

## **Becoming Aware of Insects. Humanities in the Face of Crisis**

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In their beautiful book on words for plants, animals and other living beings that are currently in danger of disappearing from the English language, author Robert Macfarlane and artist Jackie Morris present bluebells, blackberries, larks, raven, weasels, natters and newts, but not a single insect of our everyday lives.

Facing the effects of the anthropocene, we have learned that this crisis also involves the mass extinction of other than human beings and especially an „insectageddon“ (George Monbiot). In this respect, the disregard of bees, mosquitos, ticks or flies in a book about the loss of words for living beings in our everyday lives appears to be symptomatic; symptomatic for societies and humanities in which insects rarely gain any perception at all. This lack of perception also results from the predominant orders, perspectives, and values of modernity. If we understand modernity as a reduction in favour of effectivity and productivity, concerning insects this means that our knowledge at best extends to useful and/or harmful insects. Other insects whose role appears to be less significant in this worldview are disregarded. Meanwhile, in the current crisis this perception changes: societies and the sciences and humanities start to become aware of the general importance of insects and their essential role for life on earth.

Thinking with the charismatic „Violet Carpenter Bee“ (Blaue Holzbiene, *Xylocopa violacea*), my keynote will reflect how insects are overlooked and disregarded in our cultural heritage. Focusing on examples mainly from Germany, I will discuss which new perspectives the humanities might gain in becoming aware of insects as a topic of their interest and how these new perspectives may help our societies to live within the „metamorphosis of our worlds“ (Ulrich Beck). Framed within the perspectives of Multispecies Studies and Environmental Humanities, I suggest to explore new questions not only for innovative future studies but also for responsibly conceived contributions from the humanities. As experts of human possibilities, the humanities are able to make an essential contribution to overcoming the traumatic effects of modernity.