

Call for Papers

Flows, Histories, and Politics of Pollution in Europe (17–20 Century)

Rachel
Carson
Center

Location: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich

Date: 28–29 August 2020

Organizers: **Andrei Vinogradov** (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society) and **Prof. Julia Herzberg** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

The contamination of air and water with industrial and residual wastes has in many ways influenced the birth of environmental movements across the world and the formation of environmental history as a discipline. It was the need to deal with the undesirable consequences of economic growth that aroused an academic interest in studying the histories of pollution. Works in this field started to appear already in the late 1950s, and then steadily increased—not least due to Rachel Carson’s book “Silent Spring,” which had a significant impact on popularization of environmentalist ideas in both Europe and the United States. Since the 1970s, many accounts detailing the struggles of air and water pollution caused by industrial waste were written from a national perspective: they primarily considered interrelations between industrialists, citizens, experts, and officials, and the formation of comprehensive environmental policies and anti-pollution legislation. Today, the history of pollution is one of the most elaborated topics in European environmental history. A number of established narratives have been formed about the gradual “scientification” and institutionalization of environmental policies and transitions, including those based around conflicts and collaborations between different social groups.

The time has now come to view environmental pollution from a new angle. First of all, the current state of research provides good opportunities for new transcultural and transnational studies in this field. The comparison between different European states could promote deeper understandings of anti-pollution policies, features of environmental legislation, transfers of dangerous industrial and “green” technologies, and perspectives of collaboration on an international level.

Secondly, the rapid development of the environmental humanities has opened up new methodological approaches to studying pollution, including perspectives from the field of new materiality: in historical studies, pollution has rarely been considered as a social and cultural construct that could have different meanings in different cultures. “How have you managed to resist and survive?”—this question, which Bruno Latour proposes to ask in his recent manifesto “Down to Earth” of those who had been subjected to the impact of

modernization and economic development, should also be asked of those who have faced pollution crises in the past. In previous centuries, single types of pollution were understood, estimated, and fought in different ways depending on a place, social milieu, and official and informal borders. Understanding these differences across cultures and boundaries would shed more light on the perspectives of global environmental and anti-pollution policies. In this context, place means not only a geographical point, but rather a location together with its social and cultural background, which affected perceptions and spatial distributions of pollution in the past. Borders between different locations—for example states, regions, urban territories, and countryside—undoubtedly influenced anti-pollution policies and environmental impacts.

The workshop aims to answer the following questions:

- How did different European countries understand and fight environmental pollution? How did these perspectives and strategies influence each other and European environmental politics?
- How did people perceive the concept of waste and pollution in different times and cultures?
- Which places were considered acceptable and most effective for waste disposal and waste management practices?
- How is the history of environmental pollution written in different political and cultural contexts?

This call for papers addresses historians and scholars in related fields. Both transnational and comparative presentations, as well as contributions to individual aspects of the history of pollution are welcomed. We ask for a short abstract (about **300 words**) for papers to be presented (with a length of max. **20 minutes**), which address the above questions. The conference language is English, but abstracts can be submitted in English, Russian, or German. The publication of a special issue of a journal is planned.

Please send your proposal to Andrei Vinogradov by **1 June 2020**, via email:

AndreiVinogradov@gmail.com.

Please note that the workshop may have to be postponed to a later date due to measures against COVID-19. Applicants will be informed in advance.