

**Paradise on Fire**  
**ASLE Thirteenth Biennial Conference**  
**June 26-30 2019**

**University of California Davis**

<https://www.asle.org/conference/biennial-conference/>

## **CALL FOR PANELS**

This year we are experimenting with a two-part submission process intended to make the conference more participant-driven and democratic. The first step is this Call is for PANELS. We are also issuing a call for Pre/Post Conference Workshop proposals at this time. **Proposals may be submitted until Sept. 1, 2018.**

Conference panels may be proposed by anyone interested in organizing one. All panels are 90 minutes long and may take the form of a traditional paper session (4 presenters); a roundtable (up to 6 presenters making brief remarks that foster lively conversation); or a jam session (up to 8 participants in a nontraditional format of the organizer's choosing that includes significant audience participation). These panels may be of two types:

- A preformed panel that lists all participants and is ready for the conference program as it stands.
- A panel seeking participants, to be filled by its organizers through the conference call for papers released in October. We expect the majority of accepted panels to be of this kind.

Panel proposals should be submitted electronically. The complete process is detailed after the conference description below. The ASLE conference committee will select a wide range of proposed panels appropriate to the conference theme and panel proposers will be notified of success by October 1, 2018. ASLE will then distribute by email and on our website a Call for Papers listing all conference panels seeking paper proposals. Those who wish to participate in the conference may submit a proposal for consideration for inclusion within one of these panels, or for one of the open topic panels to be organized by the conference committee. Panel organizers will inform paper proposers if a submission has been accepted no later than January 10, 2019. All paper proposals that do not find an initial home will also be considered for placement in one of the open topic panels. Paper submissions for these panels begin Oct. 15 and ends Dec. 15. Please email us at [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org) with any questions.

## **Conference Theme: Paradise on Fire**

"If paradise now arises in hell, it's because in the suspension of the usual order and the failure of most systems, we are free to live and act another way."

— Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*

The Biennial ASLE Conference will be held in Davis, California, in June 2019. Following a longstanding tradition, this conference gathers scholars and artists working in a diverse array of environmental humanities projects and offers a special focus on some themes that resonate well with the location of the meeting.

Paradise does not exist, and yet that never seems to stop people from finding it, or building it, or dreaming its contours – often to the detriment of humans and nonhumans on the wrong side of its walls. Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy imagines a walled city with a climate-controlled dome called Paradise where genetic engineers create new forms of life, a bubble breached by human violence and climate catastrophe. In the sixteenth century Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo imagined a place called “California,” an island ruled by a dark skinned Amazonian queen with an Arabic name, Califia (*Las Sergas de Esplandián*). *California* was affixed to our maps by conquistadors, eager readers of Montalvo who believed the Earthly Paradise to be nearby. The price of its establishment was the genocide of the land’s indigenous populations. The Greek word for Eden is “Paradise,” a walled garden that bars entrance to most. Yet as Octavia Butler’s dystopian vision of California on fire has shown, walls seldom lead to lasting safety and cannot exclude a turbulent world for long (*The Parable of the Sower*). If as Rebecca Solnit contends, “paradise arises in hell,” when democratic communities are built from the ground up during times of disaster that leave us “free to live and act another way,” what might life in catastrophic times entail for the environmental humanities? How should we write, teach, protest, live, and act during this era when “paradise” is on fire, figuratively and literally?

The Biennial ASLE Conference “Paradise on Fire” explores the connections among storytelling, real and imagined landscapes, future-making, activism, envired spaces, differential exclusions, long histories, and the disaster-prone terrains of the Anthropocene. Plenary addresses will be given by Ursula Heise, Cherríe Moraga, Melissa K. Nelson, and Nnedi Okorafor.

Topics may include but are certainly not limited to:

- reckoning with “paradise” in the face of colonial histories, environmental injustice, and ecological catastrophe
- the intimacy of myth to possibility, alternative realities, and catastrophe
- the reduction of diversity after the arrival of settler colonialists, especially but not only in California
- cross-cultural currents and global vectors, human and nonhuman
- the relation of imagination to discovery, settlement and transformation
- extinction, ecological imperialism, monstrosity, megafauna, and scale
- gender, race and ecology in dystopian times
- the proliferation of material and ideological walls around enclaves, states, and nations
- attending better to the people, animals, plants, and natural forces that find themselves on the wrong side of the gate, forced into communities not of their choosing, or forced to migrate without safe destinations
- radical welcome: creating more just, capacious, and humane modes of living together across species

- how the past matters to the imagination of a more capacious future
- climate fiction (CliFi), climate fact, and the future of ecological science studies
- archives of recovery and enclosure
- Afro-futurisms, Indigenous futurisms, Latinx futurisms, Asian futurisms, queer futurisms
- California and beyond: exceptionalism, secession, natural and unnatural disasters, green gentrification (the L.A. River), evacuation zones, Sanctuary Cities and States, gated communities, immigration and Dreamers, Trump's border wall, housing and being humane
- The Trans-Pacific: imaginaries, cultures, materialities, flows
- Fire as emblematic of the strange agencies and hybrid onto-epistemologies of the Anthropocene, and fire as emblematic of the passion, energy, and incendiary creativity of activism

ASLE is a diverse professional community that is enriched by the multiple experiences, cultures, and backgrounds of its members, and we strive for access, equity, and inclusion in the conference.

