

No. 2, 2025. *Post-Anthropocentric Water Relations at the Bothnian Bay*

POST-BOTHNIA POST

- *POST-BOTHNIA Project news*
- *Excursion at the Bothnian Bay*
- *InfraNorth Conference, report*
- *Conferences & Seminars on water 2026*
 - *Recent Publications*
 - *Water-Society projects*



POST-BOTHNIA Project news/ greeting

Welcome to read about recent news and developments in our Post-Bothnia project, as well as updates on interesting literature, projects, and future events in the field of critical water studies.

Monica Tennberg, PI



Immersing oneself into the biopolitics of the Bothnian Bay

Text: Monica Tennberg, Photo: Heidi Konttinen

My main activity this year has been to develop a theoretical and methodological framework for studying post-anthropocentric water relations. I decided to build on recent discussions on expanding the biopolitical tradition to include the non-human dimension. In practice, I have developed an approach to include non-human entities, such as the Baltic Salmon, Baltic Herring, and invasive alien species, into the study of Baltic Sea politics, particularly concerning the Bothnian Bay. The framework focuses on how marine life is incorporated into politics about fisheries, nature conservation, and restoration as hierarchies and justifications, and on how different practices for caring for marine life are developed and implemented accordingly. I have presented my framework in various seminars, workshops, and conferences during the year.

About rain as waste and communal water extraction

Text & Photos: Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo

This year, I completed my research on stormwater management, culminating in the publication "Arctic Urban Water Management: Rain and Snow in Rovaniemi" in a special issue edited by Peter Hemmersam and David Chapman. Building on this work, I have now turned my attention to the complexities of freshwater provision. While the topic is vast, my current focus lies on the small water cooperatives of Lapland, where volunteers manage the daily operation and maintenance of communal water networks. This project fulfils a long-standing interest of mine in exploring the Finnish culture of talkoovoima—the power of collective, voluntary effort—which finds particular expression in the context of water provision within remote communities.



Living with ice

Text: Sohvi Kangasluoma, Photo: Juho Karhu

The ice was our home for six months—one hundred eighty-five days, to be exact.

We anchored our boat in a small bay in western Kalaallit Nunaat at the end of November and let the ice gradually take over the waters surrounding our floating home.

It is curious how quickly ice becomes so normal. Our boat, a creature of the sea, had always lived on water, yet now it stood still on a field of ice—like it belonged there. We didn't need a dinghy to go ashore anymore—we could step onto the ice from the side of the boat whenever we wanted.

Gradually, the ice invited us to explore the ocean from another perspective, gliding over its surface on skis or wandering across it on foot.

Isolation isn't really a term I would use to describe our time in the ice—we had each other, our dog, and the whole wide, white, fluffy, snowy world just outside the hatch. The ice and the surrounding landscape offered endless opportunities to get to know the land around us.

It was peaceful.

Six months is a long time to be alone on a boat, but somehow it wasn't enough. Winter turned into spring quickly, without asking us, and spring into summer.

Slowly, the birds returned from the south, the small plants began to reach for the sky after a long winter under the heavy snow, and the ice around us began to thaw.

Then, suddenly, we floated again.

See you later, ice.



From research to a film production: Creating awareness of seal hunting cultures

Text & Photos: Heidi Konttinen

The needle pierces dry skin with a popping sound. With steady hands, a woman draws the thread through the dehaired and dried seal skin. As the thread passes through the leather, it produces a rustling sound that feels oddly calming. I am wondering if this sound has remained the same throughout generations. What kind of feelings have these sounds of sewing kamik (seal skin boot) evoked in West Greenlandic homes? As I fall deeper into my thoughts, accompanied by the soothing sounds of sewing, I hear Mauri's voice, expressing that he is now happy with this footage from the kamik-making. I stopped recording and put down the headphones and the boom mic.



