

CALL FOR PAPERS
for a
FRAGILITY Online Conference
(May 9 to 10, 2024)

Abstract submission deadline: 18.4.2024

Fragile environments, fragile states, fragile economies, fragile democracies, fragile relationships, fragile borders, fragile communities, fragile bodies, fragile feelings, fragile hopes, digital fragility, fragile peace and so on indicates the pervasiveness of *fragility* as a descriptor, an interpretation, a claim, an alert, a warning, and also a claim to respond. Fragility, as it is described in dictionaries, refers to the quality of being easily damaged or broken, harmed, or destroyed. It implies extreme delicacy of matter, being, formations or constructions and insinuates a call to “handle with care.” But “careful handling” can mean many things (from “care” to “occupation”), it is stamped by normative activity and can generate diverse experiences, connections, and projections across different life registers (political, aesthetic, moral etc.).

Hence, it is not surprising that within academia, fragility, as a concept, has a long history and includes multiple viewpoints. For example, in psychoanalytical contexts fragility implies an unstable relation between culture and drive, that is, the fragility of the social bond and subject (see the work of Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič, Slavoj Žižek). For Judith Butler, to be fragile (vulnerable) is both an existential problem and a chance to reflect upon injury and to identify the mechanisms of power relations that distribute fragility. For Lauren Berlant, fragility, as it is used in our historical present, could be seen as a neoliberal name for “new realism”, an emotionally invested term that circulates widely in and beyond specific circumstances (like ‘precariousness’); its materiality is multiple and its appearances as affect are complex and ambivalent. Sara Ahmed is interested in fragility as a connection “between things deemed breakable”, and Ann Tsing (and her collaborators) in ghosts of fragility consider active remnants of gigantic past human errors affect, interdependent multispecies assemblages (Haraway), and how they affect the daily lives of humans and other-than-human life forms. Others have asked whether fragility, like Butler’s vulnerability, is our shared condition of dependency and solidarity, or a shared existential condition with the potential to unite rather than divide.

At this conference we are open to address the concept of fragility from all of these (and others) points of view. Our main questions are: Is Fragility good to think with today? If so, in

what ways? How might it be useful? How might its use be manipulative, or how might it mobilize fragile connections? How for instance do certain forms of fragility become nationally or globally recognized, while others are suppressed? Which kinds of infrastructure are built by fragile connections and what imaginaries are emerging from them?

Potential areas of focus might include:

- Fragility of the environment
- Fragility of the subject and social bond (commons)
- Fragility and body vulnerability in a context of sovereignty and biopower.
- Digital Fragility and digital aestheticization of fragility
- Fragility in literature, cinema and other art forms (could we envisage fragility as for instances of subgenres of eco criticism, or some other catastrophism)
- Affective infrastructures of fragility
- Fragility as a mechanism of power and resistance
- Fragility and ethical questions

The conference will be conducted entirely online through ZOOM application on 09-10 May 2024. Please submit together a short biographical note and an abstract of 250 words for consideration by 18.4.2024 to senka.bozic1@gmail.com (Professor Senka Bozic-Vrbancic, University of Zadar). Organizers will send acceptance notices by April 23.

The conference is open to all (scholars, students, artists and others) (20 min presentations). (Artists can send us proposals for performances, art installations, video essays, photo essays ...)

The conference language is English.

Any questions you may have can be directed to the email: senka.bozic1@gmail.com

Spotlight speakers (alphabetical order):

Fernando Dominguez Rubio, University of California San Diego

Mark Andrejevic, Monash University

Maree Pardy, Deakin University

Massimo Canevacci, Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza

Nan Kim, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Registration fee: free of charge.

Organizers: Project Digital Aestheticization of Fragile Environments – funded within the CHANSE Programme (funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grand Agreement No 101004509), and with funds from the Croatian Science Foundation. Croatian partner institutions: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore, Zagreb and University of Zadar.

A symposium hosted by the Institute for Ethnology and Folklore, Zagreb.

<https://www.ief.hr/en/research/projects/digital-aestheticization-of-fragile-environments/>

The conference committee (alphabetical order):

Blaž Bajič (University of Ljubljana)

Senka Božić-Vrbančić (University of Zadar)

Sanja Đurin (Institute for Ethnology and Folklore)

Tomislav Oroz (University of Zadar)

Maree Pardy (Deakin University)

Mario Vrbančić (University of Zadar)