

Environmental Humanities Reading Group at a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities
Cologne, Germany (ehrg-artes@uni-koeln.de) - CfP Workshop



**CULTURES
AND SOCIETIES
IN TRANSITION**

Call for Participation

Workshop “Eco-temporalities and Geo-politics”

(in cooperation with MESH and co-funded by the
Competence Area IV, University of Cologne, and the AG Eco Media)

October 13 & 14, 2022

University of Cologne

With a keynote by Michelle Bastian (University of Edinburgh)

“This is an age in which new ghosts, new monsters, new fears, new hopes haunt the imagination of what used to be called ‘the future’ but is actually ‘the present,’ above all for peoples of all living species and other Terran entities who endure in a large part of the world now.” (Eduardo Viveiros de Castro 2019: S296)

“The Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity: those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits all of us.” (Amitav Ghosh 2016: 62-63)

Our current eco-social crises are rooted in a progressivist and productionist temporality, a narrative that often entails restless techno-capitalist advancements and a blinkered focus on future profits on a global scale. In our workshop “Eco-temporalities and Geo-politics”, we seek to develop different modes of thinking about and engaging with these discourses.

As Anna Tsing claims, it is necessary to counter a dominating, singular mode of futurity with a “temporal polyphony” (Tsing 2015: viii), which overcomes an anthropocentric perspective of unidirectional linearity to think entangled ways of inhabiting with different rhythms and cycles. Therefore, we want to examine how to distance ourselves from linear concepts of time, to instead enact marginalized temporalities and recognize more-than-human forms of agency. The Environmental Humanities as an evolving field of research play a decisive role in configuring ecological narratives and aesthetics that are able to express and make visible eco-criminal and eco-cidal tendencies in environmental politics to “engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence” (Nixon 2011: 2). In our workshop we want to consider these ideas intersectionally and connect them with past, present and future aspects of environmental racism as well as human and nonhuman displacement beyond nationalist imaginaries of climate migration. What humans might experience as slow violence can, in geological timescales, be a sudden intrusion that entangles human history with planetary history in unforeseen ways. With “anthropogenic” climate change, the earth system itself - or Geos - has transformed from a stable background for human action to a political actor on all imaginable scales. In this sense, we understand geo-politics not as territorial interests of nation-states but as a terrestrial endeavor. What can a politics of “Nonlife”

(Povinelli 2016) and “animacies” (Chen 2012) look like beyond the solutionist tunnel vision of technical feasibility? Can we go beyond linear understandings of time by framing eco-social crises as cyclical, repetitive catastrophes? Can slow arts of noticing temporal diversity (Tsing 2015) and paying attention (Stengers et al. 2013) contradict the urgency to act that is imposed on us by the geological crisis? How can we accurately account for the tensions between figurations of the “bigger picture” and localized problems, and vice versa? In our workshop we will explore how the Environmental Humanities can contribute to these questions and how they can include the geological/terrestrial along the ecological/environmental.

The workshop is conceptualized as a preliminary event to the kick-off symposium of MESH (Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities), a newly established research hub at the University of Cologne, headed by Alexander von Humboldt Professor Kate Rigby. It is composed of a (virtual) keynote lecture by Michelle Bastian and three thematic panels that relate to the workshop’s broader theme. In addition, we are organizing an early career talk to connect the workshop participants with researchers at the University of Cologne. The panels and the early career talk are conducted in person, although we can accommodate virtual participation if necessary. For presenters coming to Cologne, we offer a travel grant of 200€ per person. We invite scholars of all levels and encourage proposals from subject areas of the Environmental Humanities, including literary, media, and cultural studies, philosophy, the social sciences, anthropology, and legal theory. Proposals should include an abstract of the paper (maximum 300 words), a short biography (maximum 150 words), and should mention in which of the following three panels (1. Eco-aesthetics, 2. Eco-conflicts, 3. Eco-crime) you would like to present:

1. Eco-aesthetics

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Aesthetics of wilderness, sublime and pure nature as well as their critique and deconstruction
- Images of the earth, new forms of cartography, terraforming, and cosmopoiesis
- Ecological, post-natural, geological and earthly aesthetics
- Alternative ontologies to Western apprehensions of nature
- New-materialist practices featuring entanglements of nature, culture, ethics, and politics
- Ecological nostalgia and other eco-aesthetics of the past
- Utopian and dystopian futurities (in climate fictions and non-fictions)
- Aesthetic techniques of visualizing, sensing and detecting emerging ecological changes
- Discussions of ecocritical, ecopoetical, ecocinematic, and ethnographic approaches

2. Eco-conflicts, Negotiations of Borders, and Changing Socio-Ecological Relations

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Ecopolitics, Environmental Racism and Intersectionality
- New regimes of governance in reaction to the eroding borders of modernity: between nation-states and nature/culture
- Neoliberalization and commodification of ‘nature’
- Shifting socio-ecological relations and new forms of activism
- Non-/human displacement beyond the nationalist imaginary of borders

- Extinction as temporal displacement
- Different possibilities of cohabitation with non-/human others and ways of recognizing unmourned loss
- Transgenerational/-species responsibility and mutual care for future flourishing

3. Eco-crime, Eco-cide, and Eco-justice

Topics include but are not limited to:

- (Cultural) understandings of Ecocide
- Aspects of transgenerationality in Eco-crime, -cide and -justice
- Slow and fast violence of ecocrime
- Aspects of complicity in ecocrimes
- (International) environmental rights, laws, and their violations
- Utopias of Ecological Citizenship, including rights and obligations
- Cultural and literary depictions of Ecocide, Law in/and Literature
- Ecocriminality and non-human agents as juristic subjects
- Ecojustice for indigenous and marginalized groups

Please submit your proposals to ehrg-artes@uni-koeln.de by June 30, 2022.

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