In September 2024, kalaallisuut [West Greenlandic regalia] maker and teacher Vera Lange Larsen, movie artist Mauri Lähdesmäki, and I (Heidi Konttinen, researcher) were in Sisimiut, Greenland, to capture the art of kalaallisuut making in film. Vera initiated this collaborative project in one of our early meetings regarding my research on sealing in Greenland. She wished to raise awareness of the work of kalaallisuut making, which is no longer as well-known among Greenlandic people. For me, this film project was an opportunity to give back to the community and to disseminate the research results to the public. Acknowledging our limited movie-making skills, we were happy to have Mauri, an award-winning movie artist, on board take responsibility for that part.

Our aim is to produce three films: an educational film on kalaallisuut making (Sisimiut, Greenland), an educational film on preparing paint from seal oil (the Bothnian Bay, Finland), and a short film presenting seal-hunting cultures (Greenland and Finland). We applied for and received funding from NAPA (The Nordic Institute in Greenland) to complete the first part of the project, which consisted of two weeks of filming in September 2024. Personally, I was excited about the chance to see the entire process of kalaallisuut making. At that time, I had just finished writing an [article](#) about the work of kalaallisuut makers in contemporary Greenland, but I had seen only parts of the process. To my surprise, perhaps even better than seeing was hearing! The local audio designer had to cancel at the last minute, so I was promoted to record the film's audio. This was a role I had never played before, but after I made peace with my insecurities, I was carried away with the world of enhanced audio. I heard Vera picking up a pearl with a needle for beadwork, and what the scraping of seal skin is supposed to sound like. Through the microphone, the background noise turned into a storyteller.

The film project is still ongoing, and I am looking forward to many more unexpected encounters with the worlds I have not met/heard before. If you are interested in reading more and following updates on this project, take a look at my research blog, whosesustainability.wordpress.com.

Special issue: Northern H2O in the Anthropocene Era

Text: Sohvi Kangasluoma, Sanna Kopra and Monica Tennberg, Photo: Heidi Konttinen

This theme issue of the *Alue & Ympäristö* journal focuses on the role of H2O in society – not just as a chemical formula – but on water as a political actor, an object of control, a cultural factor, a transboundary natural force, an arena for conflicts and cooperation, and an object of protection. The special issue, edited by Sohvi Kangasluoma, Sanna Kopra, and Monica Tennberg, focuses on the Finnish relationship with water, which the articles in the theme issue shed light on in different ways.

During the Anthropocene, water became an increasingly important issue. However, in areas with abundant water, such as the north, there has been no need to worry about water sufficiency. Water has become, above all, a resource, used for clean drinking water, irrigation for crops, and energy. In times of a global environmental crisis, an alternative to the human-centric Anthropocene, the Hydrocene emphasizes water as a focal point of worldwide care and concern. Two themes in particular stand out from the articles: the changing relationship with water, historically and practically, and the rights and responsibilities for water, for humans and animals, as well as in terms of participation and governance practices.



Excursion to the national park in the Bothnian Bay

Text: Monica Tennberg, Photos: Heidi Konttinen

A group from the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, visited the national park in Bothnian Bay on a sunny, windy day last August. The national park is situated in the northernmost part of the bay, in the outer archipelago of Kemi and Tornio. The trip started from Kemi harbor, and the journey to Pensaskari, one of the islands in the national park in Bothnian Bay, took a couple of hours on board the ship Jähti. The captain, Olli Ahonen, took the group to the island, introduced the tiny, but informative museum there, and discussed the island's history and nature with the group.



Report from the InfraNorth Conference

Text & Photos: Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo

*Beyond Infrastructure:
(Un-)built Environments in the Anthropocene*

Vienna, 23–25 September 2025

The three-day InfraNorth conference featured a series of inspiring and thought-provoking presentations on water-related themes, exploring how infrastructure shapes ecological, political, and social relationships in the Anthropocene.

