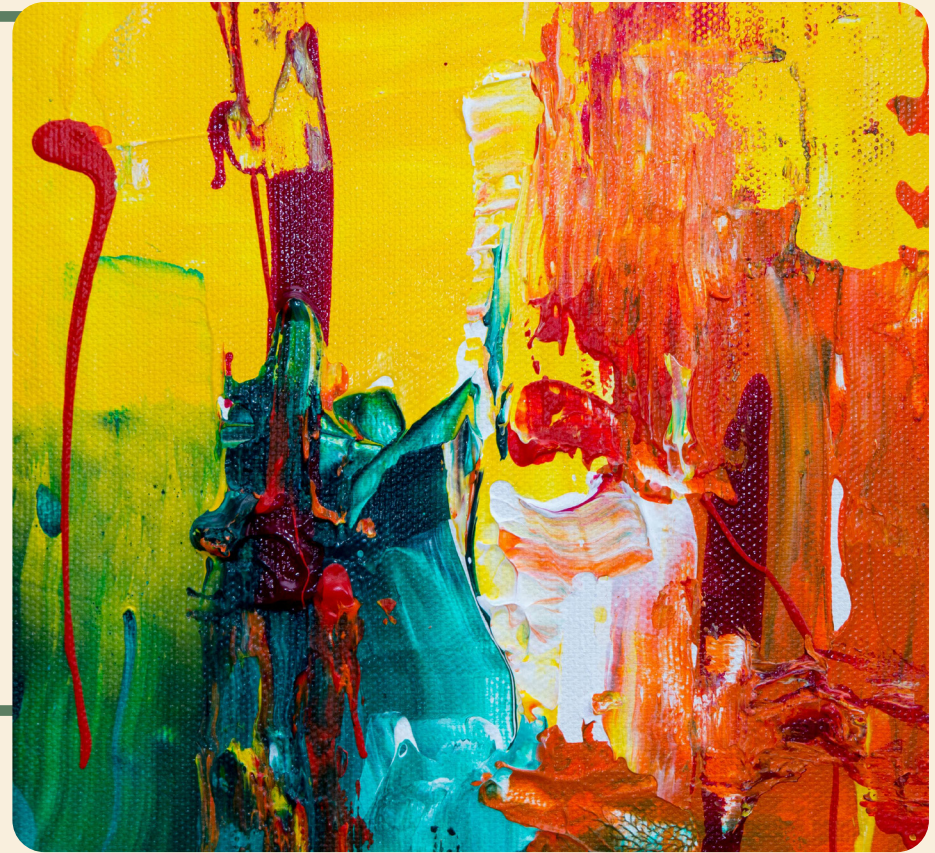
Brulle, R. J. (2020). *Denialism: organized opposition to climate change action in the United States*. In Handbook of US environmental policy (pp. 328-341). Edward Elgar Publishing. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Martijn Duineveld

Art in Climate Change (and other Environmental Concerns)

Art as a form of storytelling can transcend language, is subjective, and can reflect values and challenges of an era, such as the lived and felt experiences of major Earth concerns related to climate change, biodiversity loss, changing food and water systems. Artists, art collectives, museums, galleries, and other platforms sometimes collaborate with scientists and educators that support and promote art organize exhibitions, artwork, films, performance centering climate change. Re-experiencing climate change through art can offer fresh perspectives for scientists and the general public, and can be cathartic for communities experiencing loss or individuals experiencing anxiety related to climate changes. Along with fostering healing and processing of experiences, art can also visualize scientific findings, educate the public, and highlight hope and unity. There are many opportunities to research how art is used to elevate and foster discussions on climate change and help communities engage with experiences of environmental disruption related to climate changes such as floods, storms, coastal landloss. Social art about climate change can also center people and species that are strategically marginalized from climate change or social inclusion narratives. The prospective student will design research that considers some aspects of this use of art as communication, expression, social movement, museum-based education, collaboration with scientists and employ data collection and analysis using interdisciplinary methods.

Supervisors: Clemens Driessen & Jennifer Veilleux



Art in Climate Obstruction

Climate obstruction is phrase that describes the intentional acts taken by extractive industry and fossil-fuel positive policy-makers to delay and even deny climate change related policy and societal changes. The use of art in climate obstruction is found in advertising campaigns to include films, music, still photography... The prospective student would work on analyzing previous greenwashing propaganda campaigns effectiveness and how some of those lessons learned and being used today to promote climate changing industries. The research will seek to understand what marketing firms are involved, how climate obstruction narratives are being cultivated, how this may be found and reflected in policy (ex. clean coal).

