



**WE HAVE
NEVER
BEEN
HUMANS**

A POSTHUMANIST STS TAKE TO CONTEMPORARY LIVING AND DYING

EVENT ORGANISERS

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

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PROGRAMME

This is the first public event organised by the STS@MDU, the STS group at Mälardalen University (for more information, see the [group's webpage](#)). It is one of many initiatives taking place at MDU to foster collaboration across disciplines and methodological traditions.

This event is meant to be a forum for discussing *what* being a human means nowadays, whether this category— 'the human'— is still relevant, and *how* a posthumanist STS view on contemporary life and death on Earth can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexity of the entanglement between humans, nonhumans, and the more-than-humans.

Since their inception, Science and Technology Studies (STS) have been interested in critically approaching interactions between human beings and 'others'. Actor-Network Theory, by proposing the radical thesis of *nonhuman agency* (for example, objects, technologies, and infrastructures), has contributed to pointing scholars' attention to actors other than humans and in so doing has invited them to appreciate the limits of a perspective focused on human primacy. Feminist scholars in STS have, furthermore, highlighted the importance of *caring* for 'more-than-human worlds' – animals, plants, and other biological organisms – emphasising the deep interconnection between humans and other creatures.

By cultivating a 'posthumanistic' posture to studying the entanglement of multiple actors (humans, nonhumans, and more-than-humans) STS has paved the way for investigations that interrogate the meaning of *being human*. As feminist philosopher Donna Haraway, puts it, "We have never been human", riffing on the fact that fungi, bacteria, and other microbes outnumber human cells in the space called 'human body'. With this, she is also pointing out that the human subject has always been in sympoietic relation with other species and constantly transforming together with technological innovations and other nonhuman actors, so much so that human exceptionalism and species supremacy can be considered an artefact, the product of humankind to justify their position in the world.

The effort to decenter the human (the humanist ideal of 'Man' as the universal representative of the human) and Anthropos (the species hierarchy placing the human species on top) pose a serious challenge to the definition of 'the human' inherited from the Western intellectual and philosophical movement of the Enlightenment, which is now showing its cracks against the background of contemporary socio-technical transformations and multiple transitions. Such changes invite scholars in STS and other fields to interrogate their paradigmatic views and reflect on their capacity to account for the multispecies and multiagency complexity of the contemporary world.

This event is meant to offer - through the contributions of scholars and artists - a dialogical and creative space for reflecting upon the important and profound changes we are facing nowadays. Through the embodied and affective power of word, dance, and music, our guests will inspire and bring us to alternative scenarios and perspectives to re-imagine our present and future.

The event is open to anybody curious to learn more about posthumanism and STS and those who would like to engage in and contribute to a conversation about living and dying in our times.

PROGRAMME

12:00 - 13:00	Main entrance Building R	Registration
13:00 - 13:10	Room Pi	Welcome Martin Hellström (Vice-chancellor, Mälardalen University)
13:10 - 13:30	Room Pi	Introduction STS@MDU
13:30 - 14:10	Room Pi	Inspiration CECILIA ÅSBERG Linköping University, Department of Thematic Studies - Sweden Storying Exposure: Posthumanities and the Promises of Cyborg Knowing <p>We live in troubling times in need of multiple approaches, versatile research and new solidarities – even beyond the humanist imagination. In this keynote address, Cecilia Åsberg explores the transformative potential of feminist posthumanities through "cyborg knowing." She highlights how historical technologies of gender, race, and empire contribute to the Anthropocene crisis, or whatever we want to call our contemporary poly-crisis, with everyday algorithms amplifying biases globally. Åsberg argues for new knowledge integrations beyond academic confines and disciplines, emphasizing intellectual generosity and conviviality through storytelling. By embracing situated cyborg epistemologies, the argument is for a more inclusive and dynamic approach to knowledge production, acknowledging our entangled realities and complicit exposures to science, technology and art. Through compelling narratives and case studies, she illustrates the promises and challenges of posthumanities to STS, envisioning a future of more-than-human humanities and epistemic environments where exposures are reimagined and stories shared.</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Cecilia Åsberg is chair of Gender, Nature, Culture at Linköping University, doing feminist theory, multispecies- and cultural studies of science, technology, and medicine in society. Åsberg brings arts and sciences to the more-than-human humanities, and transformative insights to people. She has pioneered posthuman gender studies and citizen-driven environmental humanities in Sweden with a focus on environmental embodiment and embodied environments from starting points in laboratory STS and feminist new materialist philosophy. Åsberg is the founder and director of the extra-disciplinary research group, The Posthumanities Hub since 2008, and 2013-2017 she was the founding director of the Seed Box, the Swedish national Environmental Humanities research programme (MISTRA-FORMAS).</p>
14:10 - 14:30	Room Pi	Q&A Session
14:30 - 15:00	Origo Café	Coffee Break
15:00 - 15:40	Room Pi	Inspiration ANDREA BOTERO CABRERA Aalto University, Department of Design - Finland Practical doings, reorganizing human-non-human relations <p>In this talk, I will share a couple of examples from creative practices I have been involved in the past years bringing together disparate technologies and infrastructures with people, trees in forests or water bodies. The examples illustrate some designs and practical doings that explore issues of entanglement in one way or another. With them - and hopefully also with you - I want to reflect on the challenges and implications of considering interdependent co-existence as an organizing principle for designing. Could we nurture more collective capacities for transformation and from where we should be learning to do this?</p>

