

Inhabiting a transforming delta:

volatility and improvisation in the Canadian Arctic

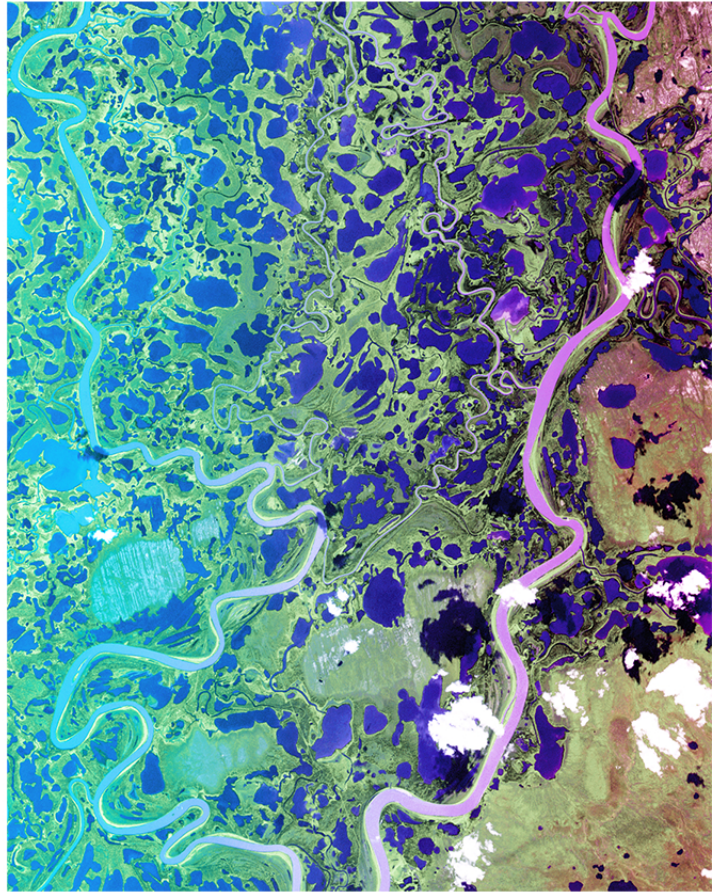
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Fakulta

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Dr. Franz Krause

University of Cologne



FACULTY
OF HUMANITIES
Charles University

ABSTRACT:

Gwich'in and Inuvialuit inhabitants of the Mackenzie Delta in Canada's Northwest Territories have witnessed an eventful history in relation to colonialism and environmental transformation. Their current lives are characterized by mobility, mixing and melting as they negotiate new and old livelihoods, continuity in traditions, and thawing permafrost landscapes. Approaching these lives in terms of volatility opens up an experience-near understanding of people's relations with perpetual, uncertain transformations. Differently situated delta inhabitants have different ways of dealing with these uncertain dynamics, but all are characterized by an improvisation that carries forth reputable activities and attitudes by new means. Dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, and risk-taking must not be seen as lacking resolve to confront transformations, but should be appreciated as skills for inhabiting a volatile world.

BIO:

Following studies in Leiden, Manchester (MSc Environment and Development, 2004) and Berlin (MA Social and Cultural Anthropology, 2006) Franz earned his PhD in Aberdeen (PhD Social Anthropology, 2010). He subsequently held postdoc positions at the CCRI (2011-2012) and in Tallinn (2012-2016). Since February 2016, he is a Junior Research Group Director at the University of Cologne. He is also Assistant Editor of *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, the journal of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA).

Franz's research revolves around human relations with and through water, which he studies with approaches from phenomenological anthropology, political ecology and environmental history. His previous research projects dealt with issues including communal irrigation in the Philippines, life along a river in Finnish Lapland, memories of floods in England, and life in an Estonian wetland.

Currently, Franz is working on a project investigating the sociocultural, economic and hydrologic volatilities of life in four river deltas around the world. His empirical work focuses on the mostly Gwich'in and Inuvialuit inhabitants of the Mackenzie Delta in the Canadian Arctic.