Supervisors: Martijn Duineveld & Jennifer Veilleux





Exploring Risk Perception and Communication in Virtual Reality

Virtual reality (VR) has become a transformative tool for simulating real-world environments, offering immersive, interactive experiences that can replicate complex scenarios. This thesis explores the intersection of risk perception and communication within virtual environments, focusing on how individuals perceive and respond to simulated risks and how VR can be utilized to improve the communication of those risks.

Risk perception—the way people interpret the likelihood and severity of potential hazards—is critical to decision-making and behavior in emergencies. VR provides a unique opportunity to study this phenomenon in a safe, controlled setting. By immersing individuals in realistic yet consequence-free risk scenarios, researchers can analyze how environmental factors, emotional responses, and cognitive biases shape their judgments and actions.

This research also investigates the potential of VR to enhance risk communication, particularly in fields like disaster preparedness, public health, and occupational safety. How can immersive simulations make abstract risks more tangible, improve comprehension, and encourage proactive behavior? The study aims to answer these questions by designing VR scenarios that test the effectiveness of various communication strategies.

The findings of this work have far-reaching implications, from improving emergency training to designing VR systems that foster better understanding and preparation for real-world risks. Join me in exploring how VR can revolutionize how we perceive and respond to risks.

Supervisors: Alexander Klippel & Marijn Poortvliet



Risk communication through museums, places and experiences

Risk communication is often done by means of websites, written material or personal communication. However, environmental risks (climate-related, flood, etc.) are abstract and not directly visible. One promising avenue is a more experiential way of performing risk communication by means of museum exhibitions, of visiting risk-related sites. This project will investigate this mode of risk communication: are immersive experiences effective in attaining risk communication goals?

Supervisor: Marijn Poortvliet

Climate risk assessment and response in tourism

The risks of climate change (e.g. heatwaves, forest fires, sea level rises) for tourism, as well as the sector's own contribution to these risks through the emission of greenhouse gasses are indicated to be well understood. Yet, "no country, no destination, and no sub-sector have achieved meaningful reductions in tourism greenhouse gas emissions" (TPCC, 2023, p. 2). As a result, tourism is exposed and vulnerable to climate risks resulting from physical climate hazards as well as the transition to a low-carbon economy. A MSc thesis could explore how and why tourism stakeholders act and respond toward climate risks in the way that they do. Potential topics could be:

- Climate risk assessment in tourism (e.g. expanding, finetuning, testing and/or the [CLIMARISKSCAN](#))
- Barriers and enablers of climate action in tourism (e.g. risk perception, governance structures, tourism institutional structures, knowledge, climate obstruction)
- Solution space* (IPCC, 2022) in tourism (e.g. climate urgency and climate action acceleration)

**defined by the IPCC as the space within which opportunities and constraints determine why, how, when and who adapts to climate risks*

Suggested literature:

Stoddard, I., Anderson, K., Capstick, S., Carton, W., Depledge, J., Facer, K., Gough, C., Hache, F., Hoolohan, C., Hultman, M., Hällström, N., Kartha, S., Klinsky, S., Kuchler, M., Lövbrand, E., Nasiritousi, N., Newell, P., Peters, G. P., Sokona, Y., . . . Williams, M. (2021). Three Decades of Climate Mitigation: Why Haven't We Bent the Global Emissions Curve? *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 46, pp. 653-689.

[Link](#)

TPCC. (2023). *Tourism and Climate Change Stocktake 2023*.

Supervisors: Cheryl van Adrichem (PhD Candidate) & Harald Buijtendijk (Breda University of Applied Sciences)



Tourism and the wellbeing/wellness

Wellness tourism may be considered one of the most ancient forms of tourism, if one thinks back to the importance of health and wellbeing in the leisure activities of the ancient Romans and Greeks; the quests for spiritual enlightenment by Medieval pilgrims; and more recently the medical seaside and spa tourism of the 19th and early 20th century European elite. Although the pursuit of physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing has long had a place in tourism, it may be argued that there has been an intensification in the pursuit of wellness in the history of tourism in recent years.

