

Der Stechlin: A Lake and Its Legacy in the Context of Climate Change

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At the Rachel Carson Center, I'll be developing research from an earlier "writer in residence" period at the Leibniz Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) into a work of narrative nonfiction, framing the text around studies of Lake Stechlin's cultural and scientific history. While the lake's more recent history as a catchment for cooling waters from the Rheinsberg Nuclear Plant have shaped the present scientific interest in the site, its history as a research site and cultural symbol took shape in the nineteenth century, particularly with the work of Theodor Fontane. His descriptions of the lake highlight the region's rich mythic history and the ways in which the science conducted on site has reflected those myths. Turning to the present day, the IGB's LakeLab conducts vital freshwater research relating to climate change. I'll therefore focus on the ways wider global phenomena have for centuries been linked to the lake's behavior.

While melting glaciers and sea level rise are central to understanding and communicating climate change, less attention has been given to inland freshwaters. The freshwater LakeLab is the only research station of its kind worldwide. With 24 "mesocosms" extending all the way to the lake bed, it enables researchers to examine the lake in miniature, specifically focusing on the ways in which aquatic organisms are responding to climate change. Presently, the lab is also host to an EU-funded project enabling researchers from around the world to carry out experiments on site. Such work at the LakeLab is focused on collaborative and creative responses to limnology. Drawing this present research together with a historical study, ultimately, my text will examine the ways in which lakes can provide lessons in a time of climate change.