Experiences of water excess, water deficit and water's balanced presence. A study in Blue Anthropology.

In a time of climate change, such phenomena as droughts and floods become more violent and cyclical. Many communities in Poland suffer alternate episodes of flooding and water deficit. Changes in the annual distribution and intensity of snow and rainfalls, and thus in the frequency of floods, droughts as well as fluctuating access to fresh water seem to challenge the existing infrastructure, strategies and ways of daily usage and understanding of water. These all are new versions of old phenomena that produce new waterscapes and a new future in the context of the climate crisis. Such topics have not yet been tackled by Polish humanities or anthropology. This research project will attempt to fill this void.

The main aim of the project will be to **investigate different local contexts and ways of experiencing water in the context of the climate crisis** in the Anthropocene era. It will **focus on three scenarios - water deficit (droughts), water excess (floods), and balanced presence of the element**. These cases will help to understand the specific local human – non-human – water nexus of relations and interdependencies. Researchers will focus on active strategies, ways of using water, ways of thinking about and treating water, but also modes of coexisting with it and living thanks to it. From a methodological point of view, the project aims to **develop and popularize research methods in the Blue Anthropology current, and develop theoretical, analytical and cognitive possibilities related to the study of relations between people and fresh water.** It will explore the theory of "thinking through water" or "water epistemologies" proposed by Stefan Helmreich or Astrida Neimanis. This will embed the study in posthumanism and relationism, which, by rejecting cognitive anthropocentrism, and in this case land-centrism, explores various weaves of relations and other processes that form human, more-than-human, and non-human worlds, including interdependencies and symbiosis of what is social, material, technological and environmental.

In addition to the theoretical research and a thorough review of the existing literature, the project will consist in conducting qualitative ethnographic research in three locations selected on the basis of their hydrological situation, the degree of human intervention in water bodies, the type of settlement, their economies and history. Droughts, floods or inundations, as well as periods when the access to water is stable alternate in all these locations. These will be the commune of Mirsk in the Kwisa and Bóbr catchment areas, the lower course of the Brzozówka river bordering on fields and the Biebrza National Park, but also Warsaw.

During short term field study visits, spread out over the course of the project, a group of researchers will talk to the inhabitants of villages and cities, especially with people who work with water (farmers, firefighters, activists, employees of national parks, water guides, employees of the company Polish Waters etc.). The methods which will be used are in-depth interview, informal conversations, participant observation or ethnography in action. Researchers will keep photographic documentation, research journal and collect photos and videos donated by local inhabitants. Researchers will also literally have to "get wet" and get to know the local water worlds by experiencing them through their own bodies.

As a result of the conducted research, the proposed theoretical approach supported by empirical evidence will make it possible to shed new light on water in a socio-cultural context. Blue anthropology, a sub-discipline that has been unknown so far in Poland, will thus be introduced in the country. New knowledge will be gathered on topics related to water, especially droughts, floods and how people treat water on a daily basis in the Anthropocene. These topics have not been yet discussed in Polish humanities or cultural anthropology. The research may also be of interest to representatives of other disciplines, and could be used in a wider public debate, by policy makers and NGOs, not only to raise awareness and better understanding of the climate crisis, but also **to implement alternative paradigms in designing a safer and more resilient future for water.**