

8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment (EASLCE)

Where: University of Würzburg, Germany

When: September 26 -29, 2018

Local Organizer: Prof. Dr. Catrin Gersdorf, American Studies

## Call for Papers

### **The Garden: Ecological Paradigms of Space, History, and Community**

Arguably one of the most alluring environmental images, the garden enjoys a poetic, aesthetic, and mythological presence across many cultures and throughout all ages. At the same time, gardens have always been real, material spaces that served a variety of social, economic, and scientific purposes and continue to do so. Whether as poetic image or as real space, gardens always represent historically contingent and culturally variegated environmental practices. They emerge from the real and imagined interactions between human and non-human agents.

Etymologically, the word *garden* derives from Old High German, *garte*, meaning that which is enclosed or protected by a fence or border. In this tradition, gardens emphasize the dialectics of inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, discipline and spontaneity, the domestic and the wild, the useful and the useless. But gardens also blur those distinctions; they represent a space that joins the utilitarian and the ornamental. More modern concepts emphasize the garden's all-encompassing character. In *Greater Perfection: The Practice of Garden Theory* (2000) John Dixon Hunt observed that "one aspect of a garden's representational ambitions was to epitomize the whole world within its own limited space" (198). He calls that the "raison d'être of the early botanical gardens," an idea that "sustained many other garden designs" (ibid.) throughout history. But it also suggests the garden's emblematic nature: to the extent that the garden depends for its existence on an assemblage of organic materials within a specific framework of time and space, it allegorizes the ecological, spatial, and historical conditions of human existence on this planet.

With this conference, the organizers seek to address the following questions: What would it mean to think modern human existence in terms of a garden ecology rather than a market economy? What would it mean to replace the *agora* with the *kipos* as the public place in which citizens negotiate the way they want to live in society with other humans and, more generally, with other living beings? At this point in history, can we shift the focus of modern human economic interests and activities from *extraction* (the violent removal of organic and non-organic substances from their environment), *production* (of that which sells), and *consumption* (of the things produced from the extracted substances) to *design* (of spaces that support life), *production* (of the things and substances necessary to sustain life), and *maintenance* (of the material and cultural foundations of life)? If cycles of (seasonal) growth define life in the garden, will recycling of that which has already been extracted and transformed into the things we live with define the future of existence on planet Earth? French gardener, botanist, and writer Gilles Clément raises similar questions, offering

*producing, sharing, and recycling* as activities inspired by the garden. He has recently been joined by a number of scholars and writers drawing our attention to the garden as a subject of historical and critical inquiry, perhaps most prominently among them Andrea Wulf and Emma Marris.

The overarching question for this conference is this: To what extent does the garden, a historically, politically, and socially loaded as well as culturally variegated space, provide us with new paradigms for thinking and living in an ecologically challenged world?

Here is a list with topical suggestions for panels and papers:

- Types of gardens and their social, political, ethical, anthropological, alimentary, etc. uses (flower garden, vegetable garden, botanical garden, zoological garden, urban garden, beer garden, *kindergarten*, cybergarden, etc.).
- Conceptual, aesthetic, historical, and material relations between *garden* and *landscape* and *national park*.
- The garden's allegorical, mythological, and utopian/ecotopian potentials.
- The garden as social space/heterotopia and the question of the boundary.
- The garden's affective ecologies.
- Gardens across cultures: diachronic and synchronic perspectives.
- Gardens in science and education (zoological and botanical gardens).
- Gardens in literature, art, film, and visual culture (their poetic, narratological, cinematic, and iconographic functions).
- Garden, eros, sexuality, and knowledge.
- The garden as linguistic, cultural, and educational resource.
- Political rhetoric and horticultural metaphors.
- Biosemiotics & the language of plants.
- Animals in the garden/ animals as gardeners.
- The garden in Ecocriticism, the Environmental Humanities, and Education.
- The pastoral and the horticultural in literature, art, film, philosophy, and political theory.
- Horticulture, agriculture and the future of modernity.

Coinciding with the 2018 State Horticultural Show (*Landesgartenschau*) in Würzburg, itself a city of gardens—the baroque Hofgarten at the Residenz, the Fürstengarten at the Festung Marienburg, the 1990 Landesgartenschau park, the Ringpark, the Botanic garden of the University, and the Lusamgärtlein with the memorial grave of Walther von der Vogelweide—this conference seeks to investigate the human experience of gardens and gardening as a paradigm for reconceptualizing space, history, and community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The primary conference languages will be English and German.

We welcome both scholarly and creative proposals. The submission formats are either for individual scholarly papers of 20 minutes, or individual creative contributions/performances of 20 minutes, or for pre-formed panels of 3-4 20-minute scholarly papers/creative contributions.

The format for submissions is as follows:

- individual proposals: title + abstract (c. 300 words) + biosketch (5-10 lines) + IT requirement + full contact details.
- preformed panels: 500 word abstract for the panel comprising general topic and format outline + participants' biosketches and full contact details + IT requirements, supplemented by individual 300 word abstract for each contribution on the panel.

All proposals should be submitted to the local organizers, Prof. Dr. Catrin Gersdorf, and her team.

Please use the following e-mail address:

[easlce2018@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:easlce2018@uni-wuerzburg.de)

**Submission deadline: January 15, 2018.**