

Themed Issue of *International Journal of Cultural Studies*

On Mediations and the Environment: Earth in Focus

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Over the past decade, themes and paradigms that incorporate an ‘environment lens’ have gained prominence in a wide range of research areas in the broad realm of cultural studies. The increased visibility of pressing questions such as environmental justice provided a positive push for historically more western-centric and positivistic disciplines in social sciences and humanities to pay greater attention to overlooked localities and epistemologies. Yet, the level of increase in the urgency of the need for social transformation in particular areas such as climate change or marine pollution is not matched with the level of expansion of disciplinary and geographic cross-breeding and transformative thinking in environmental sciences and environmental humanities. Academic knowledge and publications produced in humanities and social sciences, including media and communication studies, still remain, for the large part, western-centric and display a limited degree of inter-, multi-, or trans-disciplinarity—notable exceptions and aspirations notwithstanding. Disciplinary and geographic provincialism continue to play a significant role in shaping research agendas as well as policymaking, despite the existence of different vulnerabilities. It is fair to suggest that despite the increased visibility of environmental themes and formerly absent regions and locales in scholarly research, visual and textual analyses as well as narratives that originate *from* such localities themselves or attention to forms of ‘slow violence’ (Nixon, 2011), rather than to disaster news or sensational scenarios, remain limited.

The purpose of this themed issue is to explore a variety of themes, topics and visions in the study of the environment in cultural studies in general, and media and communication studies in particular. Studies of environmental narratives in some fields such as literature and film studies —ecocriticism, by way of an example, is an inherently interdisciplinary field—, philosophy, and history have displayed ingenuity and awareness of geographic diversity, there is room and need for greater spill over to disciplines such as media and communication studies where analyses of environmental news and electronic content have reigned supreme. One starting point for this themed issue is the idea that environmental narratives are incessantly and precipitously transformed as they traverse diverse mediums/media and scales. At a time when our mediation and communication channels (from literature, film, legacy media, social media platforms to museum exhibitions, visual and audio-art installations) are unprecedentedly complex and interconnected, bold and innovative research agendas that address the ‘mediated environment’ with an eye toward creating cross-breeding within cultural studies are called for.

The second standpoint that underlies the crux of the themed issue is the essential need to bring in knowledge and perspectives from localities that remain on the margins in terms of their visibility in academic studies. While the actual and virtual sites and locales (e.g. legacy media, museums, literature, film, music, archives, academic publications) where narrative and scholarly interventions materialize and constitute *spaces of narrativity* (see Christensen et al, 2018) or, simply put, ‘mediating environments’, are located in or originate

from predominantly western hubs, visibility of locally situated knowledge and content from ‘mediated environments’ (e.g. the Arctic, the Amazon, Pacific Islands, etc.) which experience the impacts of environmental degradation at a much higher degree are rendered peripheral.

Content

The articles the journal issue brings together will explore various constructions of the human and non-human environments and environmental change as these are mediated through narratives in various venues, creating a recent and hybrid account of how we imagine and reproduce the environment.

We invite abstracts for papers based on research from areas of inquiry related with the mediation of environmental narratives as well as cognate disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Submissions from non-Western contexts are most particularly welcome. Research that crosses disciplinary boundaries is encouraged, as are innovative approaches that combine practical and scholarly standpoints. Articles may choose to address the following topics, or pursue others that are of relevance to the issue theme:

- Local -global positionings of environmental problems and themes
- Environmental migration
- Environment in art and activism
- Political change and civic discourse
- Indigeneity and the environment
- Environmental time / chronotopes
- Environmental security and risk in everyday visions / mediations
- Mediated disasters and utopian and/dystopian futures
- Environment, tourism and travel
- Environment and labor
- Environment and health
- Environment and material resources
- Gendered and ecofeminist considerations
- Religious / theological narratives
- Sustainability and land sovereignty
- Environmental impacts of the media and cultural industries

Submitters may choose to focus on electronic media, news, literature, popular science publications, films and entertainment media, virtual environments, popular organizational venues, museums or urban space (e.g. street art and graffiti).

References

Christensen, M., Åberg, A., Lidström, S., & Larsen, K. (2018). Environmental themes in popular narratives, *Environmental Communication*, Vol 12 (1), 1-6.

Nixon, R. (2011) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Please send 350 to 500-word abstracts and short bios to miyase.christensen@ims.su.se (AND cc'ed to miyachristensen@yahoo.com) by **15 June 2021**. Authors of selected submissions will be notified by **25 June 2021**. Full papers (6500-8000 words) are due **15 November 2021**.