

THE WIZARDS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY SERVE HOPE AND JUSTICE?

68th Summer Conference of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science

Star Island, NH, USA, Sunday June 25 to Sunday July 2, 2023

Technological wizardry has been pitched against prophecies of environmental catastrophe since at least the mid-twentieth century. *Innovate! Create! Only then can everyone win!—Simplify! Change your ways! Or all will be lost!* The scientists on the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example, tell us that large-scale deployment of carbon dioxide removal technologies is “unavoidable” if we are to prevent further dangerous temperature increases. They also argue that we must live less energy-intensive lifestyles to substantially reduce emissions. Addressing the many dimensions of climate change—such as energy and industrial production, urban and infrastructure planning, building construction and design, and land use—will require *both* new technologies *and* lifestyle changes.

In this conference, we will critically examine how technology can be developed, deployed, and governed responsibly, to address climate change in ways that foster hope and justice. We will respectfully engage a multiplicity of world views, including religious perspectives, as we learn how countries throughout the world determine and apply climate and technology policies.

We will address the following questions:

- **How do we assess the future of our climate and technologies?** Knowledge about climate change and evolving technologies that address it relies on simulations using models; but the world is phenomenally complex, and unintended consequences abound. How do we best make decisions in light of the uncertainties in our models?
- **How do we ensure that technology is responsibly developed and regulated?** Regulation of new technology will require new modes of organization in areas such as government, industry, education, and religion. How can we plan for adaptive policies?
- **How can we curate sources of hope in regard to technology?** In the last few centuries, the use of technology has accelerated rapidly, often without full consideration of the consequences. There are legitimate fears that we may not

be able to control future impacts. We have reached the point where we must negotiate a “collective rite of passage from childhood to adulthood” in order to live as a responsible member of our planet’s ecosystem. Imagery, vision, ritual, new paradigms: how can these and other sources of hope assist us?

- **How do we deploy technologies to foster justice and equity?** The impacts of climate change are unevenly distributed. Technologies addressing climate change are likely to show similar inequities—and vulnerable populations such as impoverished, minoritized, and indigenous peoples could continue to suffer disproportionately—if we do not take preventative measures. How can justice best be considered in policies on climate and technology?

Presenters will consider these questions in the context of the fields of science-and-religion, public policy, and science communication.

Plenary speakers (besides the cochairs) will include:

- Willem B. Drees, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics, Leiden University and Philosophy of the Humanities, Tilburg University
- Frances Flannery, Professor of Religion, James Madison University and Co-founder, BioEarth
- Lisa Graulich, Professor of Environmental and Forest Sciences, University of Washington and President, American Geophysical Union
- Noreen Herzfeld, Nicholas and Bernice Reuter Professor of Science and Religion, St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedict
- Janot Mendler de Suarez and Pablo Suarez, Advisers, World Bank and Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre
- Bonnie Nadzam, Writer and Editor, Co-author of the climate fiction work *Love in the Anthropocene*
- Kenneth Oye, Professor of Political Science, Professor of Data Systems and Society, and Director of the Program on Emerging Technologies, MIT
- Leonard A. Smith, Professor, College of Engineering, Virginia Tech and author of *Chaos: A Very Short Introduction*
- Wake Smith, Lecturer, Yale University, Senior Fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at Harvard Kennedy School, and author of *Pandora’s Toolbox: The Hopes and Hazards of Climate Intervention*
- Billy M. Williams, Executive Vice President, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, American Geophysical Union

More information, including on registration, is available at www.iras.org.

Conference Cochairs: Arthur Petersen, Bruce Naylor, and Constance Bertka