A thesis project on this topic could investigate a broad range of issues, for example:

- The creation of wellness-themed touristic spaces
- 'Therapeutic landscapes' in tourism, e.g. natural or historic sites associated with wellbeing
- The cultivation of specific curative or restorative practices
- How particular sensory experiences or atmospheres contribute to the production of wellbeing
- Performances and experiences of wellness/wellbeing amongst tourists
- Wellbeing and quality of life amongst tourism workers or the receiving community
- The diversity of experiences, capacities, positionalities, and power relations of different bodies (e.g. gendered, racialized, fat) within touristic spaces of wellness.

Supervisor: Karolina Doughty



Music and sound in tourism environments

Music, and non-musical sound, is an emerging area of research focus for tourism studies. The ubiquitous presence of music across the spaces and situations of tourism (as well as everyday life) makes it a fruitful terrain for exploring the constitution, maintenance, and regulation of the nature of a range of social situations in tourism. If we tune our analytical attention into the aural background of tourism spaces, what might this bring to our understanding of the multi-sensory nature of the tourist experience? Or what role does sound and/or music play in processes of (touristic) place-making? For instance, in terms of destination development, place branding, or as part of an emerging focus on the senses in the staging of tourism spaces. A thesis on this topic could explore for instance; sound installation art, public forms of music-making such as busking, community music projects, or encounters with music (in everyday public spaces, or in specific venues or contexts). A thesis could also focus on sounds beyond what we call music, asking how non-musical sounds impact on meanings and uses of space, or how different people negotiate different types of sonic environments. The possibilities are wide-ranging for exploring this emerging and exciting topic in more depth.

Supervisor: Karolina Doughty

Ageing, disability and mobility

People with disabilities make up 15% of the world's population. The European Union alone counts more than 80 million inhabitants living with a registered disability today. However, with a rapidly ageing population and more people living longer than ever before, the prevalence of chronic illness and disabilities limiting mobility, perception and cognition will grow evermore significant. While a growing number of countries around the world are adopting legislation to protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities, the impacts of these significant demographic, health and legal trends on the tourism and travel industry and the ways in which the industry is (not) responding have yet to be examined in many parts of the world, including the Netherlands. Thesis projects related to this theme will explore how diverse kinds of travel, tourism and recreational sites and services are (not) being shaped by these major trends around the world.

Supervisor: Meghann Ormond

International medical travel

It's called 'medical tourism' by some and 'medical exile' by others, depending on the political orientation, location and financial stakes of who's talking... Whatever we choose to call it, however, what we do know is this: more people than ever before are crossing international borders in pursuit of high-quality, affordable medical care and long-term care that they (believe that they) are not able to access in their usual countries of residence. While we are beginning to learn more about the nature of these health-focused cross-border flows (e.g. most international medical travel occurs between neighbouring countries in the Global South and, though the media suggests otherwise, not by Global Northerners seeking 'First World care at Third World prices'), we still know very little about the impacts of international medical travel on medical travellers' source and destination countries, cities and communities. Thesis projects related to this theme will explore the relationship between how people address their individual health needs and wants, transformations in social and healthcare systems in source and destination countries, and the blurry spectrum between tourism and migration.

Supervisor: Meghann Ormond



Urban (sensory) geographies of wellbeing

A thesis on this topic would explore the intricate connections between urban environments and individual wellbeing. Drawing inspiration from the therapeutic landscape approach in health geography, the student could delve into the ways in which urban spaces contribute to or hinder the wellbeing of their inhabitants, through a focus on daily experiences and practices. Use of particular spaces in the city (such as green areas), or sensory experiences (such as soundscapes) could serve as possible focal points to examine interactions between the urban environment and different dimensions of wellbeing. Qualitative methods will serve as the cornerstone of this inquiry, emphasizing in-depth interviews, participant observations, and immersive experiences to capture nuanced and embodied dimensions of individuals' relationships with their urban surroundings. There is potential to explore innovative and creative methodologies, such as sensory ethnography and audio-visual techniques. By adopting a qualitative lens, students have the opportunity to uncover the rich narratives and complexities that define urban geographies of wellbeing.

