

**Title:**

The Snow Needs to Be Stomped. (re-)Configurations of Grassland Ecosystem Revival in Siberia

**Researcher(-s):****Abstract intellectual merit, broad impact:**

With Siberia on fire, it seems rather counterintuitive to bring forth a de-forestation and de-scrubbing of Siberian tundra. However, the idea of revitalising grassland in the North is catching up. This question was first raised by Zimov in the 1990's, initially turning it into a full-scale experiment in Sakha Republic, Russia, called the Pleistocene Park. This research would raise critical inquiries into biopolitics at play, the background entanglements of the Park and the affect of a human-modelled transformation. The project is based on New Materialism with the focus on entanglements.

**Overview/Research questions:**

Several areas of study are feasible. The overarching theme for these is a critical inquiry into a human-tampered transformation of ecosystem(-s) in Pleistocene Park and its entanglements.

The project could ask, what is the Pleistocene Park in its material-semiotic forms and plays, how it appears throughout different "construction sites", such as the family who takes care of the Park, animals (e.g. bison from Denmark or Yakutian Horses), scholars analysing this project, the government, local communities and knowledges, grasslands themselves and the forest around, global ecosystems, Siberia, funding, etc.

Another mode of inquiries could follow the arrival of species and how they affect the surroundings. For example, following the Yakutian Horses all the way from their place of origin, village of Aleko-Kuel 800 km away, to the grasslands in question. Inquiries would relate to their multi-faceted becomings of the Park dwellers.

Even the phenomena of "fencing off" could be included here, as it has its own practices, affects and (dis-)entanglements. And one more enticing idea – to investigate this whole initiative through the perspective of snow.

Questions for these inquiries could be as follow:

What is the Pleistocene Park multiple? [following Mol, 2002]. What are the practices that form and inform the Park? What relations or entanglements do these practices build? How these practices add or reduce to the global climate change question?

How is the Animal constructed through the initiative's perspective? What is the Yakutian Horse in becoming? What are the issues of repopulating the tundra with megafauna?

What are the fencing practices? What entanglements they create and what is their extension to wider issues of climate change?

Similar questions would apply to snow. It would be mostly "What is Snow in various construction sites (grasslands of the Park, scientific papers, local knowledges, herds of animals, fences, etc.)? What are the practices and knowledges of snow that are implemented in the Park? What is their affect and transferability?

**Background and Significance:**

Significance would be to critically assess the initiative, its human-centrality, power relations and the biopolitics which are inevitable.

### **Literature Review:**

### **Methods and Data Resources:**

Methods of data collection include but are not limited to participant observation on various “construction sites”, semi-structured interviews (snowball and purposive samplings), cartographic (GIS) analysis of the territories, sensory ethnography, document and media analysis.

Following snow, horses or the park would entail starting from them and getting lost in the intricate entanglements on various spatio-temporalities. The focus would gradually move onto practices.

### **Theoretical frames and Data analysis:**

Because it would eventually move onto practices, Actor-Network Theory is useful as an inspiration for the methodological framework. As well, concepts, such as “transcorporeality” (Alaimo 2010), “becoming with” (Haraway 2016), “construction sites” (Lien 2015), are beneficial.

### **Plan of work:**

### **Challenges and Ethical Considerations:**

### **Validity and Evaluation:**

### **Preparation and work thus far:**

### **References:**

- Alaimo 2010 – ALAIMO, S. (2010). *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
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- Elias, Scott. (2017). *Rewilding the Pleistocene Fauna*. 10.1016/B978-0-12-409548-9.09860-2.
- Lien 2015 - Lien, Marianne Elisabeth. 2015. *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish*. 1st ed., University of California Press.
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- Ксения Раздобреева. “Научный проект «Плейстоценовый парк» получил два миллиона рублей от якутского фонда.” Агентство социальной информации. 2021-12-28, <https://www.asi.org.ru/news/2021/12/28/nauchnyi-proekt-plejstoczenovyi-park-poluchil-2-milliona-rublej-ot-nekommercheskogo-fonda-sinet-park-v-yakutii/> (accessed on 2022-04-22).
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