

## EXPLORATIONS IN OCEAN SPACE III

### A choreography for Norskehavet / the Norwegian Ocean

**Semester: Autumn 2021**

**Teacher(s) in charge:** Nancy Couling (APP) Vibeke Jensen (DAV)

#### **Course Content:**

*A description of the course*

*What is the background of the course? Which main topic? What, for whom, where, why?*

If we were to think of the Ocean as a geographic place with spatial characteristics, protagonists, histories, and desires inscribed into its waters, how could we begin to represent it? How could we position ourselves to interact with it, to tell its stories and to intervene as architects and multi-scale designers?

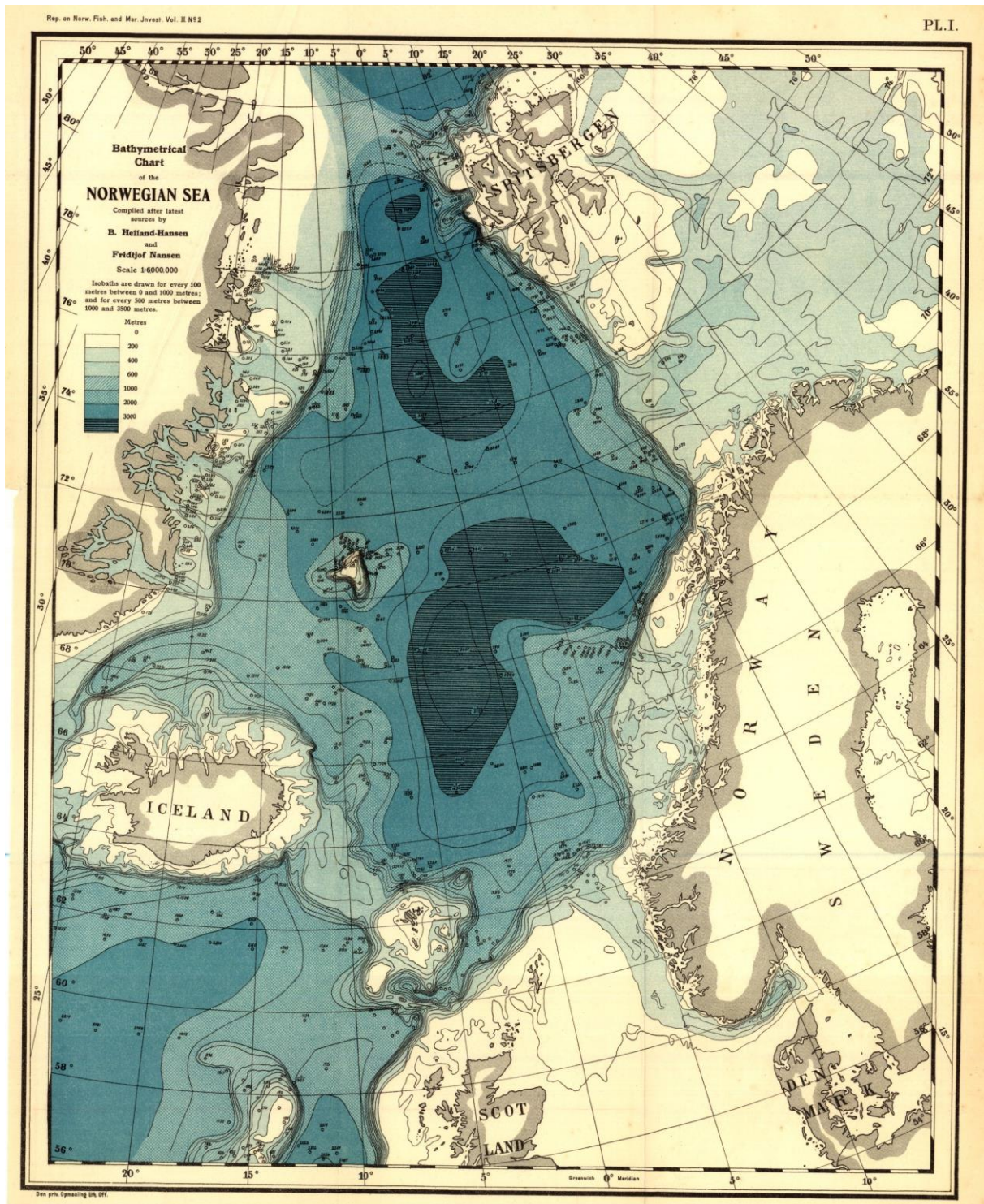
The Ocean is a powerful force of global importance, a rich pool of resources, a concealed landscape of reverse topography and surging currents coated by the shifting plane of the surface. Invisible lines of historical passages and territorial divisions are traced across it while discrete water masses circulate through. We are confronted with spatial inversion- there is more water than land, it is deeper than land is high, our reading skills so far cannot penetrate its inscrutable surface.