Suggested literature:

Doughty, K. (2023). Therapeutic landscapes of stillness: creating affective sanctuary through practices of cocooning and immersing. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*. [Link](#)

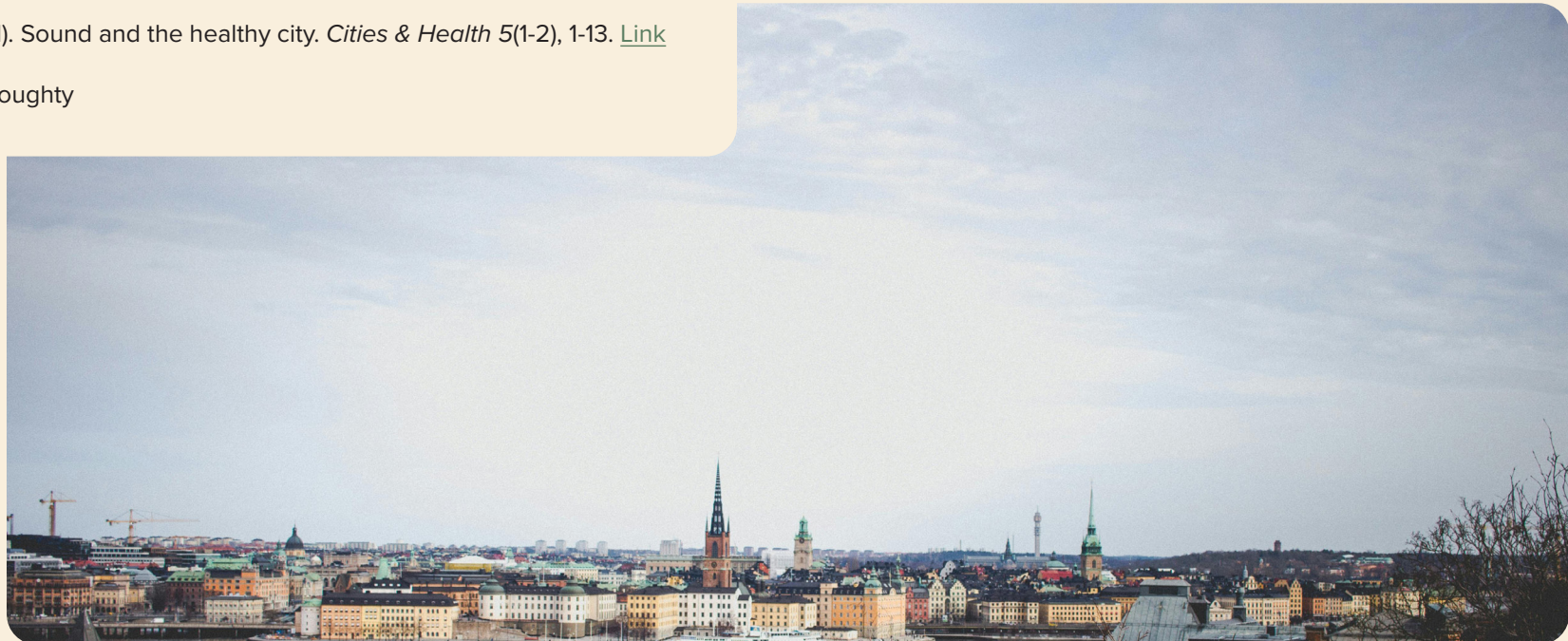
Radicchi, A. et al. (2021). Sound and the healthy city. *Cities & Health* 5(1-2), 1-13. [Link](#)

Supervisor: Karolina Doughty

Sound and wellbeing

This topic examines sonic practices for wellbeing, such as the use of recorded sound for relaxation, sleep, or to manage anxiety or enhance focus (e.g. binaural beats and ASMR). Or how people with sound sensitivities try to control their sonic environments to limit the impact of unwanted sound, for example with the help of technologies like headphones or earbuds, or by listening to their own music. This topic could also include a focus on (the creation of) particular sonic environments that are associated with wellbeing. One example would be places that offer an experience of silence, this could certainly be explored in the context of tourism, where silence has emerged as a 'luxury good' and marketable landscape value. Another example could be the use of sound/music to create atmospheres associated with wellbeing, for example in wellness spaces. The approach would be qualitative and focused primarily on practices and experiences, most likely combining conventional interview methods with sonic methods, such as audio diaries, or the analysis of online audio material.

