

## **EASA Network 'Humans and Other Living Beings' (HOLB) - Workshop Report**

### **“Arts of Coexistence: Care and Survival in the Sixth Extinction”**



**Figure 1** Participants of the workshop, Botanical Garden Oslo, Norway

**Time:** 2-3 May 2019

**Venue:** Tøyen Hovedgård, Botanical Garden, Oslo, Norway

**Convenors:** Ursula Münster (University of Oslo), Sara Asu Schroer (FU Berlin/ University of Aberdeen), and Hugo Reinert (University of Oslo)

**Granted EASA funding:** 1000 Euro

**Workshop abstract:** The workshop explored diverse forms of care across difference that people develop (or fail to develop) in the context of species disappearance. How are ways of coexistence threatened, erased but also still maintained in time of the sixth extinction? Specifically, we are interested in work that conceptualizes and explores skills, practices and ideas of care in multispecies, interspecies and more-than-human contexts. What forms of care are the chaos and

violence of the present moment calling forth? What are their limits? What are their risks and dangers, their potential for destruction? How does care travel, how may it be transposed to novel objects, settings and domains? How is care undone, destroyed, eradicated – and how can it be restored? How can we as researchers root our practice, and our commitments, in forms of care that do justice to the future? What are the possibilities of more-than-human care?

### **Workshop organization/aims:**

The workshop stemmed from a collaborative effort between the EASA Network Humans and Other Living Beings (HOLB) and the newly established Oslo School of Environmental Humanities (OSEH) at the University of Oslo, Norway. It was held at an historical building in the midst of Oslo's Botanical Garden (see pictures below). The main aims of the workshop were:

- To provide an opportunity for exchanging ideas and meeting colleagues working on research topics related to an anthropology of more-than human relations in times of ecological crisis
- To allow for inter-disciplinary engagement with questions of species extinction, care and survival
- To give participants the opportunity to receive concrete feedback on their work in progress

In response to an open call for papers in January, we received more than sixty high-quality paper proposals from different parts of the globe. To accommodate as many papers as possible, we decided to organize an event that lasted two days and included 24 paper presentations in parallel sessions. Whilst the majority of workshop participants had a background in anthropology, the workshop was open to scholars from other disciplinary backgrounds. It included participants from philosophy, geography, history, media studies, sociology, visual and performative arts, landscape architecture, film studies, gender studies and science and technology studies, and more. Thematically, the workshop engaged with a great diversity of more-than-human relations to different species of animals, plants and fungi such as: whales, orangutans, rhinos, elephants, Arctic charrs, snails, honeybees, corals, bonsai trees, oyster mushrooms, edible vegetables, boulder geese, kittiwakes, Common swifts, mosquitos. In addition, papers addressed institutions and practices of care for landscapes and communities of species, like conservation enclosures, wetlands, high altitude grasslands, urban gardens, postindustrial zones, rivers, coastal floodplains, or gut microbes. The sessions and papers reflected the different meanings of care – from care as mourning for lost species, to care as political statement, to care as technological infrastructure and geographies of survival.

Apart from the discussions in the individual sessions and plenaries, the workshop also allowed for informal conversation and opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with colleagues coming from a range of institutions mainly across Europe, but also from the U.S. and Australia (for an overview of the workshop and its participants see

attached program). To learn about urban practices of caring for plants, the workshop included a guided tour through the botanical garden founded in 1814. Our botanist tour guides introduced us to the garden's history, its rock garden, botanical systematics, medicinal plants, heritage species, and palm houses. The spring bloom in the garden's Arboretum was spectacular.

As outcome of the workshop, we are currently in the process of planning a publication of a collection of papers, which we aim to work on and publish the coming months.



Figure 2: Impressions from the Workshop, Botanical Garden Oslo, Norway