

## Call for Papers

### Hinterlands

A Project in the Rural, Literary and Environmental Humanities

Hosted by the ASCA Amsterdam and WISER, 3-4 June 2021, online

The Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and WISER are co-convening an interdisciplinary online symposium on *Hinterlands*. The symposium is being organized as part of the ERC-Funded *Rural Imaginations* project at ASCA. The intellectual rationale for the focus on **Hinterlands** can be found attached.

We warmly invite contributions to this interdisciplinary project. If you are interested in participating, please send a title, an abstract of 250-300 words, and a short bio (under 100 words) to Hanneke Stuit at [h.h.stuit@uva.nl](mailto:h.h.stuit@uva.nl) by 10 April 2021. If your abstract is selected, we will ask you to present your ideas in a 7-minute video or audio recording, to be submitted before the online symposium. At the symposium, the recordings will be discussed in preparation for the journal and book publications. The full contributions should be approximately 6,000 words and are due on November 1, 2021. We invite contributions from all disciplines and across all places, with a strong interest in multidisciplinary approaches.

**The conveners of this event are Professor Esther Peeren and dr. Hanneke Stuit from ASCA Amsterdam and Professors Pamila Gupta and Sarah Nuttall at WISER Johannesburg. In addition to the detailed rationale/Call for Papers attached you can find attached 4 [5-min podcasts](#) by the conveners exploring some initial ideas about contemporary debates on hinterlands.**

### Hinterlands

Defined as a remote area situated away from coasts, riverbanks or cities, the hinterland involves a profound entanglement between the city and the country, with the hinterland traditionally seen to serve the (colonial) port or market town through, among other things, agriculture and resource extraction (Uzoigwe 1976). Historically, the hinterland takes up an underprivileged place in Lockean perspectives on the organisation of political society, which is seen to emanate outwards from the enclosed property of the free individual (Shilliam 2016). In this sense, the hinterland spatially and conceptually overlaps with the (neo)colonial and ecological impasses of the rural. Both the hinterland and the rural are perceived as lagging behind the metropolis, behind globalisation processes and even behind modernity itself. But where the rural is also strongly associated with idylls of retreat, colonial nostalgia, dwelling, the farm and nature conservation (Ndebele 1998; Gupta 2018; Stuit 2020; Dlamini 2020), the hinterland sits more frequently on the side of wastelands, grimness, sites of racial exclusion (such as informal settlements in South Africa), and the industrial and extractive ruination of landscapes (Tsing 2015).

Nowadays, the hinterland is no longer conceived as exclusively non-urban, since there are also suburban hinterlands and hinterlands in the form of ghost cities (Neel 2018). The environmental and oceanic humanities and a focus on new materialisms, moreover, urge us to think hinterlands as sites of entanglement (Nuttall 2009) that involve being attentive to the many intra-acting (Barad 2007) infrastructures, life forms and elements (such as water and nitrogen) that make up hinterlands (Bystrom and Hofmeyr 2017; Jue 2020; Nuttall 2020). In their everyday, non-spectacularised guise, the different hinterlands that may be distinguished feature not just food production and mining (Hall 2012), but also many logistical processes that are crucial for an intimately connected global trade, including data farms, distribution centres, and garbage disposals (Neel 2018). Hinterlands, moreover, are increasingly mobilised for (renewable) energy generation, making them important sites of contention in debates about climate change, although often without sustained attention for the historical and racial inequities that structure these debates (Chakrabarty 2018).

While specific hinterlands, especially in (post)colonial contexts, have received critical attention (Korieh 2000; Curto 2003) and the term seems to be experiencing somewhat of a resurgence (Topalovic et al. 2013), what is lacking is a conceptual approach that takes into account the abovementioned developments and asks how hinterlands might help us think through some of today's impasses (Berlant 2011) pertaining to the afterlives of colonialism, impending environmental collapse, and rural-urban divides and inequalities. As well, we could think of them as "affective economies" following Ahmed (2004), as potentially recalibrating the political power of boredom, desolation, resignation, exhaustion and indignation particularly in relation to the perceived right wing/populist proclivities of the rural and the hinterland (Peeren 2018). Such an approach would also entail looking closely at how the conceptualization of the hinterland is complicated by cross-pollinations between its literal meaning as a peripheralized place and its metaphorical association with that which lies beyond what is visible or known – an association operationalized, for example, in the Welsh television series *Hinterland / Y Gwyll* (2013-2016).

