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Project title

Breathing under Blockade: Ruined and Resistant Ecologies in a UNESCO Heritage Site in Turkey

Abstract

This project explores natural heritage sites in postwar geographies at the complex intersection of climate change, endangerment, political violence, heritage politics, and questions around displacement, memory and cultural belonging. In many postwar situations, there is evidence of a popular and academic concern to restore immediately war-damaged heritage and to revive old cultural traditions. In contrast to this humanist and restorative approach, I propose to think not *about*, but *with* ecology to show that ecology is not mere context for or separate from, but constitutive to sites built on colonial extraction under war, genocidal erasure, and profound environmental degradation. With specific attention to the Hewsel Gardens, an endangered ancient ecosystem in the Kurdish region in Turkey, my project seeks to understand the force of ecology as an active agent of change. The case of Hewsel suggests that while ecology needs to be studied as a multispecies constellation under the larger context of the climate change, such a constellation is not terra nullius, nobody's land, empty space. Instead, violent histories of land expropriation, displacement, as well as resilience and resistance are enacted upon these milieus.