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# ENMOTE Lectures

MICHAEL BRAVO

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NORTH POLE IN VIENNA 500 YEARS AGO,  
AND WHY THIS STILL MATTERS TODAY

MO 17.06.2019, 17.00, HS A

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**Michael Bravo** has recently published a new and groundbreaking history of the North Pole that spans five centuries from the Renaissance to the Present.

He has written extensively on the role of scientific research in the exploration and development of the Arctic.

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*The Pan-Inuit Trails Atlas* is his most recent project. Its principal sources are maps that were drawn by Inuit for visiting scientists, missionaries, and traders over the course of centuries. Brought together and mapped it presents for the first time an indigenous cartographic vision of Arctic North America.

The earth's geographical North Pole presents us with a paradox. Centuries before being visited, it could be grasped, held in one's hands, set foot upon, and returned from – without crossing the Arctic Circle. The story of this paradox unfolds in the sixteenth century, when cosmographers paid close attention to the harmonies between events on earth and the constellations in the heavens. The timing of these movements of heaven and earth were of importance to emperors, and the kings and queens of Europe.

The mystery of the North Pole, far from giving way to certainty and banality, grew over time. The more it was studied, the stranger the idea of a pole became. Far from being just a place where men raced to be first, there is an alternative history of the Pole in which women figure authoritatively as authors and witnesses, reading the pole in terms of ambiguity and plurality, not a linear conquest as supposed in the twentieth century. Thus the North Pole's history retains a strong sense of paradox today which can help us to understand much more clearly why the Arctic matters for the way we understand the whole planet.