Western society has developed an overwhelmingly exploitative relationship to the ocean, firmly maintained by government collaboration with the maritime industries. The *space* of the sea has now become a premium resource for the energy transition and for new forms of extraction and injection. But changes in oceanic patterns, including warming temperatures and sea-level rise, have gained public attention. An urgent collective, cross-disciplinary effort is required in order to address these complex challenges, which cannot be solved purely by science, technology or the industrial sectors that have so far dominated the sea space. At a time when the ecological crisis is a global preoccupation, different forms of narration are needed to recount today's most critical story. Multiple voices have asserted that the current ecological crisis is accompanied by a crisis of the imagination.

Ocean Literacy is the individual and collective understanding of the importance of the ocean to humankind (IOC-UN's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission). The course offers different ways of approaching ocean space, encouraging dialogue between different types of knowledge and thereby enriching not only ocean literacy in BAS students, but also understandings within current large-scale debates. Becoming more literate in ocean space is one way of overcoming *Sea Blindness*, a way to develop a sense of public stewardship towards the sea, and is a form of creative empowerment for architects towards the other 72% of the earth's surface.

The course builds on research carried out by Nancy Couling on the urbanisation of the North Sea, complimented by Vibeke Jensen's ongoing artistic practice investigating the transformation of systems and spaces. *Explorations in Ocean Space III* is our third course focusing on the Ocean, and will therefore profit from established collaborations with oceanographic and other experts, as well as from the body of work – both research and project proposals – completed by previous BAS students. In 2021 we move from the North Sea to **Norskehavet** literally translated as the “Norwegian Ocean”, otherwise known as the Norwegian Sea – a largely unfamiliar entity, vast and with an average depth of 2,000m (the ocean's “twilight zone”), historically full of mythological creatures and unpredictable forces, but also drilled for oil, shipped, trawled and divided. The Norskehavet has rare and valuable oceanographic features, is crossed by the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and contains a slice of international waters under military surveillance. It is inhabited by particular life-forms, about some of which we still know very little. Beginning from the perspective that the Norskehavet is evaluated as a largely intact ecosystem, this course will firstly explore and document interspecies dialogue, and subsequently accumulated anthropogenic impacts.

Using an established methodology combining artistic and scientific methods, together we will learn how to read the Norskehavet in a holistic way – trace it back to Vestland and further on to the connecting Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and Barents and Greenland Seas. A Management plan for the Marine Environment of the Norwegian Sea has been developed by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, however this plan concerns only the Norwegian part of this sea, and not the marine territory of neighbouring Iceland or the Faroe Islands. Based on, and inspired by our readings, students will interrogate and renegotiate this plan, identify protagonists, and explore how these protagonists can steer the open development of project proposals. Hence we will aim to move from static planning processes to a dynamic choreography of this ocean space.



## **Working and learning activities:**

*How is the course structured? Different phases?*

*Theoretical study /practical work, building activities? Group work? Individual work?*

*Study trip? Where, when and for how long?*

*Methodic approaches*

The course is structured into the following parts (working & learning activities) with their respective methods.

### 1. Ocean Literacy

The course begins with projecting.

In order to structurally include plural forms of understanding, the programme explores intuitive, artistic, technological and scientific directions, including the distinct methods particular to each. Intuitive “projective” works installed during the course’s opening workshop are important to explain personal relations to the sea and to forge or reexamine emotional ties. This is followed by researching the work of relevant contemporary artists and adapting their methods to our course theme. Through this process, new ways of communicating critical issues and engaging the senses are opened up – some of which have direct influence on the final project direction. The artistic research serves as inspiration- the focus lies in the making of the student’s own interpretation. Inputs supporting this workshop include an introduction to terms and definitions concerning man-nature relations; including ecology, sustainability, the anthropocene and post-anthropocene.

### 2. Deep Cartography: The Norskehavet Aquarium

From the initial projecting we move into spatial exploration.