Possible questions to address at the workshop are:

- How can the concept of hinterlands help to rethink certain rural, urban and suburban spaces – through their material and affective dimensions – as sites from which to produce critical and engaged analysis of late capitalist formations and cultural imaginations today?
- How can we engage conceptually with fast changing hinterland worlds as pivotal sites of globalisation rather than as places that are perceived as static and still outsiders to neo-liberal urban living?
- How can we constructively mobilize the fact that hinterlands are generally less idealized than peripheralized spaces figured as rural or wilderness?
- Might a different conceptual architecture of the present become visible by connecting material knowledges from various hinterlands in different parts of the world?
- Could hinterlands be thought to delay or reroute the reach of coloniality and/or postcoloniality?
- How are hinterlands increasingly being mobilized as sites of populist sentiments and politics?

- What new forms of (more-than-human) communality and attachment become possible when rural-urban dynamics are cathected through the notion of the hinterland?
- In what ways does climate change appear differently from the perspective/materiality of the hinterland than from that of the rural or the (sub)urban?
- How do the entanglements of the hinterland differ from those in the rural or (sub)urban in terms of the specific agencies (animals, insects, pathogens, plants) involved?
- Can epistemologies and ontologies of hinterland give shape to investigations into more sustainable and inclusive futures?

## References

- Ahmed, Sara. "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22: 117-139.
- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Bystrom, Kerry, and Isabel Hofmeyr. "Oceanic Routes: (Post-It) Notes on Hydro-Colonialism." *Comparative Literature* 69.1 (2017): 1-6.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Anthropocene Time." *History and Theory* 57.1 (2018): 5-32.
- Curto, José C. *Enslaving Spirits: The Portuguese-Brazilian Alcohol Trade at Luanda and Its Hinterland, c. 1550-1830*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Dlamini, Jacob S.T. *Safari Nation: A Sociological History of the Kruger National Park*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020.
- Gupta, Pamila. "Village Delhi." *South and North: Contemporary Urban Orientations*. Eds. Kerry Bystrom et al. London: Routledge, 2018. 103-124.
- Hall, Ruth. "The Next Great Trek? South African Commercial Farmers Move North." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39.3-4 (2012): 823-843.
- Jue, Melody. *Wild Blue Media: Thinking through Seawater*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Korieh, Chima J. "The Nineteenth Century Commercial Transition in West Africa: The Case of the Biafra Hinterland." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 34.3 (2000): 588-615.
- Ndebele, Njabulo S. "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists." *Blank: Architecture After Apartheid*. Eds. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic. Cape Town: David Philips, 1998: 119-123.
- Neel, Phil A. *Hinterland: America's New Landscape of Class and Conflict*. London: Reaktion Books, 2018.
- Nuttall, Sarah. *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009.
- Nuttall, Sarah. "Pluvial Time/Wet Form." *New Literary History* 51.2 (2020): 455-472.
- Peeren, Esther. "The Affective Economies and Political Force of Rural Wilderness." *Landscape Research* 44(7): 834-845.
- Shilliam, Robbie. "Colonial Architecture and Relatable Hinterlands: Locke, Nandy, Fanon and the Bandung Spirit." *Constellations* 23.3 (2016): 425-435.

- Stuit, Hanneke. "The Ruins of the Rural Idyll: Reconfiguring the Image of the Farm in *Homeland* and *Five Fingers for Marseilles*." *Social Dynamics* 46(3): 561-579.
- Topelovic, Milica, et al. *Hinterland: Singapore, Johor, Riau*. Zurich: Architecture of Territory/ETH, 2013.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Uzoigwe, G. N. "Spheres of Influence and the Doctrine of the Hinterland in the Partition of Africa." *Journal of African Studies* 3.2 (1976): 183.