

Alex Franklin

Biodiversity and Societal Transformation: Becoming Response-Able

In this presentation, I address the imperative of societal transformation in order to overcome the biodiversity crisis. I frame societal transformation as a process founded upon overcoming inequitable relations and enabling our individual and collective 'response-ability' for practising interspecies care. I explore this challenge from a range of scales, perspectives, and conceptual starting points, all-the-while emphasising collaboration, plurality, and inclusivity. Closest to home, this includes considering the role of academia and transdisciplinary science in driving this change. Drawing on feminist care ethics, particularly the influential work of Joan Tronto, I examine how care theory can reshape our approach to environmental challenges. Alongside, I delve into more-than-human scholarship, highlighting the pivotal contributions of scholars such as Donna Haraway, Vinciane Despret, and María Puig de la Bellacasa, to understand the interconnectedness of human and non-human life. Integrating also Karen O'Brien's transformation spheres, which emphasise personal, political, and practical transformations, my aim is to prompt further critical thought and debate on how to address the biodiversity crisis in a manner sensitive to the differing situational opportunities, as well as views, behaviours, and mindsets of individuals and communities. I share examples and reflections from several Horizon Europe and national-level projects I have been involved in, demonstrating how these transformative ideas can be practically applied to foster dialogue, reflexivity, inclusivity, and meaningful change.