

# TESTIMONY AS ENVIRONMENT VIOLENCE, AESTHETICS, AGENCY

Symposium, 18-20 January 2019, London School of Economics (LSE)

Curated and convened by Eray Çaylı (European Institute, LSE)

*Attendance free; booking essential via [lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Events/TaE](http://lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Events/TaE)*

This symposium aims to engage critically with the increasingly prominent role that the environment—understood here to encompass the more-than-human entities, scales and forces of geology, ecosystems and nature-culture assemblages—is assigned in contemporary attempts to come to grips with political violence. It asks, how might this role inform the ways in which to identify and act upon rights violations? Similar enquiries have recently drawn on the ways in which the environment might be enlisted to help testify to specific subject positions involved in violence such as those of perpetrator and victim. Aesthetics has been explored in this vein as a medium through which to enhance—often by way of geo-spatial and visual technologies—testimony's material verifiability or 'sensibility'. This symposium seeks to expand on such enquiries and explorations by approaching testimony as involving a process of bearing witness as well as one of witnessing, the former being a much more in-depth, long-term, ambiguity-laden, multi-layered and self-reflexive phenomenon than the latter. This double meaning is intended to help acknowledge subjectivity's irreducibility to subject position, and the importance of agency as its fulcrum. Accordingly, the symposium aims to explore aesthetics as a prime medium through which sensibilities and insensibilities towards events are produced and made into the basis of often-hierarchized distinctions between various epistemic regimes employed in approaching the question of violence, and the sorts of agency hindered or enabled in so doing. The event will kick off with an evening screening of moving image works that engage with the symposium's framework through the case of Turkey, followed by two days of talks by critical geographers, art theorists, anthropologists and architects.

—with the participation of artists [Vahap Avşar](#), [Gürcan Keltek](#), [İz Öztat](#), [belit sağ](#), [Serkan Taycan](#), and scholars [Nishat Awan](#) (Goldsmiths, University of London), [Andrew Barry](#) (University College London), [Merve Bedir](#) (Hong Kong University), [Zerrin Özlem Biner](#) (University of Kent), [Lindsay Bremner](#) (University of Westminster), [Nerea Calvillo](#) (University of Warwick), [Ryan Centner](#) (LSE), [Eray Çaylı](#) (LSE), [Ayça Çubukçu](#) (LSE), [Mangalika de Silva](#) (New York University), [TJ Demos](#) (University of California Santa Cruz), [Başak Ertür](#) (Birkbeck College), [Allen Feldman](#) (New York University Steinhardt), [Tariq Jazeel](#) (University College London), [Helene Kazan](#) (The New School's Vera List Center for Art & Politics), [Alisa Lebow](#) (University of Sussex), [Hannah Meszaros Martin](#) (Goldsmiths, University of London), [Esra Özyürek](#) (LSE), [Peg Rawes](#) (University College London), [Shela Sheikh](#) (Goldsmiths, University of London), and [Austin Zeiderman](#) (LSE).

## 18 JANUARY 2019, 6-8.30pm, Hong Kong Theatre (Clement House, 265 Strand WC2R 1DH)

**SCREENING** of moving image works *Road to Arguvan* (Vahap Avşar, 2013), *Recounting Nightmares to Running Water* (İz Öztat, 2015), "Chapter V" from *Meteors* (Gürcan Keltek, 2017), *September-October 2015, Cizre* (belit sağ, 2015), and *A Wall of Water* (Serkan Taycan, 2018), followed by panel discussion and Q&A with the artists (discussant: Alisa Lebow; chaired by Eray Çaylı).

## 19 JANUARY 2019, 10.30am-6.30pm, OLD.4.10 (Old Building, Houghton St. WC2A 2AE)

**10.30-10.45am:** Morning tea & coffee

**10.45-11am:** Introductory remarks (Eray Çaylı)

**11am-12.30pm** (chair/respondent: Eray Çaylı): **Energy Slave Maps: Visualisations of Inhumane Technocratic Data** (Peg Rawes) + **Visualising Pollution, Witnessing Slow Violence** (Nerea Calvillo)

**12.30-1.30pm:** Lunch

**1.30-3pm** (chair/respondent: Austin Zeiderman): **The Pixel and the Plot: Delineating the Realm of the Outlaw in Low Resolution** (Hannah Meszaros Martin) + **Digital Witnessing and the Racialised Body** (Nishat Awan)

**3-4.30pm** (chair/respondent: Esra Özyürek): **Critical Evidence** (Andrew Barry) + **Resilience's Violence and Violence's Resilience: Fieldnotes on Infrastructure and Disaster in Contemporary Turkey** (Eray Çaylı)

**4.30-5pm:** Tea & coffee break

**5-6.30pm** (chair/respondent: Ayça Çubukçu): **The Poetic Testimony of Violence: What the Law Excludes** (Helene Kazan) + **Before the Law at Guantanamo: Anomic Lawscapes and Testimonial Exscription** (Allen Feldman)

## 20 JANUARY 2019, 10am-4pm, OLD.4.10 (Old Building, Houghton St. WC2A 2AE)

**10-11.30am** (chair/respondent: Ryan Centner): **Witnessing Erasure: Enforced Disappearance and the Making of Ekphrasic Umwelten** (Mangalika de Silva) + **The Agency of Fire: Burning Aesthetics** (TJ Demos)

**11.30-11.45am:** Tea & coffee break

**11.45am-1.15pm** (chair/respondent: Zerrin Özlem Biner): **Uncommon River: Concurring Memories and Boundaries of Immanence along the Maritsa River** (Merve Bedir) + **Sedimentary Humanitarianism** (Lindsay Bremner)

**1.15-2pm:** Lunch

**2-3.30pm** (chair/respondent: Başak Ertür): **Between Superstes and Testis: More-than-Human Witnessing and (Post-)Representational Practices** (Shela Sheikh) + **Tropical Modernism/ Environmental Nationalism: The Politics of Built Space in Postcolonial Sri Lanka** (Tariq Jazeel)

**3.30-4pm:** Post-symposium discussion and plans for publication (chair: Eray Çaylı)