



humanities



Special Issue Reprint

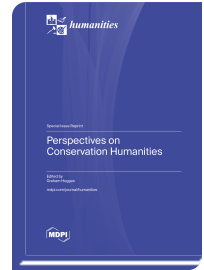
Perspectives on Conservation Humanities

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Edited by
Graham Huggan

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Broadly defined, conservation humanities is an emerging paradigm that exists within the larger multi- and inter-disciplinary field of environmental humanities which aims at using humanities-based methods—textual and discourse analysis, philosophical and historical inquiry, ethnographic fieldwork—to shed light on contemporary conservation issues and problems, paramount among them being today's alarmingly intensifying levels of biodiversity loss. Defining conservation humanities as a paradigm rather than a field is not just a reflection on the fact that its academic status has yet to be fully established. It also suggests that its main value, at least at this preliminary stage, lies in conceptualizing conservation problems rather than in seeking the kinds of direct evidence that might help to solve them, and indeed it shares environmental humanities' general suspicion towards top-down, solution-driven approaches that fail to take account of local ecological knowledge or confront conspicuously unequal distributions of wealth. However, the task of conservation humanities is not limited to exploring ongoing conservation issues from a wide range of cross-disciplinary humanities perspectives; it is also to ask questions about the changing meanings and functions of conservation and the humanities themselves. This Special Issue, the first dedicated to its subject, asks what role the humanities can play in addressing historical conservation issues, and what humanities scholars can contribute to contemporary conservation debates.



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