

Call for Papers

Conference “Planetary Waters - A Challenge Between Abstraction and Empathy”

Date: 22–24 October 2025

Location: German Maritime Museum / Leibniz Institute for Maritime History (DSM), 27568 Bremerhaven, Germany

Organized by:

Dr. Katrin Kleemann, German Maritime Museum / Leibniz Institute for Maritime History, Bremerhaven, Germany

Dr. Noemi Quagliati, THE NEW INSTITUTE Center for Environmental Humanities (NICHE) / Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy

Dr. Fabienne Will, Deutsches Museum / Munich Science Communication Lab, Munich, Germany

Aims of the Conference:

The Leibniz Institute of Maritime History (DSM) invites submissions for the conference “Planetary Waters – A Challenge Between Abstraction and Empathy”, taking place on October 22–24, 2025, at the German Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven. This interdisciplinary event will bring together scholars, researchers, and practitioners to explore public communication strategies that integrate the planetary scale of water studies while maintaining a focus on human-water relationships at the local level.

The intertwined crises of climate change and biodiversity loss urge us to incorporate a planetary perspective into our thinking and actions more than ever before. The conference “Planetary Waters” addresses this challenge by examining water in its many forms—oceans, seas, inland waters, and wetlands—through interdisciplinary dialogues that balance abstraction with empathy.

Key questions include: How can the complex effects of climate change on the hydrosphere be made accessible to diverse audiences? Can the humanities and museum exhibitions integrate a planetary perspective while conveying local dimensions in an engaging and empathetic manner? What role can visualization techniques play in this process?

The conference brings together scholars, science communicators, curators, and artists drawing on Blue Humanities to explore human-water relationships while advancing three central goals: deepening the planetary dimension in the humanities, fostering interdisciplinary approaches to water studies, and developing innovative public communication strategies.

Bremerhaven, with its strong maritime heritage, provides an ideal setting for these discussions. Hosted at the German Maritime Museum/Leibniz Institute for Maritime History (DSM) in the Bremerhaven Havenwelten, the conference seeks to illuminate the vital connections between people and water.

Conference Themes:

We welcome submissions on a wide range of topics related to the concept of planetary waters, including but not limited to:

- New approaches in the history of oceanography, maritime studies, and Arctic or Antarctic humanities
- Research on wetlands, rivers, and lagoon environments

- Planetary history and microhistory methods in analyzing human-water relationships
- Environmental history of hydraulic engineering projects
- Water pollution and planetary health
- Journalism and science communication on global water issues
- The Blue Humanities in maritime and natural history museums
- Water heritage, memory, and storytelling
- Deep mapping, digital visualization, and artistic responses to the water crisis
- Graphic, visual, and/or multimedia design in relation to museum exhibitions
- Earth observation and the emergence of the "blue planet" concept

Submission Guidelines:

Interested participants are invited to submit a single PDF document containing an abstract of no more than 300 words and a brief bio by June 15, 2025. Please send submissions to all three organizers: k.kleemann@dsm.museum; noemi.quagliati@unive.it; f.will@deutsches-museum.de.

Important Information:

- **Abstract Submission Deadline:** June 15, 2025
- **Notification of Acceptance:** June 30, 2025
- **1st Draft Paper Submission Deadline (5 pages):** October 10, 2025

We request first drafts as pre-circulated papers, which will form the basis for a subsequent publication in Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal (in English or German) where we will publish our conference papers. Find more information [here](#).

Additional Information:

The conference will feature two keynote speakers: oceanographer Prof. Dr. [Elda Miramontes](#), (MARUM - Center for Marine Environmental Sciences, University of Bremen) and art historian Dr. [Anne Hemkendreis](#) (The Greenhouse Centre for Environmental Humanities, Stavanger University). Additionally, a workshop will be held with two practitioners – environmental journalist [Christian Schwägerl](#) (RiffReporter) and artist-filmmaker [Sonia Levy](#) (Royal College of Art, London) – offering hands-on insights into visual and narrative strategies for communicating water-related issues.

Practical Information:

Meals and accommodation costs for speakers to Bremerhaven will be covered by the organizers, while travel costs are subject to available funding (with priority given to doctoral students and unfunded scholars).

Contact Information:

For any inquiries or further information, please contact the three organizers at k.kleemann@dsm.museum; noemi.quagliati@unive.it; f.will@deutsches-museum.de or visit our website at <https://www.dsm.museum/en/calendar/conference-planetary-waters-a-challenge-between-abstraction-and-empathy>.

We look forward to receiving your submissions and welcoming you to “Planetary Waters - A challenge between abstraction and empathy” in Bremerhaven!