Sunna Kokkonen discussed recent efforts to remove the invasive pink salmon species from the Njauddâm and Deatnu rivers, drawing on observations from the Skoltefossen rapids. She noted that a recent river blockage, intended to control the invasive species, instead prevented local Atlantic salmon from migrating upstream, while the pink salmon successfully adapted by using the fish ladder—a failed intervention. Once the blockage was removed, local fishers began targeting pink salmon through more sustainable methods. Kokkonen argued that the blocking and unblocking of the river has become a form of political action.

Paul Katterl presented his ethnographic research among forest workers in Vienna's drinking water catchment area. He demonstrated how maintaining "Wiener Wasser" depends on long-term forest management to ensure that the landscape functions as a sponge for the city's water supply. Following a major storm in the 1970s, vast areas required reforestation, and young trees needed protection from deer. In this complex system of forest-based water infrastructure, even wolves migrating from Italy are welcomed for their ecological role in controlling deer populations and supporting forest regeneration.

Erika Takahashi and Kirsi Sonck-Rautio reported from the Åland Islands in Finland, focusing on the environmental transformations affecting everyday life. Whereas winter island-hopping on ice was once a common practice, warming temperatures have rendered the ice unsafe, leaving residents dependent on infrequent ferry connections. These shifting environmental and infrastructural conditions profoundly shape social relations among the islands' 50,000 permanent inhabitants.

Natalya Friedan examined the ongoing debates surrounding the proposed "Ike Dike," a massive infrastructure project designed to protect Houston and its oil refineries from hurricanes and flooding. She highlighted the political and ethical tensions around funding, noting the irony of oil companies seeking public money to safeguard their operations against the very climate impacts their industry has helped produce.

Mari-Sohvi Miettinen shared insights from her fieldwork in wilderness huts in the Hetta–Pallas region of Lapland, focusing on visitors' water-related practices. Each cabin is situated near a freshwater source (ideally flowing water) that must be treated for safe consumption, revealing how access to and purity of water structure the rhythms of human dwelling in remote environments.



In my own [Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo] presentation, I discussed how the discovery of a small seasonal creek (*noro* in Finnish) temporarily halted construction in the Kruunuvuorenranta area east of Helsinki, where an old forest is being cleared to make way for residential blocks for up to 8,000 people. As this type of small water body is legally protected, activists risked detention in their efforts to prevent its destruction. Eight hundred kilometres further north, the clearing of a city forest in Rovaniemi is planned to accommodate a new road across the river as part of a broader strategy to expand residential areas on the southern bank and improve access to NATO training grounds. I argued that, in both cases, “infrastructure” tends to be conceived narrowly in terms of buildings and roads, while the urban forest and its complex ecological functions are overlooked as forms of critical infrastructure essential to human well-being.

Finally, historian *Timothy Moss* traced a century of debates over Berlin’s water transfer projects. He illustrated how anxieties and aspirations concerning urban water supply have recurred across different historical moments—from Weimar-era urbanization and post-Cold War growth forecasts to contemporary concerns about scarcity—revealing water’s enduring political and symbolic significance in the making of cities.



Upcoming conferences and seminars with a focus or section on water in 2026

MARK IN YOUR CALENDARS! The Critical Arctic Studies Symposium will be held at the end of August in 2026. The symposium's working theme is Northern Waterscapes. The Post-Bothnia team will organize the event. More information will follow in the spring.

BALTEHUMS IV 18.-20.8.2026, Fourth Baltic Conference on the Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences. "The BALTEHUMS IV conference invites all environment-inspired scholars from different humanities, social sciences and art disciplines to join us in the City of Pori, the northern San Francisco on the Finnish West Coast, for a three-day conversation about how environmental humanities and social sciences could be done in the area, what are the urgent topics today, and how more classical concepts apply to our geographical and historical realities. BALTEHUMS IV will be as wide and inclusive an event as the previous conferences in Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. It aims to bring together researchers from different backgrounds and discuss common themes, advance a Baltic network of interdisciplinary studies on environment, and discover ways of developing further cooperation in research, teaching, and outreach."