GIS data is useful to trace the geophysical characteristics of our “unknown” site of the Norskehavet. As a group we learn to use the open source software QGIS to research available sources and compile thematic layers of “protagonists”. This results in a shared cartographic resource, which we aim to convert into a physical model; the Norskehavet Aquarium. Understanding the model as a common working tool and a deep three-dimensional map, a creative process unfolds within which the model is co-designed and produced. This process is not neutral. It is accompanied by inputs on critical cartography, which highlight the political dimensions to scanning, mapping, dividing territory, gathering seabed data and selecting forms of representation. By beginning with tracing the life and movements of the natural marine protagonists of the Norskehavet, such as cold-water corals, plankton, krill, fish, mammals, birds and also including wind, currents, ice and water-masses, we expect to build a different basis for a common strategic plan.

### 3. Repeated Round-tables: Common Choreography and Independent Acts

Centred around the common Aquarium model, the course proceeds with regular roundtables aimed at the negotiation of a common strategy. A second layer of human-induced protagonists are introduced; maritime borders, infrastructure, fishing, oil & gas, monitoring and mapping technologies, shipping and research. Emerging conflicts of interest are to be resolved through dialogue, articulating propositions and the formulation of a common protocol to manage such deliberation. External inputs introduce the idea behind “choreographic” scenarios, which insist on including temporal and performative dimensions to the process.

In parallel to the development of a common strategy, a deeper exploration of the habitats and agency of groups of protagonists continues to be developed and communicated as a collection of quasi-autonomous acts, which can open the way for more specific or divergent project work. Projects in the past have developed seaweed, mussel and kelp cultivation, transformed decommissioned oilrigs, proposed systems of marine plastic capture and recycling, or ecosystem monitoring, and imagined narratives around deserted dock areas or new hybrid marine creatures. See: <https://explorationsinoceanspace.cargo.site/> and <https://explorationsin.wixsite.com/oceanspace>



#### 4. Field-trip

The course field-trip normally takes place over one week towards the end of September. In 2021 we hold different options open around the Norskehavet such as Tromsø or Lofoten, depending on travel restrictions and recommendations. Travel costs should be restricted to around €350.

#### 5. Mid-term presentations and reviews

At the mid-term review, the latest, most developed state of the common choreography for the Norskehavet will be presented through the Aquarium model and supporting media (sound, projection, thematic maps and protagonist acts). At this presentation, smaller groups and individual students should be able to articulate an area of interest for their ongoing explorations in second half of the semester.

#### 6. Project development

After mid-term, time and space is dedicated to further or project development individually or in small groups with ongoing input and support from course teachers, a marine biologist, a curator, project presentations from previous course students, and an introductory video-making course. Two further reading/discussion sessions are planned with relevant theoretical texts in relation to project work.

#### 7. Final Roundtable & pre-final reviews

For the pre-final reviews at the end of November, a final roundtable is held to adapt and adjust the BAS Management plan for the Norskehavet and to coordinate the different protagonists, both in their role within specific narrations as well as within the overall choreography. This final revisiting of the Aquarium serves to link the different scales and to reassert the relevance and influence of the very small within the very large and vice-versa. It enables parallel versions of the “plan” to be communicated and its development over time.

#### 8. Final presentation.

The course maintains an open approach to formats for the final presentation. These are discussed with the teachers throughout the semester according to the projects themselves, and students are encouraged to explore and to pursue their own methods of research, project development and narrative communication. Findings feed into the ongoing Index of Terms and Lexicon of Species and Things.

### **Learning Outcome:**

#### **a) Skills**

The course offers students a way to gain an integrated understanding of the relations between different scales and teaches a range of skills to communicate these scales; for example QGIS, marine biology, video-making, using hydrophones.

In a similar way to promoting an agile transition between different scales; from the scale of the Norskehavet as a whole, through regional basins or fjords, to the micro-scale toxins or plastics, the objective is to promote an agile transition between these different spheres of knowledge, and to enable to students to extract, transform, utilise and potentially synthesise elements from each. This agility enables architecture to provide a detailed local scale interpretation of large-scale design decisions, while the local scale can be perceived through the view of different protagonists; human, or fish, oilrigs, birds and more.

The course cultivates informed spatial criticality and aims to sharpen communications skills. The ability to summarise and communicate the essentials in complex oceanic relations to a broader audience is vital to the improvement of ocean literacy.

