

Remembering Environmental and Natural
DISASTERS
in Europe



Subaltern Memories 2026

5th International Conference

April 16, 2026

European University Institute, Florence (Italy)

Villa Salviati - Sala del Consiglio

INTRODUCTION

The fifth edition of EUROM's annual series Subaltern Memories focuses on voices that have too often been marginalised or insufficiently recognised within dominant narratives of environmental and natural disasters.

Organised in collaboration with the European University Institute (EUI), this year's conference seeks to foreground the experiences of those affected by past environmental and natural catastrophes, as well as the memory initiatives associated with them that have long remained overlooked or inadequately acknowledged in public discourse.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the conference examines its long-term human, social, and environmental consequences, as well as the ongoing struggles of affected communities for recognition and remembrance. The programme further includes a panel on major natural disasters in Italy, alongside a session dedicated to broader transnational perspectives, addressing, in particular, the environmental consequences of armed conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine.

Through these case studies, this edition of the Subaltern Memories conference offers a critical examination of how environmental suffering has been remembered—or neglected—in Europe. In doing so, it foregrounds subaltern experiences while interrogating dominant narratives of progress, responsibility, and resilience. At a time when the consequences of climate change are becoming increasingly visible—often manifesting in devastating and deadly disasters—such critical reflection acquires renewed urgency.



COMUNE MEDA E SEVESO
ZONA INFESTATA
di
sostanze tossiche
DIVIETO
TOCCARE O INGERIRE PRODOTTI
ORTOFRUTTICOLI. EVITARE
CONTATTI CON VEGETAZIONE,
TERRA E ERBE IN GENERE.
LIVELLO GARANZIA

DIVIETO DI ACCESSO
ALLE PERSONE NON AUTORIZZATE
I TRASGRESSORI saranno deferiti
all'Autorità Giudiziaria ai sensi
dell'Art. 650 C.P.

Environmental disaster at Seveso, Italy. July 10, 1976.
Unknown author, public domain. Via Wikimedia Commons.

PROGRAMME

9.00 AM **Arrival and registration**

9.30 AM **Opening Words**

Monika Baar, European University Institute

Luca Bellizzi, Delegation of the Government
of Catalonia to Italy

Jordi Guixé, European Observatory on Memories

9.45 AM - 11.15 AM

Panel 1:

War and environmental consequences,
moderated by Oriol López (EUROM)

**Whose environment?
Perspectives on environmental
history and historiography
in Europe and beyond**

Corinna Unger

**Weaponising water in
the Spanish Civil War:
An Environmental History**

Santiago Gorostiza

**Submerging and Surfacing:
Nova Kakhovka in Ukrainian
Contemporary Art**

Polina Baitsym

11.30 AM **Visit to the Historical Archives
of the European Union**
Exploring the Roots of European Environmental Policy
with Jacopo Cellini.

1.00 PM **Lunch break**

2.30 PM - 3.30 PM

Panel 2:
**Environmental impacts of technological disasters
in Italy: memory and recognition,**
moderated by Fernanda Zanuzzi (EUROM)

The Vajont Dam disaster in 1963
Chiara Calzana

The Seveso disaster in 1976
Monika Baar

3.30 PM - 4.30 PM

Keynote:
**A Beacon of Hope, a Catastrophe,
a Landscape Scar. Chernobyl's (In-)visible Impact**
Achim Klüppelberg

Presented by Monika Baar

SPEAKERS

Achim Klüppelberg is a historian of energy systems and their implications on life, focused on Eastern Europe and the former USSR. He earned his PhD from the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and currently researches energy transitions and the so-called “technocratic culture”.

Chiara Calzana holds a PhD in Cultural and Social Anthropology from the University of Milano-Bicocca. She researches historical anthropology and memory studies, focusing on disaster memory and contemporary legacies of fascism in Europe.

Corinna Unger is Professor of Global and Colonial History at the European University Institute in Florence. Her research focuses on decolonization, development, pesticide regulation, and the history of forest use.

Jacopo Cellini is a Research Fellow at the Historical Archives of the European Union. His work focuses on European integration, political groups in the European Parliament, and the historical development of environmental policy in Europe.

Monika Baar is Professor of East-Central and South-Eastern European History at the EUI. Her earlier research focused on historiography, nationalism, political thought and the challenges faced by small cultures. Currently, she is studying the history of disability movements in Europe.

Polina Baitsym is an art historian and curator specializing in Ukrainian Soviet visual arts. She has co-authored books on Ukrainian Soviet mosaics and recently co-curated exhibitions on socialist design. She is a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute.

Santiago Gorostiza is an environmental historian at Lund University (Sweden) studying war, environmental destruction, and socio-ecological change. Most of his research has focused on twentieth-century Spain.



Memorial to Those who Saved the World. Chernobyl (Ukraine)

This photo is part of the photo exhibit Chernobyl: the legacy of a disaster.
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SURVEY

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Project reference: 101236354
Type of activity: Mutual learning
Title: Subaltern Memories 2026
Date: 16/04/2026
Hybrid event

Thank you very much for your collaboration!

The European Observatory on Memories (EUROM), based at the University of Barcelona's Solidarity Foundation, was founded in 2012 to foster dialogue on historical memory and to promote fundamental rights through collaboration among academia, institutions, cultural centres, and civil society.

The European University Institute (EUI), established in 1972 by the European Union, is a postgraduate and postdoctoral research institution specialising in the social sciences and humanities.

For this conference, EUROM and the EUI's Department of History join forces to explore EU remembrance policies in the context of the profound societal challenges posed by climate change.

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