

International Conference

Negotiating Peripeties: Change and Its Narratives

25 – 27 May 2023

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KEYNOTES

25 May, 11.00

I. Master and Counter Narratives in Times of Global Crises

Hanna Meretoja (University of Turku)

This talk focuses on public narratives that dominate discourse on our current era of global crises. I suggest that it is useful to study narratives as part of narrative environments characterized by the dynamics of master and counter narratives. These notions draw attention to power dynamics in which some narratives are socially and culturally dominant and others contest the dominant narratives. Some scholars, however, have questioned the idea that master narratives are real narratives at all, since they rarely exist anywhere in a concrete, textual form. I argue that instead of saying that master narratives are not real narratives, we should work towards a broader conception of narrative that encompasses both concrete textual narratives and tacit narratives that guide our processes of sense-making. For this purpose, it is useful to make a distinction between implicit and explicit narratives. I will illuminate my theoretical point by analysing narratives that dominate processes of making sense of our current global crises, particularly the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and the war in Ukraine. When the pandemic erupted, it was quickly framed in terms of a narrative of war, which is problematic in many ways. A narrative of battle is also prevalent in the discourse on climate change. Both climate denialist narratives and the narrative warfare that is an integral part of Putin's war in Ukraine show that counter narratives are not always progressive but can also be part of deeply problematic ideologies. Overall, this talk draws attention to the importance of narrative awareness – awareness of which narratives dominate public discourse and of the narrative contestation that is a pivotal part of the struggles linked to our current global crises.

Hanna Meretoja is Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory at the University of Turku (Finland) and Principal Investigator in the Academy of Finland research consortium “Instrumental Narratives: The Limits of Storytelling and New Story-Critical Narrative Theory” (2018-2023). Her research is mainly in the fields of narrative studies, cultural memory studies, and trauma studies. Her monographs include *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History, and the Possible* (2018) and *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory* (2014), and she has co-edited *The Use and Abuse of Stories: New Directions in Narrative Hermeneutics* (2023), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (2020) and *Storytelling and Ethics: Literature, Visual Arts and the Power of Narrative* (2018) and special issues of *Memory Studies* (“Cultural Memorial Forms”, 2021) and *Poetics Today* (“Critical Approaches to the Storytelling Boom”, 2022).

Moderator: Ingvild Folkvord (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)

25 May, 18.00

II. Remembering, Representing, and Re-conceptualizing Repression? What we Learned from the Narratives of Gulag Survivors

Nanci Adler

**(NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies Amsterdam &
University of Amsterdam)**

Evidence from numerous studies of Gulag survivors suggests that the consequences of the Gulag did not end with its closing under Gorbachev, nor was its influence limited to its prisoners. The Gulag pervaded daily Soviet life because it could ensnare almost anyone. Post-Soviet Russia is still mired in an entrenched culture of repression, which has long included – and continues to include – repressing the memory of Stalinist repression.

This lecture will present a selection of narratives gathered through interviews and from archives in the course of various research projects, conducted since 1989. Each illustrates the usefulness and the challenges of personal accounts in reconstructing or representing experience, and each offers a different understanding of the repression. Through careful examination of how the survivors remember, represent and/or re-conceptualize the terror in their testimonies, we can begin to understand more about the dynamics of repression, survival, and meaning-making.

Nanci Adler is Professor of Memory, History, and Transitional Justice at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) and the University of Amsterdam. She has authored and/or edited several works, including *Keeping Faith with the Party: Communist Believers Return from the Gulag* (2012), *The Gulag Survivor* (2002), *Victims of Soviet Terror: The Story of the Memorial Movement* (1993), *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice* (2018), (co-edited with A. Weiss-Wendt) *The Future of the Soviet Past: The Politics of Memory in Putin's Russia* (2021), and numerous scholarly articles on the consequences of Stalinism. Adler serves on the Academic Advisory Board of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute and the *Journal of Genocide Research*, and was 2022 Chair of the Academic Working Group of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Her current research focuses on the organization Memorial, transitional justice, oral history and eyewitness testimony, and the legacy of Communism.

