



Islands and Environment(s) – Literary Ecologies and Political Discourses

Project brief

The project in the field of German-language and comparative literature is part of the Blue Humanities strand of the Faculty of Arts Research Cluster DECC and seeks to explore representations and imaginations of (Mediterranean) islands and their environment(s). Its main aim is to analyse how islands as environments – geographical, ecological as well as technological, architectural, urban, rural etc. – are represented in various discourses, and how they are connected to human modes of living and further natural and social contexts. In aquapelagic spaces (Hayward 2012) with coastal landscapes, harbours, fisheries etc., water-land-connections are intricately linked to human-environment-relations.

Methodology

For the methodological framework, both the concept of the island and of the environment are critically examined. As opposed to dominant Western notions of the island, often characterised by binary oppositions such as land-water or centre-periphery, island studies assume a close connection between (is)land and water: land and water are not conceived as fixed binaries, but as non-hierarchical constellations including spaces in-between. The island is considered from the perspective of its local and global interconnections, and liminal, transitional and contact spaces play an important role. Similarly, the concept of the environment, which suggests a dichotomy between humans and surrounding nature, is deconstructed in ecocritical approaches: like land and water, humans and non-human nature are understood in their inseparable connectedness and diverse forms of transitions. On this basis, islands as highly semanticised spaces in contemporary environmental discourses are analysed with a critical focus on anthropocentric traditions versus more ecocentric viewpoints.



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Results & conclusions

The research conducted shows diverse conceptions of islands in literature, reflecting issues such as shorelines as hybrid spaces of contact between culture and nature, human and non-human. In climate discourse, islands are often used as exemplary spaces, ranging from island stereotypes to engagements with the realities of climate change. Further examples of comparative literature conceive islands as sites of transcultural encounters, migration, travel and tourism as well as politically charged spaces of activism and debates surrounding issues, such as the environmental and social impact of capitalism and contested technological approaches to climate change mitigation. Planned publication in: *Germanistica Euromediterrae* (2027).