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Author

Sandberg, Michael

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Landscapes of Migration

According to the UNHCR, there are currently 65.6 million people around the world who have been forced to leave their home. Of these, 22.5 million are refugees, half of whom are under 18 years old. Twenty people per minute are forcibly displaced. At the same time, climate change is rapidly increasing; according to NASA, 16 of the 17 warmest years on record have occurred since 2001. Sea levels are rising, droughts continue to devastate agricultural communities, extreme weather is growing more frequent and destroying societal infrastructure across the globe; biodiversity is diminishing.

It is clear that these crises affect one another. As the world arounds us changes both physically and ideologically, it grows ever more urgent to consider the human relationship to landscapes and how our actions, perspectives, and interventions affect and shape them. Within the interrelated discourses on climate, politics, and [migratory] spaces, the term “landscape” can have a variety of implications beyond the conventional connotation of fixed outdoor environment. Rather than affirm ‘natural,’ immutable characteristics, “landscape” can reflect the changing assemblage of geographical, physical, and imaginary entities. For instance, Georg Simmel intuits that to perceive a particular landscape is a creative and constitutive act that actualizes a viewer’s subjective expression. Alternatively, “landscape” can take on a metaphorical dimension to describe the composition of a group or set of practices such as cultural landscapes, media landscapes, and, for our purposes, migration landscapes. In this issue of *TRANSIT*, we hope to address the following questions: How do different understandings of landscape interact and in turn shape each other? How might a landscape of migration affect the ecological landscape, and vice-versa? How does one represent changes in the environment, especially in light of the unprecedented magnitude, speed and intricacy of transnational movement and global-environmental transformation? How can we strive to make patterns of migration more intelligible and what are the limits of that intelligibility? What are the roles of the scholar and the artist in these discourses? Can the language we use to discuss matters of extinction, biodiversity, and geographical environment serve us in rethinking our notions of social diversity in Germany and matters of so-called integration and its implications?

With notions of progress and change pitted against nostalgic calls for preservation and restoration to times past in the German-speaking world, German Studies has a responsibility to question the discourses surrounding landscapes of migration and its own status as an academic field. What are the implications for German Studies of analyzing global phenomena that call into question the very idea of national borders? What does the changing human landscape of the German-speaking world mean for the discipline? How do concepts of nation persist or dissolve in the wake of so-called “refugee crises” or climate change? How should the field position itself in the face of these questions?

This CFP encourages contributions from a wide range of related disciplines including but not limited to literary studies, language pedagogy, history, linguistics, film and media studies, performance studies, geography, philosophy, translation, critical theory, and anthropology.

English- or German-language papers or projects are due for editorial review by August 1, 2018.
transitjournal@berkeley.edu, CC misandberg@berkeley.edu and mkrueger@berkeley.edu
(Michael Sandberg and Molly Krueger, Managing Co-Editors).