Moderator: Margit Bussmann (University of Greifswald)

May 26, 14.45

III. Familyhood across Borders in Times of Crises: COVID-19 Pandemic and Russia's War on Ukraine as Turning Points for Migration and Mobility in Europe

Laura Assmuth (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

The paper discusses how the contemporary realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine have changed the meanings and consequences of migration and mobility in and for Europe. Based on research carried out for the *Inequalities of Mobility: Relatedness and Belonging of Transnational Families in the Nordic Migration Space* project, I show how emotion, multiple belonging and intersectional inequalities play out in the lives of translocal families, and how the current crises have profoundly changed cross-border mobility. Many translocal futures have been altered or made insecure or impossible. Consequently, ordinary people's ideas and practices on living and working across borders are affected for years to come.

Laura Assmuth is Professor Emerita of Social and Public Policy, University of Eastern Finland. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology (University of Helsinki) and is teaching in Social Anthropology and Sociology. Her long-term research interests are migration and mobility, borders, gender, family, life course, identities, social inequality and peripheral rural areas. On these topics she has published extensively in many languages. Assmuth has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Southern Italy, Sardinia, Estonia, Latvia, North West Russia, and Eastern Finland. She has led and participated in many international research projects and consortia, for example *Inequalities of Mobility: Relatedness and Belonging of Transnational Families in the Nordic Migration Space* (TRANSLINES, Academy of Finland, 2015-2019) and *Multilayered Borders of Global Security* (GLASE, Academy of Finland Strategic Research Council, 2016-2019). In her work and together with her research group members Assmuth has developed and encouraged interdisciplinarity, participatory, visual and art based methods, and collaboration between researchers and artists.

Moderator: Terje Loogus (University of Tartu)

27 May, 11.00

IV. Pragma and Peripety? The (Un-)Expected in Ludvig Holberg's Comedies

Clemens Räthel (University of Greifswald)

Ludvig Holberg is often celebrated as the godfather of Danish and Norwegian literature. He is best known today for his comedies, written primarily in the 1720s – in the spirit of Molière and/or the commedia-dell'arte-tradition. His oeuvre, however, is much more diverse, including fantasy novels and a large number of historical writings. Indeed, Holberg's main occupation was that of a professor at the University of Copenhagen.

I will take a look at selected comedies by Holberg and explore the questions of what standards he applies to his characters and how (un)expectedly the plot proceeds. For whom do the gates of happiness open in the end? What does a comic peripety look like, if there is one?

Clemens Räthel is Professor of Modern Scandinavian Literature at the University of Greifswald and Principal Investigator in the International Research Training Group “Baltic Peripeties. Narratives of Reformation, Revolutions and Catastrophes”. Until 2022 he was Associate Professor for Theatre Studies at University of Bergen and held a post-doc position at Humboldt-University Berlin (2015-2021). His research focuses on Scandinavian theatre history, contemporary opera, queer/ing narrations of the welfare state, concepts of body and performativity, Jewish-Scandinavian relations. He has written and co-edited books on the depiction of the Jewish in Scandinavian literature and theatre, for example *Wie viel Bart darf sein? Jüdische Figuren im skandinavischen Theater* (2016) or (together with Stefanie von Schnurbein) *Figurationen des Jüdischen. Spurensuchen in der skandinavischen Literatur* (2020). Further, he has published journal articles and book chapters on a wide range of topics in Theatre Studies and Scandinavian Literature, including works on comedy and illness narratives. Clemens Räthel is a member of the editorial board of “Nordeuropa Forum. Journal for the Study of Culture” and in addition to his academic work he has been active as a producer and director for a number of theatres and festivals.

