

PREMIS

The Literary Research Seminar of English Language and Literature at Åbo Akademi University

PREMIS in 2018–19 will begin on 26 September 2018, from 16-18 in room Kramer, Arken

Water Cities

Lena Englund and Jason Finch (both English Language and Literature, ÅAU)

The United Nations has labelled the twenty-first century the ‘urban century’, in which a greater proportion of a human population itself immensely greater than in previous centuries will live in built-up areas worldwide. Simultaneously, massive human urban settlements have the potential to disrupt the water cycle as never previously, both through large-scale phenomena such as climate change and localised impacts. Cities only exist thanks to a water supply. For many, particularly those with riverside and coastal positions, access to water is central to their economies. Previous research has considered intersections of water and society at very localized levels and has most often taken a functionalist and technocratic approach which fails to include social, cultural and historical dimensions.

Lena Englund and Jason Finch will present preliminary work towards a research project that would bring new interdisciplinary methods and approaches being developed in the humanities to bear on problems related to the supply and conservation of water in a range of specific city contexts globally. This project would potentially involve workers in other disciplines, including geographers and climate historians. Lena and Jason will introduce two case studies looked at from the point of view of literary studies: Cape Town (South Africa) and St Louis (USA).

Lena Englund: “The rest of us prayed for rain” – Tracing the Personal in Accounts of the Water Crisis in Cape Town’

Jason Finch: ‘Tales and Visions of the River City: Writing St Louis, Missouri, in Memoirs and Planning Texts’

This will be a presentation of ideas, questions, and preliminary investigations, not final results. The project being discussed is still at a very early stage. Questions and observations by people from any of the language and culture subjects working with varied methodologies are very welcome!