PROGRAMME

Andrea Botero is Associate Professor at the School of Arts, Design and Architecture of Aalto University (Finland). Her work engages with the possibilities and contradictions of participating in design, and designing participation today, what counts as design, what other practices for world making are there, and which ones we need to call into being. Her research looks at how collectives (broadly speaking) come to understand the design spaces available to them, what it means for their capacity to design livable futures and how could designers infrastructure those processes with care, commitment and reflexivity.

15:40 - 16:00

Room Pi

Q&A Session

16:00 - 17:00

Origo Café

Inspiration

HENNY STRIDSBERG (choreography), **TUVA NORDELIUS** (dance), **ESTER LARSSON** (dance), **DESIDERIA THUR** (music) & **LIS ROSENQVIST** (text interpretation) - Sweden

Waterscaping

Waterscaping is a fantasy about waters within and around us. It takes inspiration from readings of poet Göran Sonnev's The Ocean and environmentalist Rachel Carson's Sea Trilogy, as well as from feminist scholar Astrida Neimani's figuration bodies of water. The performance and process behind it dives into dance and choreography as a space of transformation, where imaginary waterscapes form and dissolve through aquatic assemblages of bodies, movement, sound, text and material objects. We meet the gate of the ocean as a metaphor for entering the unknown, we attune to water-memories and become with a shower curtain, protoplasm, mermaids, deep sea fish and other beings.

Henny Stridsberg has an interdisciplinary background in dance, arts & political science from France and Sweden, and today, she continues her dance studies at the Stockholm University of the Arts. She is currently involved in MDUs' educational project ARMESS, where she, together with the researcher Silvia Bruzzone, explores creative and embodied methods for knowing water from a relational and posthumanist perspective. This performance is a co-creation with the dancers Tuva Nordelius & Ester Larsson and the actress Lis Rosenqvist (text interpretation), and with musician & dancer Desideria Thur, who in this piece plays newly composed music - from the album "Princess Wwise Wishing Well" - and improvises live with harp and electronic sequencer synths.

17:00 - 18:00

Room Omega

Inspiration

RIKARD VILHELM LINDELL

University of Dalarna, Dalarna Audiovisual Academy-DAVA - Sweden

Tapestry

An aesthetic experience of an audiovisual tapestry woven from electricity that flows through cables in analog circuitry transformed into digital information and back, actuated perceptually via loudspeakers and projectors.

Rikard Vilhelm Lindell is an electroacoustic composer with a diploma from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, a code artisan, an interaction designer, a reader in computer science, and a professor of audiovisual studies at the University of Dalarna. Today, Rikard prefers to perform on his bass flute and live-patching his eurorack audiovisual synthesiser system. The combination of the agency of the analogue and digital machine with the somaesthetic performance of the acoustic bass flute creates atmospheric electroacoustic music where electromagnetic waves and sound-waves are woven into a musical tapestry. Rikard has also made interactive audiovisual installations off-grid in the forest, developed music and video performance apps for iPad, and has participated as a songwriter, composer and musician on many phonograms since the early 1990s.

18:00 - 20:30

Origo Café

Social dinner / Mingling

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