Moderator: Benjamin Schweitzer (University of Greifswald)

ROUNDTABLE

26 May, 15.45

Peripeties in and out of Context

Discussants:

Nanci Adler (NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies Amsterdam & University of Amsterdam)

Laura Assmuth (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

Alexander Drost (University of Greifswald)

Hanna Meretoja (University of Turku)

Moderators:

Ingvild Folkvord (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)

Eckhard Schumacher (University of Greifswald)

The roundtable discussion negotiates the meaning and utility of the concept of peripety by bringing together pivotal perspectives from literary and narrative studies, history and memory studies, as well as political and cultural studies. The discussion evolves around questions like:

- *In what ways can narratives serve as means and subject of negotiation?*
- *How are severe changes represented narratively and, conversely, how do narratives of change impact individual and collective realities?*
- *How might we explore the interconnections between peripety and other crucial concepts, such as crisis, turning point, tipping point, and event, and in what ways can this deepen our understanding of these phenomena?*
- *In what ways may we apply the concept of peripety to negotiation processes of sense-making, and what benefits might this offer in terms of better understanding and navigating complex transformation processes?*
- *When using a concept from a specific historical or philosophical context in a broader range of applications, what are the potential risks and benefits of doing so, and how can we ensure that we are using it in a nuanced and responsible way?*

Eckhard Schumacher and **Ingvild Folkvord** take on the role of active moderators. Eckhard Schumacher, as the speaker of the International Research Training Group "Baltic Peripeties" at the University of Greifswald, has a special interest in the project's central concepts. Having a background in German Literature, his views are connected to his research on literary representations of turning points, especially within the genre of the *Wenderoman*.

Ingvild Folkvord is co-speaker of the International Research Training Group "Baltic Peripeties", representing one of the IRTG's partner institutions, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. She is experienced in exploring the intersection between literature and political change, as her current research examines law and literature related to terror attacks in European contexts and the formation of collective identities in the aftermath of crises.

The historian **Alexander Drost** is currently the Academic Manager of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO) at the University of Greifswald and played an important part in the formative phase of the IRTG "Baltic Peripeties". Recent works of his, such as the edited volume *Collapse of Memory – Memory of Collapse: Narrating Past, Presence and Future about Periods of Crisis* (2019, together with O. Sasunkevich, J. Schiedermaier and B. Törnquist-Plewa) acknowledge the tie between narrative and history of peripetous events.

Laura Assmuth, Professor Emerita of Social and Public Policy, brings to the discussion her expertise on life-line research and her findings on the influence of the current European crises on the lives of translocal families. With her extensive experience in anthropological and sociological research, she will share impressive insights on the nexus between large-scale, all-encompassing change and its concrete manifestations among families and individuals.

Nanci Adler, who holds a professorship in Memory, History and Transactional Justice, is likewise well-equipped to share personal accounts of individual and collective hardships. Her research with Gulag Survivors shows a particularly striking example of how an event alters not only the present of the individuals involved, but also collective present and future, as well as their memories. Adler's perspective on patterns of memory and historiography in post-Soviet Russia contests the image of a linearly progressing plot leading to and succeeding peripeties.

Hanna Meretoja is a Professor of Comparative Literature and enriches the discussion with her research in trauma studies, cultural memory and ethics of storytelling. Her appeal for a broader understanding of narrative in order to raise "narrative awareness" evokes the question of criteria of adequacy for applying the concept of peripety to other contexts than envisioned in Aristotle's dramatic theory.

SESSIONS

I. Living Through the Change: Building Bridges Between Life and Narrative

Confronting dramatic change can be simultaneously an extremely difficult and very revealing experience. In this panel, we analyze the potential that lies behind literary understandings of drastic upheavals. Narrative forms offer a means of comprehending and transcending the gap between humans and the world. In this way, we embrace significant shifts, opening up the opportunity to capture and reflect on the multiplicity of emotions through written expression. Additionally, we explore the importance of these narratives for the lives of the people who experience them.

