

Geographisches Kolloquium Sommersemester 2021



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Sustainability in Times of “Dark Machines”

Raging fires in the Amazon, in Australia and California. Rapid melting of glaciers and ice sheets, the continued loss of biodiversity, and zoonotic disease outbreaks causing one of the most devastating pandemics in human history. These are only a few examples of how our planet is radically changing, and its profound impacts for human wellbeing all over the world. At the same time, modern societies are entering a period of rapid economic and technological disruption and change. Financial flows and economic information move in ultraspeed across the planet. Sensors, increasingly advanced satellite technologies, and a growing number of applications of machine intelligence (including both machine learning and deep learning) to analyze vast growing volumes of data, are at the verge of altering how we perceive and modify our living planet, forever. What is the role of sustainability research in this new planetary context? In this talk, I will explore the growing interplay between humans, technology and ecology. I will elaborate how new technologies augmented by advanced algorithmic systems (often referred to as “artificial intelligence”) shape the way we see, and respond to climate and environmental change, and why a broader and more inclusive approach to AI is urgently needed.