

Water, Animals, and Arctic Climate Change: An International Symposium

December 12–13, 2018, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu

Organizer: *The Changing Environment of the North: Cultural Representations and Uses of Water*, <https://blogs.uef.fi/cen-aqua/>

Human and non-human experiences are part of the Arctic reality, and these both must be approached and analyzed with the help of interdisciplinary humanist studies and their highly developed methods and concepts. Natural sciences, politics, economics, and technology and the strategies they produce have not focused enough on the changing conditions of human and non-human lives in the North. What we suggest as an innovative contribution and a novel perspective to the Northern theme is implicated in the key question of the symposium: What does the North, and the Arctic, look like when we investigate its history and narratives through its waters, rivers, and seas – including the lack of water? Accordingly, the multidisciplinary approach corresponds to our focus on the northern geography thought more in categories of water than through land. It is the aim of the symposium to trace the impact of climate change on human and non-human adaptation in the Arctic regions as well as develop the concept of *aquagraphy*, which includes an analytical means of exploring multiple Northern waters turned into glaciers, ice, snow, and floods.

The symposium will shift the focus from purely textual ecocriticism to the recent breakthroughs in material ecocriticism and explore the creative role of materiality in narrative meaning-making. Our approach is thoroughly informed by the idea of water as a physical and material as well as a cultural and imaginary form. Indeed, one of the main challenges for environmental humanities has been the material turn and the conception that all organisms live in complex interrelated systems and networks. The ontology addressed by our project is a complex intersection of human and non-human bodies, natures, and political discourses. The main concern is to challenge the predictability between human and non-human categories and to examine “liquid” practices which both stabilize and unsettle borders and hierarchies. With an emphasis on a non-dualistic perspective, we question the schism between nature and its narrativization in order to reconcile matter and meaning. We aim to rethink the material-semiotic interconnections in Stacy Alaimo’s sense of “naturecultures,” the idea of “trans-corporeal” cohabitation of human and non-human stories in the Arctic region and in the age of the Anthropocene.

We invite presentations that address all three key topics of the symposium: water in its different manifestations, human and non-human animals, and Arctic climate change. The symposium will include a keynote lecture by Professor **Scott Slovic** (University of Idaho, USA). Individual papers are presented and discussed in a two-day workshop. Instead of conventional conference papers, we ask the participants to present new theoretical openings and analytical ideas which would provide a basis to a scholarly article. Articles are meant to be published in an anthology based on the presentations and edited by Markku Lehtimäki, Arja Rosenholm, and Scott Slovic. Please send the title of your presentation and a brief description of the contents of the presentation to Markku Lehtimäki and Arja Rosenholm no later than **October 31, 2018**.

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