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WINS Seminar

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**Title of presentation: The Agony of the Anthropos? The Challenges for Democratic Citizenship in the Anthropocene.**

### **Abstract**

The “Anthropocene” is fast becoming a familiar, if contested, term in various academic disciplines and in wider popular culture. As a signifier of a new geological epoch, it is a concept with as many social, and political implications as geological ones. This paper assesses the implications of the Anthropocene for democracy. More specifically, it considers the implications for the political participation of citizens in a democracy from an agonistic perspective informed by the work of Chantal Mouffe and James Tully. Citizens are traditionally understood to constitute the demos, the collective subject and the source of democratic authority. The Anthropocene, in contrast, heralds the Anthropos, the human collective who have fundamentally transformed the planet. In its signification of a biological unity the Anthropos apparently dissolves any heterogeneous social identities. This paper suggests that while the Anthropocene challenges the boundaries of the demos, it ultimately cannot override them. Rather, it demands that we attend to the inevitable yet contingent exclusions of citizenship. It is precisely this challenge that is capable of provoking an antagonistic confrontation that, if sublimated by democratic institutions, might reaffirm identification with the demos.

### **Short bio**

Dr. Amanda Machin is a post-doctoral researcher at Zeppelin University, Germany where she is researching the connections between radical democracy, citizenship and the environment. She has a PhD in political theory supervised by Chantal Mouffe at the University of Westminster, London, UK. Her books are *Nations and Democracy: New Theoretical Perspectives* (Routledge, 2015) and *Negotiating Climate Change: Radical Democracy and the Illusion of Consensus* (Zed Books, 2013). She has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Environmental Politics*, *Ethical Perspectives* and *Democratic Theory*.