## b) Knowledge

- Understanding of the spaces and dynamics of the global Ocean, with a particular focus on the Norskehavet.
- Understanding of the ecological processes affected by human impact in marine environments and knowledge about the state of the art in potential solutions.
- Knowledge and a critical approach to the maritime sectors including marine spatial planning
- Introduction to current theoretical writing addressing man-nature relations and urban processes

## c) Competencies

Architecture students are skilled in spatial representation and the ability to create imaginative proposals. They are able to activate knowledge, to mould material and space into something new, and to find engaging ways to communicate ideas. The course will build on these skills, and also offer short workshops to address specific thematic areas and methodological approaches:

- oceanography
- marine biology
- cartography
- GIS mapping with QGIS
- underwater sound recordings with hydrophones
- artistic research methods
- current spatial theory (reading & discussion)
- collective model-making
- video-making with Adobe Premier Pro
- choreographic curation

## Requirements:

Our experience has shown us that regular course participation is essential for grasping important concepts and methods, for developing convincing project work and for exchanging with peers. We ask for clear communication in the case that presence in the class is impeded for some reason.

The first part of the semester will involve group work, therefore in order to achieve a good result, it is important that the whole class is committed, and working consistently – all contributions count and depend on one another.

## Reading list /References:

\* The BAS library already holds most of the volumes on this list. The reading is not compulsory, rather you are encouraged to dive into some texts if they attract your attention. We will distribute specific excerpts from these and other texts for particular discussions

Nancy Couling and Carola Hein, eds. *The Urbanisation of the Sea: from Concepts and Analysis to Design* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2020)

Harry Gugging, Nancy Couling, and Aurélie Blanchard, eds., *Barents Lessons. Teaching and Research in Architecture* (Zürich: Park Books, 2012).

Laboratoire Bâle, *Icelandic Lessons: Industrial Landscape, Teaching and research in architecture* (Zürich: Park Books, 2015).

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and Stefanie Hessler, *Tidialectics: imagining an oceanic worldview through art and science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018)

Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

- Neil Brenner, *Implosions / Explosions : Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014).
- Rania Ghosn, El Hadi Jazairy, and *Design Earth, Geostories: Another Architecture for the Environment* (New York: Actar, 2018).
- Jon Anderson & Kimberly Peters (eds.) *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (Farnham: Ashgate 2014)
- James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention', in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 213–52.
- Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network, Sign, Storage, Transmission* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015)
- Allan Sekula, *Fish Story*, ed. Barbera van Kooij, 2., rev. Engl. ed. (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2002).
- Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018)

## **Specific conditions**

A master course is considered a formal exam at BAS. The only grading is Pass /Fail.

An external examiner will be present during the final review, and participate on the final grading of the student in collaboration with the teacher(s) in charge on the course.

If a student lacks the minimum level and attendance in order to be evaluated for the exam, the student shall receive written notice of this as soon as possible, and at the latest 2 weeks before the final review. Then this student will have failed the course. As a master course is based on the effort and work during a whole semester, this will be the basis for the approval for the exam.

Written notice/warning can be given throughout the semester if a candidate does not have the required progress or attendance. Then it is the student's responsibility to put in the extra effort and resources.

Even though a student does not receive a warning/notice from the teachers, the final result will be depending on an evaluation also by an external assessor, and the result can therefore not be guaranteed.

If a student has special needs and will need facilitation during the master course, the student must contact BAS before the course starts and inform the school about this. It is required to have documentation of a diagnosis in order to have facilitation. If you have had a process with this earlier in your study, you nevertheless have to contact adm. to inform and agree upon the specific needs for facilitation for the upcoming semester.

## **The final assessment**

will be made by the teacher(s) in charge of the course plus an external examiner during the final review, and will be based on:

1. The individual submission for the different stages of the project.
2. The level of participation and contribution to the collective/group work.
3. The assessment of the work/project as presented at the final review.

After the final review one will receive either a pass or fail. If there are minor weaknesses that could improve the project in order to pass, a candidate may be given supplementary work that is to be completed within 2 weeks after the final review. The supplementary work will be evaluated to either a pass or a fail by the teacher(s) in charge. If the weaknesses are not possible to overcome by doing supplementary work, the grade will be fail. This decision of giving supplementary work is solely up to the teacher and the external examiner.

## **Specific requirements for design and build courses:**

For design and build courses it is very important that the student participates on the collective work, as well reflect on one's own effort and learning outcome.

The final decision as to the performance of each student will be taken by the external examiner (senior) on the basis of

- a) both group performance,
- b) the report on individual participation done by the teachers,
- c) and a portfolio made by the student showing the extent of individual and collective contributions to the studio.

**Portfolio**

a student is expected to make a portfolio of all 3 master courses before diploma. This is to be submitted at the beginning of the diploma semester.