

IASS Focal Topic 2022 „Justice in Sustainability“

Justice and Sustainability Fellow Dr. Malika Virah-Sawmy

The IASS Fellow Programme brings highly qualified and **inspiring individuals from academia, politics, the business world, and civil society to Potsdam to develop their ideas and help us address the sustainability challenges of our time. The fellows support our research activities, contribute to the ongoing development of our transdisciplinary methodology and support the Institute’s mission of developing transformative knowledge and building bridges between science, politics, and society.**

Malika Virah-Sawmy recently joined the IASS as our new Justice and Sustainability Fellow and will be working on youth climate action during her fellowship. In this blog post she outlines her professional background and her plans for the fellowship.

Job description: facilitator and researcher

Languages you speak: English, French, Mauritian Creole

As a child, my dream was to talk to animals, trees, and spirits. I left home at eighteen to be in the forest and worked as a park ranger, first in Mauritius, then Seychelles, New Zealand and Madagascar. I headed the conservation programme of WWF Madagascar for several years.

To get closer to my dream, I did a PhD in human-nature conflicts at the University of Oxford. After my PhD, I worked for fifteen years in international development and conservation across the world from Asia, Australia, Africa to South America.

A few years ago, I listened to my original dream and founded Sensemakers Collective to facilitate societal transformations. I bring mindfulness, embodiment, systems science, and ancestral wisdom in decision-making to processes. I’m still learning not perhaps to talk to animals, trees, and spirits but to listen more.



3 things that make me unique

1. I dedicate myself both to systemic change and to nourishing relationships
2. I am experimental and work on transformation with an animal instinct
3. I have the ability to bring cognitive, emotional, and shamanic intelligence together

3 things I'm learning

1. Learning to be even more fierce and fearless
2. Learning to bring decolonisation and diversity practices into the workplace
3. Learning to bring systemic constellations to leadership and facilitation

What am I currently working on at the IASS?

As an IASS fellow, I will be working on eco-anxiety among youth in Germany. I facilitate a process of embodying climate chaos and dialoguing on eco-anxiety. During my fellowship, I will be working on the topics of justice and dialogue with youth. I will also be collaborating with the co-creative reflection and dialogue space (CCRDS) to engage on meaningful listening and relating at climate summits.