Organisers: Martina Zagni & Krista Anna Zalāne (both University of Greifswald)

Moderation: Martin Nõmm (University of Tartu)

25 May, 13.15

“I Missed Seagull Screams”: Narratives of Dwelling and Displacement in the Riga Port Neighbourhoods

Dace Bula (University of Latvia, Riga)

Based on an ethnographic study of five Riga neighbourhoods, the paper addresses environmental narratives of their inhabitants. Unwanted change has been a chronic condition of dwelling beside the Port of Riga. The environmental talk of local communities abounds in motifs of displacement, territorial restrictions, landscape degradation and ecological concern. Focussing on the concepts of dwelling and displacement, the paper explores the mapping functions of narration – the capacity of narrative to draw connections between phenomena as well as events. It is through stories people tell that we can detect the place humans allocate for themselves vis-à-vis other species, materials, objects, and elements.

25 May, 13.45

An Assault on the Socialist Realist “Master Plot”: Svetlana Aleksievich’s Many-Voiced Narratives of Catastrophic Change

Katharine Hodgson (University of Exeter)

This paper will consider some of the narratives Svetlana Aleksievich constructed from her interviews with people talking about the often dramatic changes they experienced during the Soviet period and the collapse of the USSR, in the light of the ‘master plot’ of Socialist Realist narratives, identified by Katerina Clark. Aleksievich’s interlocutors provide a story of change which departs from Socialist Realist tales of a ‘typical’ positive hero’s purposeful progress towards revolutionary self-mastery, although many reveal their unease about telling stories which do not fit this model. The paper will explore the extent to which the ‘master plot’ is challenged, and what Aleksievich puts forward in its place in her books which assemble overlapping individual narratives of life-changing experiences.

25 May, 14.15

Narratives Between Past and Future: Peripety as a Tool to Analyse Change in Life and Literature

Martina Zagni & Krista Anna Zalāne (both University of Greifswald)

Sudden changes in personal life on one side, and in society on the other, can constitute a surprise, a shock, or even the complete revolution of one’s existence. The process of reading and creating literary texts is a chance for human beings to enter in communication with the extraneity of the outside and a channel for various emotions, impressions and opinions generated by the interaction with it. In this process literature is for the individual a way to interpret their existence, therefore participating in the development of society as a constant interaction between human and the world.

The employment of the concept of peripety as a literary tool can help us explain how humans as sentient beings are impacted by radical modifications and especially how they categorize them, voluntarily or involuntarily, in order to make them recognizable and comprehensible, to incorporate change as an integral element of their existences. This use of peripety, in fact, allows us to shift the focus from the single events to the entirety of their net of historical and societal connections, and to identify the role individuals have in them. Literature, then, acts as the instrument that reads into the effects of peripetic changes on the individual.

II. Shifting Belonging: Understanding People and Practices in Repopulated Places

We focus on the phenomenon of places affected by population displacement and drastic changes in national and political affiliation due to World War II. Drawing on data from interviews with different generations of settlers in totally and partially repopulated territories, the panel will discuss case studies from Lviv, the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea, and the formerly Finnish territories in Karelia. We explore resulting processes of change including practices of renaming, or the movement and meaning-making of expropriated properties. Our panel examines the impact of historical discontinuity and unconventional processes of creating belonging.

Organisers: Rezeda Lyykorpi and Douglas Ong (both University of Greifswald)

Moderation: Douglas Ong (University of Greifswald)

25 May, 15.15

“We just moved in, and this is it”: Dwelling and Home Space as a Site of (Dis)remembrance of the Vanished East-Central European Populations

Eleonora Narvselius (Lund University)

A typical feature of borderline cities in East-Central Europe is coexistence of remnants of different historical periods and (geo)political contexts. Such urban environments are typically considered to be palimpsests exposing various layers of both material (architecture, fashions, cuisines, ways of arranging public and private spaces) and immaterial (stories, genres of urban folklore, skills, practices) character. These mixtures have different psychological effect on people with different biographies, education, family memories, and outlooks. In the city of Lviv stories of the inhabitants of old houses about their previous residents, and especially about those groups and categories who perished in WWII or left their homes in the wake of the post-war resettlements, are of great interest as an oral-historical source. However, for many reasons, a systematic collection of the material is not an easy task. My study builds on 45 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2017-2018 for the international project The Memory of Vanished Population Groups and Societies in Today's East and Central European Urban Environments. Memory Treatment and Urban Planning in Lviv, Chernivtsi, Chisinau and Wroclaw, with the assistance of the Center for Urban History in Lviv. Recorded with present-day residents of old buildings in several historic districts of the city, in particular, the Jewish midtown, these interviews both add new details to our knowledge of Lviv's wartime realities and post-war everyday life, and give a clue about strategies of managing a personal space that bears profound traces of events and people from the past.

