
From Planetary Change to Psychological Impact: Understanding and Responding to the Mental Health Effects of Climate Change

Virtual Panel Discussion · 9 June 2026
12:00 – 13:15 Pretoria (SAST) · Berlin (CEST) · (UTC+2 | GMT+2)

BIOGRAPHIES (in order of appearance)



Image source:
heathealth.info

PROF DR CARADEE WRIGHT

Chief Specialist Scientist, South African Medical Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa

Caradee Wright (PhD in Preventive and Social Medicine) is a Chief Specialist Scientist at the South African Medical Research Council leading the Climate and Health Research Programme. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg. Her research is in environmental health epidemiology to understand climate change and air pollution impacts on human health and well-being to inform interventions and policy development in Africa. Her research fields also include solar ultraviolet radiation dosimetry and skin cancer prevention. Dr Wright has published more than 150 research articles in peer-reviewed accredited journals. Dr Wright was a Committee member of the World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines Committee, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Report 6 Africa Chapter Author, a Chapter Lead Author of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) / Stockholm Environment Institute African Assessment on Climate Change and Human Health and an author of several recently published UNEP reports. Dr Wright is currently Technical Advisor to the World Health Organization (Air Quality, Ethics), the International Livestock Research Institute (One Health), and the Health Effects Institute (Global Health Oversight Committee); and a Review Lead for the National Institute of Health (NIH) / Nature Collection on Data Science for Health in Africa (Environmental Health / Climate Change). Dr Wright was recently named as one of the 2024 NIH Climate and Health Scholars and is working with the Fogarty International Centre.

Webpage: <https://heathealth.info/people/caradee-wright/>



Image source: University
of Cologne

PROF DR FRAUKE KRAAS

Professor and Chair of Human Geography, University of Cologne, Germany

Professor Dr Frauke Kraas is Professor and Chair of Human Geography at the Institute of Geography, University of Cologne since 2000. After her doctorate from University of Münster (1991) and habilitation from Bonn University (1996), she had a Heisenberg scholarship (1997-2000). Her research interests and fields of expertise focus on urban geography (esp. megacities, sustainability, transformation, disaster risk management, resilience, health, heritage) and social geography (esp. migrant health, regional socio-economic development) with a regional focus on Southeast Asia and India. Professor Kraas is member of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

Webpage: <https://geographie.uni-koeln.de/kraas-frauke>



Image source: MPI for Human Development

PROF DR SIMONE KÜHN

Director, Center for Environmental Neuroscience, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Germany

Professor Dr Simone Kühn studied psychology at the University of Potsdam. She has long been associated with the Max Planck Society. The neuroscientist was a doctoral student at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig. After postdoctoral positions at Ghent University in Belgium, University College London, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, she led the “Mechanisms and Sequential Progression of Plasticity” group at the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (MPIB) from 2012 to 2016. She then took a Heisenberg professorship at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE). In 2019, she returned to the MPIB as head of the Lise Meitner Group for Environmental Neuroscience. Since July 2024 she is a Scientific Member of the Max Planck Society and Director at the MPIB. In addition, she leads the working group Psychiatric Environmental Neuroscience, a cooperation between the MPIB and Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin. Her research focuses on how different environments affect brain and mental health across different timespans and the mechanisms underlying these effects. Professor Kühn is member of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

Webpage: <https://www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/staff/simone-kuehn>



Image source: African Scientists Directory

PROF DR THOLENE SODI

SAMRC-DSI/NRF-UL SARCHI Chair in Mental Health and Society, University of Limpopo, South Africa

Professor Tholene Sodi is a registered Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Limpopo. He holds the SAMRC-DSI/NRF-UL SARCHI Chair in Mental Health and Society at the same institution. He is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and serves as Advisor to its Council. He has served on various national and international professional platforms, including the Boards of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP). He is a former President of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), former Chairperson of the Professional Board for Psychology, and former Vice President of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). He was also a Member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Mental Health. His research interests include youth mental health, culture and mental health, suicide, behavioural medicine, mental health policy, and implementation science.

Webpage: <https://africanscientists.africa/business-directory/sodi/>



Image source: Deutsche Welle

DR ANNA CARTHAUS • Moderator

Science Journalist & Health Editor, DIE ZEIT, Germany

Anna Carthaus studied medicine in Heidelberg and Paris and earned her doctorate on the topic of COVID-19 antibodies. She has two passions: one for science, one for journalism. That’s why she completed an internship at Deutsche Welle from 2019 to 2021, with stays in Bonn, Berlin, and Washington, as well as a guest internship at ZEIT-Wissensmagazin. She then worked as a multimedia editor at Deutsche Welle and as a freelance writer. She has been an editor at DIE ZEIT since August 2025.

Webpage: https://www.zeit.de/autoren/C/Anna_Carthaus/index