flows of entanglement: how rivers shape identities

This panel invites scholars from a diverse range of disciplines to consider the entangled and fluid ways in which rivers shape identities.

The language of rivers has seeped into our vocabulary, inspiring expressions and conceptions of everyday life. Fluidscapes oscillate between land and water shaping political, cultural, social and environmental discourses. We live on and by rivers, we have songs dedicated to rivers. We seek to cross rivers on ferries or bridges, by swimming or wading. Rivers break the banks into which they are confined, carrying within them traces of our imagination and memories. It is no wonder that time has etymological connections with tide as poets, artists, novelists and academics consider the ebbs and the flows of histories: reflecting and responding to the river itself, the lives it sustains, its cultural narratives and wider ecosystems. Rivers are places of connection but also of distinction.

Through this full day session, we are hoping to promote an interactive, informal and multi-perspective discussion that explores the meanings and representations of rivers, documenting how we live on, by, or with rivers. Taking the interface between water and land, we recognise that rivers are also murky spaces, dynamically shaping and reflecting the world in which we live. They are complex flows of entangled forms, species intentions and systems.
We invite scholars at all stages of their research to the river’s confluence: in narrative, in politics, in culture, in art and in everyday lives and so welcome submissions relating rivers to the following and more:

(Re)presentation of rivers
Narrating rivers
Social rivers
Political rivers
Fluctuating rivers
Ambiguous rivers
Entangled rivers

This panel is part of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment’s Biennial Conference, hosted at the University of Plymouth between the 4th and 6th September 2019. The conference theme deals with the complexity of entanglements through the theme of ‘co-emergence, co-creation, co-existence’ (https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/asle). In so doing, we welcome inter-disciplinary conversation as a way of exploring the river from a diverse range of perspectives.

‘Flows of Entanglement’ will begin with an introduction by Dr Tricia Cusack (author of ‘Riverscapes and National Identities’, editor of ‘Art and Identity at the Water’s Edge’) followed by a round table discussion with artists and practitioners; scholars and river enthusiasts with an opportunity for questions and answers. Presentations will then be given, exploring the theme of the river in greater depth. Taking advantage of Plymouth’s location on the river Tamar, we will then shift our discussions onto the water through interactive and practical workshops on a local cruising boat: responding to the sight, sound, smell, lines and imagination of the river as we move along its course.

In so doing, we hope to bridge a lively and exciting discussion between a diverse range of scholars in which the river can be traced through their own identity.

Conveners: Eva McGrath, Sally Sutton, Zoe Latham, University of Plymouth.

Scholars are invited to submit a 300 word abstract, alongside 3-4 key words to:

flowsofentanglement@gmail.com

The deadline for submissions is MONDAY 29TH APRIL 2019.