25 May, 15.45

The House of the Lost-and-Found: Belonging and Belongings in the Kaliningrad Region

Olga Sezneva (University of Amsterdam)

'Reported', 'confiscated' or 'looted'? All three words apply to properties seized from ethnic Germans who fled or were deported from their homes in East Prussia in 1945-1949. Each organizes the ownership over these properties differently, constituting them as distinct social types with a different value. I will discuss how such objects circulate in Kaliningrad, and what positions they occupy in relation to various social actors.

25 May, 16.15

Soviet Experience, Narrative, and Reality in Former Finnish Karelia

Pekka Hakamies (University of Turku)

In WWII Finland ceded territories on its eastern border to Soviet Union. The Finnish inhabitants were totally evacuated, and Soviet Union resettled the new territories. The way of life and historical experiences of the new settlers differed profoundly from the way of life and culture of the former Finnish inhabitants. The new dwellers had to rename places and to find out meaning and explanation to all strange phenomena in the surrounding. Soviet settlers have told stories explaining the exit of the former Finnish population and all they had left to the new inhabitants. My research is based on interviews of the old settler generation in two regions in the former Finnish Karelia. My method has been thematic interviews and the analysis of the content of the texts thus created.

III. The Russia-Ukraine War as a Major Turning Point for the Baltic Sea Region

We address the war in Ukraine through narratological, poststructuralist, and biopolitical approaches. The 2022 Russian invasion has altered the security architecture in the Baltic Sea region significantly. The first paper explains violent shifts in Russian foreign policy, positioning Russia as a primary antagonist of the liberal international order. The second paper discusses the sociological and epistemological factors that contributed to Russia's failed information campaign in Ukraine. The third contribution applies innovative approaches to illiberal biopower to explore internal Russian crises and their impact on the transition to illiberalism and aggressive foreign policy.

Organiser and Moderator: Natalia Iost (University of Greifswald)

Discussant: Bo Petersson (Malmö University)

26 May, 9.00

The Peripety of a Contestant in the Liberal International Order: Russia's Transition to Antagonism

Viacheslav Morozov (University of Tartu)

Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine is rightfully viewed as a major violation of the basic principles of the liberal international order. However, Moscow has a long record of using military force under questionable pretexts. In its official discourse, Putin's Russia still claims the status of a legitimate contestant. To address the sudden change in Russia's standing, I advance a poststructuralist perspective on international order, treating it as a mode of discursive reflection on the rules underlying international interaction. International order is a performative practice which gives meaning to the international and fixes this meaning hegemonically. Hence, it constantly faces its own incompleteness, manifest in the subversive logic of negativity. Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine is a rare case where this negativity consolidated into a fully-fledged antagonism. Viewed from within the liberal international order, Russia's brutal war has delegitimized it as a contestant and pushed outside, into the position of an antagonist, an anti-Self of the community of liberal democracies.

26 May, 9.15

Dark Instruments: How Russia's Information Operations Faltered in Ukraine

Muhammad Idrees Ahmad (University of Essex, Colchester)

In Syria, the Russian government claims to have tested over 320 weapons. But its biggest success was in the field of information warfare, where traditional methods of propaganda were combined with 21st century technology to obfuscate the realities of war, inflating military achievements and obscuring effects, especially the serial atrocities and mass displacement. This manufactured uncertainty guaranteed impunity for the perpetrator, which in part encouraged Vladimir Putin to escalate the ongoing war in Ukraine into a full-scale invasion. But in Ukraine the Russian information operations have run aground, regardless of an intense propaganda effort. In this paper, I will look at the supply and demand side of propaganda and describe the sociological and epistemological factors that contributed to Russia's successes in Syria but have so far failed to gain traction in Ukraine. But knowledge has a power bias and it favours aggressors. Si of the war drags on, awareness will have to struggle against the natural erosion of attention and compassion, which creates space for doubts to fester and impunity to reign.

