

# **The Best Ideas? Natures, Nations, and Collective Memory**

Conveners: Andreas Gestrich (GHI London), Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham)

Nature has served as a resource for the construction of national identities throughout the modern era. The relationship goes into both directions, as nationalisms have framed the appreciation of the natural environment. This conference discusses the nationalization of nature and the naturalization of nations in transnational perspective. With a broad range of case studies from Sweden to India, scholars explore how objects and events of nature became national icons and what this meant for nations and environments. Can we identify certain groups that typically played an important role in the construction of natural icons? Did national icons receive acclaim beyond borders? Can we identify differences in the construction of identities in Western countries and the colonial and post-colonial world? And how did the autonomous logic of the natural environment play out in these case studies? The conference explores paths towards what one might call an environmental history of nationalism.

## **Programme**

as of October 31, 2016

### **Thursday, December 1, 2016**

14:00-14:30 **Registration**

14:30-16:00 **Session 1: Colonial Landscapes**

Chair: Corey Ross (University of Birmingham)

José Miguel Moura Ferreira (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

Rugged hills, rebellious forests and savage people. Imagining landscapes in colonial Goa during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

Martin Kalb (Bridgewater College, Virginia, USA)

An Environmental History of Conquest and Nation-Building in German Colonial Southwest Africa

16:30-18:00 **Session 2: Liquid Narratives**

Joanne Yao (London School of Economics)

Taming the River: Culture, Riverscapes, and the Creation of 19th Century International River Commissions

Fabian Zimmer (Heidelberg University)

Nature, Nation and the Dam: Narratives about the Harnessed Waterfall in early 20th century Sweden

18:30-19:30

Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham)

Best Ideas: National Parks and the Problems of Collective Memory (Keynote Address)

### **Friday, December 2, 2016**

9:30-11:00 **Session 3: Narratives of Iconic Landscapes**

Chair: Simon Yarrow (University of Birmingham)

Oliver Aas (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary), Liis Jõhvik (University of Vienna, Austria)

Limestone, Juniper and the Smell of Seaweed: The Affective Dimensions of Post-Soviet Estonian Landscape

Tait Keller (Rhodes College, Memphis, USA)

The Retreat of Nations: Religion, Race, and Recreation in the Eastern Alps

11:30-13:00 **Session 4: Contested Landscapes**

Bouchra Saab (Erlangen-Nürnberg University)

Kahlil Gibran, 1923 - Amin Maalouf, 1993: National Landscapes Revisited Through Literature

Shalini Panjabi

Claiming a Contested landscape: Narratives Around the Dal Lake in Kashmir

14:00-15:30 **Session 5: Commemorated Landscapes**

Chair: Simon Jackson (University of Birmingham)

Gulbin Kiranoglu (Kocaeli University, Turkey)

Istanbul's Landscape and Restorative Nostalgia (working title)

Chris Manias (King's College London)

Cave Bears and Mammoths: Imagining the Pleistocene of Europe and North America, 1880-1930

16:00-17:30 **Session 6: Tales about Species**

Yuheng Zhang (Zürich University, Switzerland)

“The Panda of Plants”: the Discovery of Dawn Redwood and the National Identity Construction in Modern China

Rajarshi Mitra (Indian Institute of Information Technology Guwahati, Assam)

To Hunt or not to Hunt: Tiger – Hunting, Conservation and Collaboration in Colonial India

18:30-20:30 **Conference Dinner**

**Saturday, December 3, 2016**

9:30-11:00 **Session 7: National Parks**

Chair: Andreas Gestrich (GHI London)

Esa Ruuskanen (University of Oulu, Finland)

Iconic Landscapes and Species Within the Finnish National Park Deliberation, circa 1880-1910

Calin Cotoi (University Of Bucharest, Romania)

Of Goats and Men: Ruins of Nature and Nation in the National Park Măcin Mountains

11:30-13:00 **Session 8: Disaster Narratives**

Felix Mauch (TU München)

Between & Between. National Patterns in Local Disaster Memory

Concluding Discussion