

DIGITAL MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

visitor seminar



with visiting Professor

SAFFRON O'NEILL

University of Exeter



TUESDAY

16 DEC 2025



TIME

10AM – 11AM



VENUE

QUT KELVIN GROVE,
Z9-607

The Visual Life of Climate Change

Imagine a foreboding photograph of factory smokestacks pumping out dark clouds of pollution, compared to a photograph of gleaming silver wind turbines in front of an ethereal golden sunset. Both images tell stories about climate change, but can make people feel completely differently about the issue.

In this seminar, Professor Saffron O'Neill (Geography, University of Exeter, UK) presents results from her new book, *The Visual Life of Climate Change*. She draws on different types of climate images - from photographs to memes - and shows how these are produced, shared, riffed on and repeated across public life. Visual examples are drawn from across the climate space: from mitigation to adaptation, energy to climate science, from climate politics to protest. These examples will demonstrate how the images we use to tell stories about climate change fundamentally shape how we respond to the issue.

Saffron will also reflect on current project work with colleagues at C3DS (Centre for Climate Communication and Data Science), exploring the challenges and opportunities

Of visual GenAI for climate journalism. This project uses a series of studies to explore how different GenAI tools visualise a range of typical climate news stories.

The seminar concludes with a call to make climate visuals more representative, equitable and just. Ultimately, Saffron argues that we should look more critically at climate images; and at how they reflect and shape the world around us.

Biography | Saffron O'Neill is Professor in Climate & Society in the Geography Department, University of Exeter, UK. Her research explores the social science dimensions of climate variability and change, particularly focusing on communication and public engagement. Her research specialism is the visual communication of climate change. Saffron is founding Co-Director of the Centre for Climate Communication and Data Science (C3DS). She is also Co-Director of the ACCESS network (Advancing Capacity for Climate and Environment Social Science); and Co-Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Geography department at Exeter University.



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