UArctic Congress May 26-29, 2026 in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands on the theme Healthy Humans and Oceans in the Arctic <https://www.uarctic.org/about-us/meetings/uarctic-congress-and-assembly-2026/>

EISA-PEC's Polar and Ocean Justice Section in Lisbon, 01-04.09.2026

Romain Chuffart (<romain@unak.is>) and Hannes Hansen-Magnusson (<Hansen-Magnusson@cardiff.ac.uk>) will again organize the Standing Section on "Global Oceans & Polar Justice".

The conference theme is 'Even better than the real thing? Questioning knowledge production, positionality, and authenticity in IR'. The call for contributions will be issued in late autumn and closes 19 February, 2026. More information here <<https://eisa-net.org/pec-2026/>>.



Recent publications

Publications in Finnish for interested readers

Bothnian Bay. History, culture and nature. Perämeri. Historiaa, kulttuuria ja luontoa (2025)

This book by Juha Ylimaunu tells what is typical, unique, and special about the Bay of Bothnia. It tells the natural and societal history of the Bothnian Bay, local cultures and livelihoods, and economies based on the use of marine resources. The book has many illustrations.

The age of water. A journey through a transformed landscape. Veden ajat. Matka läpi muuttuneen maiseman (2025)

The book by Jenni Räinen discusses the disappearance of watery entities and landscapes, which is happening before our eyes but which we overlook. The author travels along waterways from the shores of seas to the streams and riverbeds to document drastic changes. The book was nominated for the Finlandia Prize for Non-Fiction this year.

On the beach. How authors found the sea. Rannalla. Miten kirjailijat löysivät meren (2024)

On the beach is a journey to the favorite beaches of writers, such as Jane Austen, Marcel Proust, August Strindberg, and Tove Jansson, and their relationships to these places. At the same time, Sanna Nyqvist's book describes the diverse cultural understandings of the beach and their evolution over time.

Related to the water-society relations in the European Arctic:

Strauss-Mazzullo, Hannah (2025). Arctic Urban Water Management: Rain and snow in Rovaniemi, Finland. *Urban Design International*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-025-00279-2>

Related to the intersectionality in the coastal communities

Konttinen, H. (2025) Visions for the Future of West Greenlandic Regalia and Knowledge of Seal Skins. *Suomen Antropologi : Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, 49(4), 24-49. <https://doi.org/10.30676/jfas.154990>

Related to the sociology of water:

Alba, R., Betancur Alarcon, L., Pereira Prado, M., Jaramillo Villa, U. and Ortiz – Guerrero, C.E. (2025). *Hydrosocial Territories Research: An Overview*. *WIREs Water*, 12: e70023. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wat2.70023>

Rusca, M., Browne, A. L., Di Baldassarre, G., & Menga, F. (2024). Pluralising the materiality of water: More-than-water, lively waters, water with, and the agency of hydro-social assemblages. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 8(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486241301249>

Related to the political ecology of water:

Kangasluoma, S. (2025). The agency of ice in Arctic geopolitics: An autoethnography of the Northwest Passage. *Geoforum*, 166.

Feldblum, S.B. (2025), Emerging Currents in the Political Ecology of Water. *Geography Compass*, 19: e70031. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.70031>

Boelens, R., Hommes, L., Hoogesteger, J., Swynedouw, E., Vos, J., & Wester, P. (2025). Hydrosocial territories: imaginaries, materialities, and struggles over knowledge, order and meaning. *Water International*, 50(5), 426–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2025.2528261>

Global state of water 2025

[Water Atlas 2025: Data and facts about the basis of life | Heinrich Böll Stiftung | Brussels office - European Union](#)



Interesting water-society related projects

More-than-human Aquatic Relations and Algal Blooms (MARBLOOM)

