

CLIMATECH

ClimaTech 2026

Session Title: Climate, Culture and Communications

Date & Time: Monday, May 4th from 4:00 – 4:40 PM (40 Minutes)

**Rachel Kyte, UK Special Representative for Climate to close (4:40-4:50pm)*

Location: Wimberley

Description (draft):

This panel will explore how reconnecting people to the rhythms of their local ecology can change the way we understand climate risk, design policy, and build community resilience. Panelists will discuss how climate shifts from a solely an abstract, “academic” issue; how arts and storytelling can bridge highly engineered cities back to the physical world; and what it means to pursue a fully net-zero, locally accountable landmark project.

The session will include a major public announcement about a forthcoming climate installation and its role in our region’s position on arts culture and climate change.

Moderator: Alison Smart, Executive Director, Probable Futures

Panelists:

- Lourdes Alvarez, Arts and Culture Assistant Director, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Lindsey Butler, Executive Director, Green Ribbon Commission
- Ryan Edwards, Founder and Principal, MASARY Studios
- Tory Stephens, Climate Fiction Creative Manager and Network Weaver, Grist

Questions:

TO BE DISCUSSED

Intro panel (2 mins)

- Good afternoon everyone. My name is Alison Smart and I'll be your moderator for the next 40 mins as we explore climate, culture, and communication — basically my three favorite things to talk about, and I couldn't have asked for a better group to dig into them with.
- I'm the Executive Director of Probable Futures, a nonprofit climate literacy initiative that makes climate science accessible and actionable. My colleagues and I spend our days helping executives, community leaders, and elected officials see how the climate underpins the things they care about — and how change might intersect with those things. Ultimately, that work requires people to develop a stronger awareness of the physical world around them.
- Which is what tonight is really about. We live in a highly engineered world, and that engineering — for all its benefits — can separate us from the ecological rhythms of the places we live. That disconnection has real consequences for how we understand climate risk and what we're willing to do about it. Our panelists are working at the intersection of art, culture, science, and policy to close that gap — to bring climate out of the abstract and into the practical, physical world and the culture around us here in Massachusetts.

Segment 1: Introductions (3 minutes each)

Single question to all four, in order — Lourdes, Lindsey, Tory, Ryan:

"This conversation is ultimately about the ways the environment around us — the natural world, the built environment, the cultural life of a place — shapes our experience and shapes us. So to help the audience get to know you: tell us about a place you know and love, and something about its rhythms. It could be the natural environment, the built environment, the culture — whatever feels most alive to you. And how it informs the work you do today."

After Ryan answers (he's last in the lineup):

"Ryan, you also have something to share with this audience — something you've been building that I think is a concrete expression of everything we're about to discuss."

[Ryan makes the announcement and spends 2 mins on the project, what it's purpose is, etc.]

Segment 2: The communication and culture problem (~12 min)

Alison segue: This project is a perfect entry point into the conversation we're here to have — how do we make climate change vivid, resonant, and tangible to the public?

To Lindsey: "The GRC has spent 15 years helping Boston plan for climate change. We're now in a moment where planning has to become doing, and I know that implementation of climate goals is what GRC is focused on today. Is climate communication still relevant once you are at that stage and if so, how?"

To Tory: "Your work is built on the premise that stories can help us envision what the future might be like. What have you learned about how effective these stories can be — what can they do that science and data can't? Any examples?"

To Lourdes: "Chelsea is on the other side of the Tobin Bridge and one of the most climate-vulnerable communities in the region. What does effective climate communication look like in your community — and how is it different from what might work in a boardroom or a policy room?"

To Ryan / open: "The Tobin Bridge project will give 90,000 people a daily encounter with environmental data. What does that rhythm of exposure do that a report or a campaign can't?"

Segment 3: The role of arts and culture in the climate ecosystem (~8 min)

To all: "Policy, innovation, litigation — these are the tools we typically think of when we talk about climate action. Where do the arts and culture fit in that ecosystem?"

Segment 4: Closing rapid fire (~5min)

"Last question, same for everyone, and I want short answers: What's the most underrated tool in climate communication that people aren't using or talking about enough?"

OR

"What does Massachusetts look like in 20 years if we get this right?"

Session Flow & Tips:

- A "Voice of God" (VOG) will introduce the moderator to the stage
- Panelists will be introduced by the moderator who will give a brief panel introduction.
- Moderators will typically direct questions to individuals, rather than posing open questions to the group.
- Each theme or topic will likely get ~8–10 minutes, so responses that are clear and concise help keep the pace dynamic.

- We aim to end each session with a strong takeaway—this might include a rapid-fire round of predictions or one key insight from each speaker.
- If time runs out, our stage managers will respectfully stop the discussion and ask that the conversation continue off stage and/or during breaks and networking reception.

Logistics & Preparation

Arrival Time: Plan to check-in at speaker registration by 3:30pm. Speaker Check-In will be located next to Registration in the Cyclorama. Upon entering the venue's main entrance, both will be immediately on your right-hand side. Once everyone has arrived, you will be led to the theater space.

Time & Format: 40 min; moderated with prepared questions.

Day-Of Contact

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