

Call for Papers

RESILIENCE IN NORDIC LITERATURE AND CULTURE

8th Research Workshop of the Ecocritical Network for Scandinavian Studies (ENSCAN)

University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway, 10–11 December 2026

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Over the past decades, the concept of resilience has become ever more prominent in environmental research. Resilience theory considers natural ecosystems and social-ecological systems to be exposed to expected and unexpected risks and disturbances and as always changing. Understood as “the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure” (Walker & Salt 2006, 1), resilience focuses on processes of adaptation and transformation as a precondition for persisting and avoiding the crossing of critical thresholds. Resilience is also a prominent concept in psychological research, which emphasizes the importance of natural and social-ecological environments for the dynamic processes in which individuals and groups persist or even prosper despite exposure to risk, trauma, and catastrophe. In these ways, resilience arguably shifts the focus away from notions of either stability or collapse to processes of survival and thriving despite risk and adversity.

In environmental humanities, resilience has been criticized as a “codeword for ‘business-as-usual’” (Vardy & Smith 2017, 175) that can obscure the structural causes of vulnerability and normalize social and ecological perturbation. Yet literary and cultural studies have recently also begun to constructively explore the potentials and pitfalls of the concept of resilience. They emphasize, amongst other aspects, its specifically narrative character, as “the very notion of resilience [...] rests upon the narrative sequencing of events, responses, and adaptive processes” (Basseler 2019, 26). Such research also underlines the cultural, normative, cognitive, affective, and aesthetic dimensions of resilience. It asks to what extent representations or narratives of resilience themselves function as “cultural resources of resilience” (Nünning 2020) for individuals and societies but also critically explores their ideological implications (O’Brien 2024).

In this workshop, we aim to explore Nordic approaches to resilience across different times, genres, and media. As a starting point, we suggest Kate Rigby and Evi Zemanek’s transhistorical definition, according to which resilience narratives “focus on the vulnerability experienced by individuals and societies, understood socio-ecologically as more-than-human collectives, and on the process of their successful or failing resilience building” (2026, 9).

Paper proposals are invited on questions including but not limited to the following:

- Are there culturally or historically specific Nordic forms and narratives of resilience? Are any genres and tropes especially prominent? How is resilience conveyed not only in

literature, television and film, but also, for example, in educational texts and in political discourse in the Nordic countries?

- Does resilience theory give us new ways of reading old, or new, Nordic texts? Which kinds of texts lend themselves especially well to this kind of re-reading?
- Can we trace how Nordic representations of resilience have changed over time? Which differences are there between premodern and contemporary resilience narratives, for example?
- How does Indigenous and minority “resilience thinking” differ from that of the majority societies in the Nordic countries? To what extent is resilience compatible with decolonization and/or able to function as a response to environmental injustice?
- To what extent have texts and artworks functioned (or been viewed) as “cultural resources of resilience”? Can literary texts or other art forms help their audiences cope with processes of ecological and social-ecological change?
- How have writing, reading, and performance of literary and/or audiovisual texts played a role in practices of resilience in the Nordic context?

We invite contributions from all parts of (environmental) humanities and beyond, including explicitly interdisciplinary approaches. Researchers from all levels of experience, including doctoral students, are encouraged to submit a proposal of up to 300 words for a 20-minute paper (followed by a 10-minute discussion) to reinhard.hennig@uia.no by **22 June 2026**.

The workshop language will be English. The papers presented at the workshop are planned to be published as part of a peer-reviewed edited volume. For participants without their own travel funding, some funding to assist with accommodation costs may be available. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the workshop organizers Reinhard Hennig (reinhard.hennig@uia.no), Judith Meurer-Bongardt (judithmb@uni-bonn.de), and Katie Ritson (katie.ritson@lrz.uni-muenchen.de). Further information can also be found on the ENSCAN website at www.enscan.net.

References

Basseler, Michael (2019). [“Stories of Dangerous Life in the Post-Trauma Age: Toward a Cultural Narratology of Resilience.”](#) *Narrative in Culture*. Edited by Astrid Erll and Roy Sommer. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, pp. 15–36.

Nünning, Vera (2020). “(European) Narratives as a Cultural Resource of Resilience.” *Europe’s Crises and Cultural Resources of Resilience*. Edited by Imke Polland et al. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, pp. 35–52.

O’Brien, Susie (2024). *What the World Might Look Like: Decolonial Stories of Resilience and Refusal*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Rigby, Kate, and Evi Zemanek (2026). [“Narratives of Resilience: Introduction.”](#) *Narratives of Resilience / Narrative der Resilienz*. Edited by Kate Rigby and Evi Zemanek. Berlin: J.B. Metzler, pp. 1–20.

Vardy, Mark, and Mick Smith (2017). [“Resilience.”](#) *Environmental Humanities* 9 (1): 175–179.

Walker, Brian, and Salt, David (2006). *Resilience Thinking. Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*. Washington: Islandpress.