Supervisor: Karolina Doughty



More-than-human commoning and the meaning of good life

In many countries rural populations have been rapidly decreasing and ageing. It is not clear what will happen to the environments created by interaction of these rural human populations with their environment and other species who live with them. Tourism has been identified, and used, as one strategy to strengthen the relationships of mutual care that constitute socially, spiritually and ecologically sustainable rural areas. In this thesis project, students will examine relationships between urban tourists and/or the tourist industry and the embodied meaning of good life that emerge from forms of tourism designed to strengthen caring relationships in rural areas. Suggested theories (but not limited to these) are community economies, feminist political ecology, and more-than-human commoning. Students are strongly encouraged to find a case study speaks well to them on their own.

Supervisor: Chizu Sato



Affect, emotion, and the geographies of community-making

Affects, emotions, and feelings are important for community-making as a situated practice or process. Theories of affect and emotions can renew and strengthen our understanding of community-making in relation to material, social and discursive conditions. This is an invitation to exploring any form or mode of community-making/building, collective- or group-forming, 'being-in-common', gathering or coming together in the broad context of travel and tourism. You are invited to approach 'community-making' with insights derived from bodies of literature associated with the so-called 'affective turn', such as affect and non-representational theories and emotional geographies, in combination with other areas of literature that suit the specific subject of the thesis. All specific empirical cases within the contexts outlined are welcome, but students are especially encouraged to explore the theme of community-making in connection with these following options: activism; urban utopias; mobilities and displacement; children and youth; forms of vulnerability and/or healing.

Suggested literature:

Berlant, L. (2022.) *On the inconvenience of other people*. Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2018). *99 Theses on the revaluation of value. A postcapitalist manifesto*. University of Minnesota Press.

Supervisor: Chih-Chen Trista Lin

Opportunities in Nepal (internship/thesis)

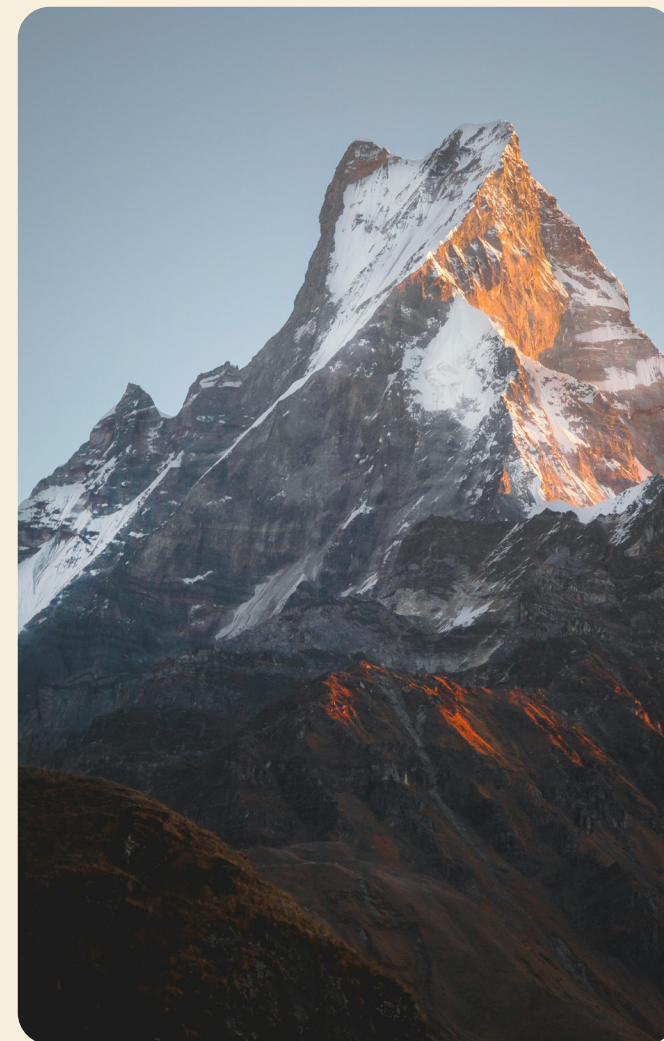
For more information, please contact [John Hummel \(johnhummel@gate.edu.np\)](mailto:johnhummel@gate.edu.np).