26 May, 9.30

Sovereign Peripeties: Bio-, Zoo- and Necro-politics in Putin's Russia

Andrey Makarychev (University of Tartu)

This presentation intends to discuss the concept of sovereignty, as unfolded in the contemporary Russia, from the viewpoint of its bodily and corporeal components. Using different approaches to illiberal modes of biopower and adjacent concepts (in particular, Giorgio Agamben's academic metaphors of bare life, homo sacer and the camp), I aim to narrate the genealogy of Putin's regime as a series of crises and "tipping points" that could be theorized through the lens of biopolitics (Foucauldian policies of care and life promotion), zoopolitics (a peculiar version of "the war of all against all" short of normative constraints) and necropolitics (understood in Achille Mbembe's sense of the integration of death into political calculations and agendas). This conceptual triad might be a helpful explanatory tool for multiple stories of Russia's illiberal transit, including the enactment of the Russian world doctrine, border redrawing, imperial aggrandizement and, ultimately, the current war against Ukraine.

IV. Disruption, Diagnosis, Disease: Narratives of Medical Crises, Care and Recovery

We examine turning points in medical humanities and some of its central, highly peripetous concepts such as 'crisis,' 'disease,' and 'diagnosis.' Both visible and covert, contemporary and historical narratives that negotiate health and illness are being analysed. The discussions concentrate on how diagnoses, diseases, and recovery are narratively framed in diverse cultural and scientific settings, as well as on the role of storytelling in medicine. We aim to initiate a dialogue about how disease-related experiences are dealt with on different levels with regard to the involved narrative activities.

Organisers: Victoria Oertel and Nina Pilz (University of Greifswald)

Moderation: Sebastian Laacke (University of Greifswald)

26 May, 11.00

Disease as Peripety — Negotiating Perspectives on Public and Philosophical Discourse

Victoria Oertel & Nina Pilz (both University of Greifswald)

Our paper aims to show the suitability and utility of the concept of peripety to analyse discourses on disease. Intuitively, its impact on individual lives, but also collectives, is a key characteristic of diseases. On a more analytical note, linguistic and narrative representations of disease often portray it as an interruptive agent within a broader context, a surrounding plot. The concept of peripety, we argue, can serve as a valuable tool to better understand such narrative disruptions in different contexts, of which illness and disease is one example. Originally defined for tragic plots, the Aristotelian peripety designates “a change of events to the opposite direction, and in accord with necessity or probability”. We test the transferability of the concept to two other contexts: to philosophical discourse on the general definition of disease, and to public discourse on the special case of pandemic outbreaks. Viewing representations of disease as instances of peripety helps us to explore the structural role disease plays within these two discourses and to answer the following questions: Which plot events lead to the peripety and what are its consequences? From which perspective and for whom do the events turn into an opposite direction? Which are the interpreters', in this case journalists and philosophers of medicine, expectations and beliefs? What underlying narratives can thus be unveiled?

26 May, 11.30

Shattered Expectations in Caregiving Literature: Reflections on the Shared Reading of Schema Disrupting Fiction

Sidsel Boysen Dall (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)

Shattered expectations are a prominent theme in contemporary Scandinavian literature about the informal caregiving experience. More specifically, many present-day novels, short stories, poems and graphic novels depict informal caregivers who struggle as their expectations and hopes for the future are shattered by their loved one's illness. In addition to this, many of the portrayed characters are unable to live up to their own and other's expectations of them as caregivers, despite their best efforts. From the perspective of psychological schema theory, the caregivers' shattered expectations can be viewed as *schema disruptions*, that is, as violations of their fundamental assumptions regarding themselves and their future. In my presentation, I will examine these schema disruptions as they occur in selected works of contemporary Scandinavian caregiving literature, exploring their literary aesthetic, the affect they arouse and their relation to different categories of caregiving narratives. Theoretically I draw on psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulman's *shattered assumptions theory* as well as on literary schema theory by David Herman, Guy Cook and Elena Semino. Afterwards, I will share my thoughts on whether and how the shared reading of schema disrupting caregiving literature could potentially strengthen informal caregivers' psychological resilience. Finally, inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of the *reparative reading*, I will discuss the possible healing power of schema disrupting literature when it comes to informal caregivers' ruptured self- and life narratives.

