



Universität Hamburg  
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

**CENTER**  
FOR SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIETY RESEARCH

LECTURE SERIES „AFTER SUSTAINABILITY“

# PROF. NIGEL CLARK

(LANCASTER ENVIRONMENT CENTRE /  
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY)

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## Earthly Multitudes and the Challenge of a Self-Differentiating Planet

We might view sustainability as an especially cramped and fearful response to the challenges of a dynamic, self-differentiating Earth. In this talk, using the concept of ‘earthly multitudes’ (Clark and Szerszynski 2021) Prof. Clark will be looking at some of the many ways that humans respond to both the threats and the opportunities that arise out of our planet’s capacity to transform itself. After focusing on the excessive, unpredictable aspects of tapping into planetary forces, the talk will circle back on the issue of how strategies of growth and accumulation – including sustainability – avoid facing up to the excess inherent in the Earth itself.

**Wednesday, 30th June 2021**  
**06:00 PM**  
**via Zoom Webinar**

Please register via [css.wiso@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:css.wiso@uni-hamburg.de)

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MORE INFORMATION ON THE  
LECTURE SERIES AVAILABLE [HERE](http://uhh.de/wiso-css)



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# AFTER SUSTAINABILITY. WHAT IF WE STOPPED PRETENDING?

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## Rationale for the CSS Lecture Series

Fifty years after the Stockholm conference on the Human Environment ushered the creation of environmental ministries around the world, thirty years after the Rio Earth summit gave birth to international conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification, environmental policy and its associated language of preservation and precaution has failed (Biermann et al. 2019). It failed to formulate an adequate political diagnosis of the multiple crises societies face in the Anthropocene (Bonneuil & Fressoz 2016). It also failed to deliver on the measures needed to limit global warming or biodiversity loss to non-dangerous levels, or to buy enough time for an orderly, smooth transition to an ecologically viable future. The sustainability paradigm has become obsolete, because it is too late for sustainability.

This is the starting point for the lecture series. Over the next year, we will explore different aspects of this theme, together with a series of distinguished guest speakers. The aim is to *disorient and disenchant* current ecological debates and go beyond techno- and marketfixes or highly uncertain technological gambles. Instead, we will point *dilemmas and contradictions* in discussions on decarbonisation and green growth, and center instead on the day-to-day practices of *unsustainability* in economic policies, infrastructure planning, consumption patterns and global financial markets. On this basis, we wish to engage a discussion on how to *re-build and reassemble* a horizon for contemporary ecological thinking. Starting from an honest assessment of the current situation and our ecological entanglements, what would a possible way forward look like? How can ecological thinking be at the same time critical *and* empowering, to support a politics of transformation that is not rooted in magical thinking?

**Nigel Clark (Lancaster University)**  
30th June 2021, 06:00 PM

**Frank Biermann (Utrecht University)**  
6th July 2021, 06:30 PM

**Other speakers: Karen Pittel (WBGU),  
Pierre Charbonnier (CNRS), more tba**

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