

# Environmentalism in Tolkien's World

## Ecocritical perspectives on Middle-earth

First Annual Conference of the *Schweizerische Tolkienfördergesellschaft* in Cooperation with the University of Zurich, the University of Lausanne, and the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena

The aim of this conference is to explore environmentalist thinking in Tolkien's fictional world. *The Lord of the Rings* offers detailed depictions of how different societies relate to the earth, both in their economies and in their values and ways of being. Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Ents, Wizards and Orcs all interact differently with nature in ways that may be mutually sustainable or dangerously exploitative at different points in their histories. Individual characters are also differently fashioned and schooled by their encounters with natural forces in their respective journeys and quests. Some places, like Isengard, Mordor and the Shire, suffer waves of environmental destruction that might be read as parables for our times. What can readers learn from the way Tolkien's characters respond to environmental catastrophe? Tolkien himself famously loved trees, and he roots them at the very centre of his vision of Middle-earth. But does his dendrophilia amount to ecological thinking, such as we might recognise this approach today? Aside from Tolkien's own views, how may his works be illuminated by ecocritical perspectives on his writing and art? Finally, in what ways, and to what extent, might Tolkien's environmentalism speak to us as we face the global problems of climate change?

**Date:** 15 March 2025, 08:30-18:30 (Saturday)

**Place:** Kleine Aula, University of Zürich. See:

[https://www.del.uzh.ch/de/Raumreservationen/Räumlichkeiten-Zentrum/Eventräumenlichkeiten\\_Zentrum/Rauminformationen\\_RAA-G-01.html](https://www.del.uzh.ch/de/Raumreservationen/Räumlichkeiten-Zentrum/Eventräumenlichkeiten_Zentrum/Rauminformationen_RAA-G-01.html)

and on ZOOM (link to be announced)

**Speakers:** Dr. Patrick Curry (University of Wales, Trinity St David); Dr. Alexandra Filonenko (Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena); Prof. Dr. Thomas Honegger (Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena); Dr. Amber Lehning (University of Nevada, Reno); Prof. Dr. Christine Lötscher (University of Zurich)

### Academic leadership:

Prof. Rachel Falconer (UNIL)

Prof. Dr. Thomas Honegger (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena)

Prof. Dr. Christine Lötscher, Director of ISEK - Institut für Sozialanthropologie und Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (on-site organiser):

**Organisation:** *Schweizerische Tolkienfördergesellschaft*, University of Zurich, University of Lausanne, the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, Swiss Tolkien Promoting Society

**Registration:** the conference is free, and participants can attend in person or online.

**For more information, and to register, go to:** <https://omentie-nolwe.ch/>

For those registered to attend online, a ZOOM link will be sent shortly before the event. We warmly encourage UNIL members to attend in person. While the trip to Zurich is not funded, we will get reduced fare train tickets from CFF if ten or more travel together (Lausanne-Zurich).

**Further information:** Sarah Heinzelmänn, UNIL (Organising Committee). Please write to [sarah.heinzelmänn@unil.ch](mailto:sarah.heinzelmänn@unil.ch) and mention 'Tolkien conference 2025' in the subject line.