### **Panel Submission Process**

We are modifying the organization of the 2019 ASLE conference to ensure that the conference program reflects the diverse strengths and interests of the ASLE community. As our membership and the number of conference presenters have grown, a small selection committee is likely no longer the best judge of our members' capacious range of interests and expertise. We also want to empower ASLE members to shape the conference they will attend. As in past years, there will also be a significant number of panels organized by the conference committee based on open submission, ensuring that everyone's interests are welcomed.

Proposed panels for the ASLE 2019 conference may be submitted until **September 1, 2018**. The secure submissions site requires you to create a simple login account to submit your panel proposal, which will also allow you to view your submission and make modifications up to the deadline. Submit here: <https://asle.submittable.com/submit>

Please note that unlike in previous years we are not seeking only preformed panels. We hope to have many open panels that will choose their participants through the Call for Papers circulated in October.

All conference panels are 90-minutes long. ASLE strongly encourages organizers to experiment with alternative forms of presentation, discussion and engagement. Both scholarly and creative submissions are very welcome. Panels which are aligned with the conference themes and reflect the diversity of the ASLE mission will be given priority.

Key information:

- Proposals for panels must include the type (traditional papers, with or without a respondent; roundtable; jam session of any kind) and a 250 word abstract for the panel outlining topic, format, and participants' roles.

- Preformed panels must include a short synopsis of the role of each participant and a brief bio (two or three sentences).
- Multiple panel submissions are allowed, but keep in mind that only one paper submission is allowed per person, as participants can present only once during the conference. Pre/post conference workshop participation, organizing panels, and chairing a panel do not count as presenting. Panels may be co-proposed.
- Panel proposals must be submitted online.
- To encourage institutional diversity and exchange, all panels must include participants from more than one institution and from more than one academic level/sector
- ASLE policy is currently to discourage virtual participation at our biennial conferences except in extraordinary circumstances or to accommodate disability.

**Panel proposals must be submitted by September 1 2018 at**

<https://asle.submittable.com/submit>. A diverse array of panels in keeping with the conference theme will be chosen by the conference committee, and a call for papers will then be released October 1. Anyone who wishes to participate in the ASLE conference may then submit a paper proposal for consideration for inclusion within a specific panel, or within an open panel, between October 15 and December 15, 2018. Panel organizers themselves will choose presenters from the submissions that they receive and will let paper proposers know if their paper has been accepted no later than January 10, 2019. All paper proposals that do not find a home in the panel to which they were submitted will be considered for placement into one of the conference's many open panels.

Thank you for your patience as we attempt this two-step method of organizing our biennial gathering. Our desire is to maximize the ability of our membership to participate in the shaping of the conference, an event at the very heart of our ASLE community. As interest in the environmental humanities has greatly expanded, we hope this structure will not only be more transparent but will take better advantage of the wide-ranging interests, expertise, and diversity within ASLE. Please email us at [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org) with any questions.

**Pre/Post Conference Workshops Call for Proposals**

We will offer a number of workshops on important and emerging topics that reflect the diversity of our approaches and our membership. These workshops may or may not relate directly to the conference theme (although we encourage it) and will be held either at the beginning of the conference on Wednesday, June 25th or at the end, on Sunday, June 30th. Ideally, Sunday workshops will be more experimental; for example, site-based and/or including a field component.

We are calling for proposals for these workshops, and will choose the slate of offerings from the submissions. Workshop leaders will receive free registration for the 2019 conference and a complimentary year's membership in ASLE. For further information or to submit a proposal,

please email Nicole Seymour, Conference Workshop Coordinator, at [nseymour@fullerton.edu](mailto:nseymour@fullerton.edu).  
**Workshop proposals must be sent to the coordinator by September 1, 2018.**

Proposals should include:

- a 500-word max description of the proposed workshop theme and structure (for four hours), in addition to the leader's or leaders' (limited to two) particular qualifications to lead it; and
- vita for the leader or leaders.

Information on which topics are being offered will be available in late Fall 2018. There is limited availability (15 persons) in each workshop, so you will need to pre-register to reserve a spot. As participants' names will appear on the program, we encourage registrants to apply to present in one of these events instead of giving a paper at the conference. In addition to the workshops to be proposed, our Graduate Liaisons will organize a writing workshop for graduate students.

If you have any questions, please email Nicole Seymour at [nseymour@fullerton.edu](mailto:nseymour@fullerton.edu).