<https://research.fi/en/results/funding/83396>

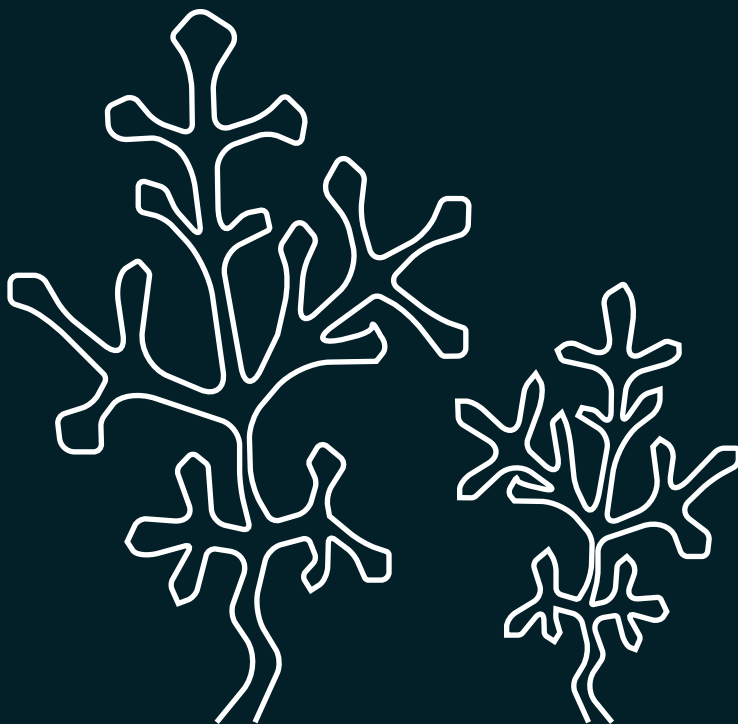
"The way humans relate to the environment is changing as a result of the ongoing ecological crisis. Among the most important aspects are the important transformations in the composition and quality of water bodies. One of the main outcomes is the increased frequency of algal blooms in Finnish lakes and coastal areas. This increase is most prominently linked to rising nutrient concentrations associated with various forms of pollution and to warming temperatures driven by climate change. Algal blooms affect the balance of existing marine and freshwater ecosystems, fish and other aquatic animals on which humans depend for subsistence, and the recreational value of lakes and coasts. The MARBLOOM project investigates how the work and life of different communities change in connection to algal blooms: scientists, policymakers, fishers, farmers, without forgetting the inhabitants of lake and coastal areas."

Comparative environmental history of pollution and protection in the northern Baltic Sea region

Simo Laakkonen and group, University of Turku, Kone Foundation [Ylirajainen ympäristökilpailu: Vertaileva tutkimus vesistöjen pilaantumisen ja suojelun ympäristöhistoriasta Suomessa ja Venäjällä 1800-luvun lopusta 2000-luvulle – Koneen Säätiö](#)

[Arctic Auditories | Hydrospheres in the High North | A NRF-funded project about sound, water, climate and the Arctic](#)

"Arctic Auditories – Hydrospheres in the High North" (RCN 325506, 2021-25) is an interdisciplinary project based on feminist methodologies. It engages scholarship and methods from sound arts, human geography, and applied ethnomusicology to develop strategies for understanding environmental change through sound. Focusing on water environments, the ultimate aim of the project is to deliver innovative inter-disciplinary, empowering, and democratic listening strategies to help individuals and society more broadly cultivate radical imaginations of futures beyond environmental anxiety.



Post-Anthropocentric
Water Relations at the Bothnian Bay.

Project homepage:
www.arcticcentre.org/EN/postbothnia

Layout & Illustrations: Heidi Konttinen



ARCTIC CENTRE
University of Lapland



LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND



Suomen Akatemia
Finlands Akademi
Research Council of Finland