26 May, 12.00

How May a Meaningful Everyday Life Be Re-created after Mental Health Crises?

Nina Petersen Reed (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)

During our lifetime, many of us experience mental health problems. For some individuals these problems have a devastating effect on their lives. How may individuals overcome these effects of mental health problems and recreate meaningful everyday lives? Meaning is an important dimension of mental health recovery. I will present my research on how meaning making may unfold as enacted narratives. I will present findings of how meaning may be created collectively, through doing activities together. I will also present findings of how narrative meaning making unfolds over time in individuals' lives and may contribute to their recovery.

V. Events, Landscapes and Water. Negotiating Dramatic Changes in Environmental History

The presentations explore the element of water as an integral part of our environment and its impact on local populations. Water can be undesired within the context of catastrophic events such as a storm surge, and bring the sudden realization of danger. Meanwhile, water management schemes, especially dams, can be highly contested, as these may benefit some, but bring harm and the loss of autonomy over their homeland to others. From the perspective of environmental history, these examples make visible the changing connections of communities to their respective aquatic landscapes.

Organisers: Paul Kirschstein and Laura Tack (both University of Greifswald)

Moderation: Charlotte Wenke (University of Greifswald)

27 May, 9.00

A Sudden Realization of Risk: The Possibly Largest Storm Surge on the German Baltic Sea Coast

Laura Tack (University of Greifswald)

When during the night of the 12th to the 13th of November 1872 a storm surge hit the German Baltic Sea coast, the waves brought not only water but also the realization to people's minds that this kind of natural event is indeed a danger to be reckoned with. As this occurrence marks a turning point in coastal protection and is in general regarded as the largest storm surge on this coast, my presentation will investigate how the concepts of peripety and natural disaster come together in it, and how it became the core of the narrative of it being the most destructive and terrible event for the region we know today.

27 May, 9.30

A Sunken Island's Legacy: The Case of Ada Kaleh

Merve Neziroğlu

(Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Leipzig)

In the late 1960s, the Romanian island Ada Kaleh disappeared in the floods of the Danube, because a hydroelectric power plant was built in close proximity. For the islanders who had to leave the island, this meant the loss of their homeland. For Yugoslavia and Romania, the destruction – that also affected other places nearby – was something that could not stand in the way of constructing a hydroelectric power plant. Although the island sank over 50 years ago, its memory lives on. With examples from field research in 2022, this presentation wants to focus on the present-day memory of the island in the Iron Gates region, the same place where the island eventually sank.

27 May, 10.00

Dramatic Developments: Identifying Turning Points in the Historiography of the Alta-saken

Paul Kirschstein (University of Greifswald)

After one final court ruling in 1982, construction on Norway's largest concrete dam could continue. The planned dam and hydroelectric plant had been a point of conflict and social unrest for more than ten years. Political and technological visions of unlimited energy supply clashed with Saami rights to land and water. The controversy concerning the project fundamentally changed the position and rights of indigenous Saami in Norwegian society and beyond.

Immediately after the official case was closed, several publications tried to tackle the complexities of the events known as Alta-saken. In my presentation, I trace the developments of historiography on the Alta-saken until the present. Even though the overall case is an established turning point, the changes within the chain of events remain understudied. In most accounts, central turning points are recurring building blocks for their differing narratives. I intend to show which singular events were repeatedly elevated in subsequent years to represent the essence of the case. Identifying such turning points is the foundation for developing a systematic overview of the competing narratives of the same events.

Because of the focus on history writing, my presentation will not attempt to demonstrate the changes brought about by the building project itself but rather how the benefit of hindsight influenced the interpretation of the Alta-saken.