

Introduction: Framing nature and culture

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The articles gathered in this special issue of *Sign Systems Studies* discuss a variety of discourses, theoretical models, artistic activities, principles of design, etc. which in one way or another expose and manifest, but also guide, our perception of nature and human-environment relations. Most of the articles in this issue have grown out of presentations made at the conference Framing Nature: Signs, Stories, and Ecologies of Meaning, which took place in Tartu from 29 April 2014 to 3 May 2014.³ Humans create multiple environments by using various frames of interpretation. In addition, specific means of expression and modes of signification give nature a particular shape and character. However, framing nature is not a one-way process – i.e. the semiotic frames are not simply of nature, but they are part of nature as they have an effect on the ecological processes themselves. Such a modified environment in turn becomes an object of further models, interpretations and significations. Hence, nature frames culture just like culture frames nature in a variety of ways, some of which are examined in the articles of the current issue.

In the first article of the issue, “Urban discourse – city space, city language, city planning: Eco-semiotic approaches to the discourse analysis of urban renewal”, Ernest W. B. Hess-Lüttich reviews a broad set of approaches to the discourse of urban development. He finds that, for planning a sustainable urban environment, successful communication between different stakeholders should take place, the stakeholders’ various backgrounds, interests and even perceptions of reality must be observed and taken into account, and a coherence of different discourses involved

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³ This large meeting on environmental humanities, hosted by the Department of Semiotics of the University of Tartu, included the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment (EASLCE) Biennial Conference, and the Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES) IX Conference, altogether with more than 240 participants and 115 presentations (Tüür 2015a, 2015b; Rattasepp 2014). It also included a Jakob von Uexküll Lecture given by Wendy Wheeler (Wheeler 2014).