

'Ecological rites in the deep time of the Earth'

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Ritualistic cultural forms have long been used in politics, by both established political systems and social movements without formal power – by what Castoriadis calls 'instituted power' and 'instituting power' – and climate politics is no exception. In this talk I focus on the use of ritualised and aestheticised gestures and imagery in climate and ecological protest in the UK, where artists and other protestors have worked together to create rich, visually and emotionally arresting dramas in public spaces – streets, squares and buildings.

I explore how these actions intervene in three different registers: space, public discourse and time. I first look at how ritualised action organises the space of protest – marking out a chronotope (segment of space-time) and coding it for new meanings, roles and experiences.

Secondly, I look at them as communicative acts that disrupt the mundane ritual order of politics-as-usual through social dramas that set up complex relations between the world as it is and as it could be, and resist incorporation into conventional systems of justification and negotiation.

Thirdly, I explore how these communicative acts mediate between the time of human experience and action, and the deep time of the Earth – in ways that combine warnings of future catastrophe and an irruption of eternal time into public space.