



Arctic FROST Young Scholars Panel – Arctic anthropology and sustainability

(3 March 2016, Sitka, Alaska, USA)

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Arctic FROST Young Scholars Panel – Arctic anthropology and sustainability

(3 March 2016, Sitka, Alaska, USA)

Sustainability continues to be a widely debated subject. The cross-disciplinary panel “Arctic FROST Young Scholars Panel – Arctic Anthropology and Sustainability” at the Alaska Anthropological Association’s meeting, organised by Alexander Meitz and Susanna Gartler (both University of Vienna, Austria) and funded by Arctic FROST, invited graduate students and other early career scholars to present and discuss their research. This platform allowed six speakers to present their work: Jon Krier (Oregon State University) spoke about “GIS Applications for Predictive Modeling of Submerged Sites”, Josie Oliva and Alexandra Taitt (both University of Alaska Anchorage) presented their research about “Anchorage Sister Cities: Exploring sustainable Arctic connections” and Kate Yeske (Colorado State University) talked about “Communal hunting game drive systems in Alaska”.


Alexander Meitz presented his work on the topic “The Bicycle in the Arctic – Questions about Sustainable Mobility” and Susanna Gartler opened the session with an exploration of the notion of sustainability in “Sustainability and the Arctic”. During the ensuing discussion, held in a world-café format, we were able to determine intersections of these various topics in anthropological and archaeological research. Several overarching themes were identified, including resource use, relations (human–animal, human–environment and human–human), adaptability to disrupted environments and indigenous relations. The overarching themes urbanisation, local knowledge and food security were also discussed in the world-café.

The identification of these themes was followed by their elevation to a higher level of abstraction – temporality and spatiality were argued to represent two key differentiating factors of sustainability, as the research presented and the panel related to different aspects of time and space. For example, the archaeological case studies highlighted long-term temporal frames for sustainable resource use, contrasting with mining and the extractive industry where far shorter time frames shape policies, actions and understandings of sustainability. The variety of spatial configurations that were involved in our topics included cities, sub-surface marine and lacustrine environments, rural sites as well as corridors connecting different areas of the Arctic. We conclude from these observations that, from a theoretical point of view, different understandings of sustainability must be understood through their spatial as well as their temporal dimensions.

Our idea of space and time as meta-level aspects of analysis provides a condensed but important input to the theoretical discussion of sustainability – especially since the development of the concept has somewhat been lagging behind. Other approaches focus on more practical aspects, such as how to achieve and measure sustainability or the concept and its limitations and boundaries in comparison to other concepts such as the anthropocene or the ecozoic, or policy as well as research implications and gap analyses in the Arctic. Grappling with the terms’ pluralistic use and critique, we came to the conclusion that it is more accurate to speak of *sustainabilities* in the Arctic, instead of the singular form.

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Abstracts can be downloaded from https://www.alaskaanthropology.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/AKAnthro_2016_Program.pdf

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Northern Political Economy (NPE) symposium 2016: everyday life in the Arctic

(8–9 September 2016, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland)

The 2016 Northern Political Economy (NPE) Symposium is an annual research event organised by Research Professor Monica Tennberg and the NPE team from the Arctic Centre/the University of Lapland (Finland). The symposium was held in Rovaniemi, Finland from 8 to 9 September 2016 and was intended to exchange research results, knowledge and ideas with a focus on changes and developments in everyday life in the Arctic.

The currently occurring environmental and sociocultural changes in the Arctic are frequently discussed in academia as much as they are featured in the media. Climate change and its impacts on the Arctic environment and Arctic society are certainly of great significance, but they are not the only relevant topics in this discourse. The NPE symposium 2016 aimed to give researchers focusing on different Arctic regions the opportunity to gather and discuss current developments in the Arctic, which are a combination of complex, largely interrelated environmental, social, cultural, economic and political transformations and efforts. The participants in the symposium also explored diverse strategies to address or to adapt to specific challenges or threats for regional and local communities arising from changes in the Arctic.

A range of quantitative and qualitative methods were discussed at the symposium to explore the theme from different angles and disciplines. Keynote speaker Helena Ruotsala, Professor of ethnology at the University of Turku, Finland, spoke about transnational processes at the border between Finland and Sweden, particularly highlighting the example of the Tornio River Valley.

Ruotsala explained how the twin city of Haparanda (SWE) and Tornio (FIN) developed over the centuries, including how it became an important place for trading in the European Arctic. She also discussed the implications of the migration to Haparanda of Finnish pensioners, who used to work in Sweden and are eligible for a Swedish pension. Those Finnish pensioners needed to live in Sweden to receive their pension and opted for taking up resident in Haparanda to also be close to their home country.

The Swedish and Finnish Arctic histories are entwined as Finland was once a territory of the Swedish Kingdom. This is reflected in shared cultures and in the regional dialects of the Tornio River Valley until this day.

G rard Duhaime from the Universit  Laval in Qu bec, Canada, delivered a second keynote address, during which he shared with the audience some key results from his research on