

## **Abstract for general public**

Urban areas host over 57% of the world human population and excrete expanding pressure on land, nature, and non-humans. As the climate change unfolds with extreme weather, heat waves, and growing unpredictability, urban nature and urban green spaces emerge as crucial for the mutual flourishing of human and non-human lives. Nevertheless, the profoundly anthropocentric approach that prevails in the language and practices of governance puts common futures at risk, as it fails to acknowledge existing interdependencies between the needs and well-beings of humans and other living beings. It seems that in order to ensure a sustainable future(s) a cultural shift is required that would “resituate humankind ecologically, while resituating otherkind (...) ethically” (Rigby, 2018). In this respect, urban areas should be re-imagined and reshaped as spaces for „more than human flourishing”, where nature would be welcomed, and where non-humans would be urban citizens enjoying the right to political representation.

This project responds to this call and seeks to explore possibilities for more than human flourishing in contemporary cities by looking at the ways in which green spaces and nonhumans, especially plants, have been constructed, governed and imagined in two metropolitan cities: Istanbul and Gdańsk. As coastal urban areas, both cities have diverse micro-climate zones that create high biodiversity potentials. Although they differ in terms of the governance structure, their visions for the future are formulated as „green”. Nevertheless, it is not clear how the concept of a „green city” (Zielone Miasto; Yeşil İstanbul) is being understood, especially in relation to non-human others. What actions/things/values/beings are considered „green” in the urban context? What futures are envisioned in „green cities”, and to whom they belong? If interests of non-human others are represented, what entities are represented, under which conditions and by whom?

With empirical focus on urban green spaces of different scale ranging from urban forests, parks and gardens, to road sides, lawns, and single trees, this research utilizes a concept of socio-natures, which brings to the forefront the importance of entanglements, codependencies, and both social (nature as a social construct) and material (nature as materiality) aspects of nature. This research attempts to examine both, and will be organized around three main, partially overlapping „Work Packages” (WP): Constructions, Governance and Belonging.

As the main goal of this project is to explore possibilities – for more-than-human flourishing, rethinking hierarchies between different living beings, and creating sustainable futures – the question of hope, future, and time emerges as crucial and requires attention to temporality among key theoretical concepts.

**WP 1, Constructions** examines how “green spaces” and other key concepts used in environmental governance, such as „biodiversity”, „wild”, „nature” have been constructed through the politics and practices of environmental governance in urban context.

**WP2, Governance** scrutinizes politics and practices of the governance of urban green areas, and inquires into cultural, social, structural and temporal dynamics of strategic planning and decision making processes. Who governs urban green spaces of Gdańsk and Istanbul? Whose voices and interests, including those of nonhumans, are considered?

**WP3, Belonging** focuses on selected green areas of Gdańsk and Istanbul as socio-natures and explores the question of urban citizenship of non-human others, with the main focus on plants. “Who” – in terms of species and entanglements – is (not) welcomed into the urban space? What kind of a „green city” emerges through the practices of care, planting, and removal applied to plants? If planetary survival depends on our ability to engage with nature and nonhumans in a sustainable way, what kind of sustainable futures are envisioned, and for whom?

In addressing these question, the applicant will utilize various methods of anthropological inquiry, such as participation, observation, interviews, and more-than-human ethnography, and will develop new research tools. This research is planned as multi-sited, with “sites” including different institutions, legal documents, plans, practices of governance, and green spaces of a different scale and kind.

Rigby, K. (2018) “Feathering the Multispecies Nest: Green Cities, Convivial Spaces.” In: “Green City: Explorations and Visions of Urban Sustainability,” edited by Simone M. Müller and Annika Mattissek, RCC Perspectives: Transformations in Environment and Society, no. 1, 73–80.