Assessing transformations in the landscape - developing co-creative research approaches for regenerative hospitality in conscious destinations

In this thesis study/internship the focus will be on the approaches to study regenerative hospitality in its surroundings, the destination, but also about the main elements to focus on in the destination. In this research I would like to take the work of Kate Raworth's 'Doughnut Economics - Seven ways to think like a 21st-century economist' (2017), and explore how downscaling of doughnut economics could work in conscious destinations in Nepal and how we could research that co-creatively with stakeholders in these destinations, well.

Developing a Conscious Destination approach in the Nine Lakes of Pokhara area further

In this internship/thesis research the student will further build on the development of the co-creative transformation approach, based on the earlier research/learning of the students of NHL Stenden and GATE. After an exploratory research (on slow tourism and its elements for Begnas Tal/Rupa Tal (Tal = lake), towards the east of Pokhara) of NHL Stenden students, six students of NHL Stenden and six students of GATE studied the initial development of community-based tourism/homestays and the link between fisheries and hospitality in the Begnas/Rupa Tal area and soft trekking in the Ghorepani/Poon hill area of the Annapurna Conservation Area. The methodology the students used was the APPA methodology (developed by The Mountain Institute [TMI] and used by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation) used in tourism development in several countries in South (Nepal, Bhutan, India) and South-East Asia (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam). This methodology was introduced by TMI and SNV as a development tool, but is - slightly adapted - a very useful way to study co-creative learning in conscious destination transformation processes. The homestay study explored the possibilities of more nature-inclusive agriculture and convivial conservation, especially in relation to the agriculture fields and forests between the lakes of Begnas and Rupa. Developing a collaborative research and transformation trajectory with the homestays, hotels and farmer groups in that area could be a very good case-study to show the possibilities of regenerative tourism development.



Opportunities in Nepal (internship/thesis)

For more information, please contact [John Hummel \(johnhummel@gate.edu.np\)](mailto:johnhummel@gate.edu.np).

Regenerative leisure/tourism in the southern Kathmandu/Panauti area, supporting the conservation of the remaining wetlands and forests in the area, and transformation of the agriculture system

This internship is with Wetlands for Nepal (WfN). WfN wants to conserve wetlands in Nepal. For a student challenge they developed nature-based solutions for the small Nagdaha wetland in the south of the Kathmandu valley. This wetland has strong connections to local mythology and religion. Historically, cultural beliefs helped protect these important ecosystems but the connections have sometimes been forgotten. In the case of Nagdaha, the story goes that Naga Raj, or serpent god travels from Taudaha to Panauti to celebrate a festival, passing to-and-fro Nagdaha, bringing with him heavy rains (the monsoon). To conserve and restore these wetlands a convivial conservation approach is proposed, promoting environmental enrichment and human well-being in mutually reinforcing ways. The goal of the assignment is to study the mythical trail of the Nagas, develop a regenerative tourism plan including the conservation of these threatened wetlands. A hiking and cycling trail are proposed. The plan could include activities of cleanup, invasive species removal, tree plantation in its watershed, local income generation, adoption of suitable nature-based solutions, and promoting educational and advocacy for further restoration.

Developing nature-inclusive and convivial supply and demand networks around organic farms/resorts, like the Okharbot Organic Farm, in Nepal

There are several hotels and resorts with their own organic farms and organic farms with overnight stay in Nepal, who are providing an example of regenerative hospitality. These examples include The Farm of The Pavillions and Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge in Pokhara, Dwarika Resort, Namobuddha Resort, Vissudhialaya and Okharbot Organic Farm in Dhulikhel. How do these resorts/lodges/farms become more nature-inclusive and convivial? How do they source organically, environmentally friendly, and locally and how do they find the right suppliers/ How do they present/market their businesses to tour operators and tourism businesses in Kathmandu and abroad? Do they focus on specific markets? The study could start with research of a few businesses and widen the scope to a wider regenerative hospitality sector later in the study.

Greening of the GATE campus in Kathmandu and/or the GATE Vocational campus in Pokhara

This internship/thesis study is focused on greening the campuses of GATE in Kathmandu and Pokhara to show possibilities to green the hospitality industry in Nepal and provide hospitality enterprises with direct examples. The internship provides opportunities to the campuses, as well. The student could explore the usefulness of the Bhutan Green Hotel Standard and Bhutan Green Hotel guidelines and the Travelife Stay manual, as starting points, but could also gather examples of good practice at hotels and restaurants from around the world, and explore how useful these will be in the reality of Nepal.