

Sites of Remembering

Landscapes—Lessons—Policies

Date: 27–28 April 2018

Conveners: Eveline de Smalen (RCC), Vikas Lakhani (RCC)

Location: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich

This workshop aims to discuss, identify, and evaluate ways in which social sciences and humanities can use memory studies to engage with the problems we encounter in the world today, and bridge the divide between academic disciplines, and academia and policy. We intend to publish the results of this workshop as an issue in *RCC Perspectives*, the in-house journal series of the Rachel Carson Center. *RCC Perspectives* is an open access publication for examining the interrelationship between environmental and social change.

Issues such as anthropogenic climate change, pollution, soil depletions, and increasingly frequent large-scale disasters are widely recognized in the world today, yet they are only very hesitantly acted upon by citizens, governments, and corporations. The data about the state of the world that scientists have been providing for decades has hitherto failed to make significant landfall and change the ways we behave and govern our planet. As Amitav Ghosh suggests, this failure shows how important humanities and social sciences are in the Anthropocene debate, because “the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination” (12). Many environmental issues are problems of the *longue durée*. Rob Nixon has addressed the difficulty implied in writing about calamities that are stretched out over long periods, rather than short, immediate events (2). The fact that they are long-term problems directly invites memory studies as a partner in research and governance.

To begin to solve the myriad of problems assailing the planet in our age, we need to understand how people use narratives to position themselves in their world, and how these narratives in turn influence how they perceive their place in it. We need to understand, too, how these stories change as the problems of the Anthropocene become ever more pronounced. Finally, we need to explore how we can use our knowledge to connect these narratives to our behavior and our policymaking, so we can initiate a political culture that is more thoughtful, democratic, and hopefully, more productive.

The Rachel Carson Center and the Marie Curie Innovative Training Network Environmental Humanities for a Concerned Europe (ENHANCE) would like to invite early career researchers from a wide range of backgrounds to submit applications to attend our workshop. Applications from the social sciences and the humanities, ranging from geography, to history, political sciences or literary studies, are encouraged. The central question for this workshop revolves around the role of memory studies in the public sphere, in an environmental context. How can scholars from the humanities and social sciences use memory studies to make their work relevant beyond academic publications?

The following questions will be central to our workshop:

- How do we bring environmental history in dialogue with memory studies?
- How do we examine climate change and natural disasters in terms of environmental and cultural heritage?
- How does our knowledge influence our understanding of the past, as well as the future?
- And in this light, how do we make our research relevant to and heard in political debate and the public sphere?

In order to make our work relevant to society, we need to be able to communicate it to as wide an audience as possible. Often, this means working in an interdisciplinary context and ideally, one that also engages with the world outside of academia. This approach, however, comes with a number of challenges, as academics and professionals from different backgrounds have different approaches and expectations of research products. In this workshop, we want to discuss these so we will be better equipped to successfully apply our research in different environments, inside and outside of our discipline and academia, as we seek to make our work relevant in the age of the Anthropocene.

Selection Process

The workshop is funded by the Marie Skłodowska Curie ENHANCE ITN and facilitated by the Rachel Carson Center in Munich, Germany. It will take place on 27–28 April 2018. Food and drinks will be provided. All participants will be reimbursed for their travel and accommodation expenses.

Places for participants are limited and will be allocated by refereed selection. Applicants should send an abstract (max. 300 words) of their proposed paper with a short biography (max. 250 words).

Please send these in a single PDF file (not exceeding 5 MB) by email to vikas.lakhani@rcc.lmu.de and eveline.desmalen@rcc.lmu.de by 12 February 2018. Successful applicants will be informed by 20 February 2018, and complete drafts of papers (2000–3000 words in English) will be required by 31 March 2018. All papers will be circulated to the participants in advance.

Works cited

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

