# AU Moesgaard Autumn Lecture Heritage, climate change and environmental insecurity

Friday 4 September 2015, from 13.00-17.00 In the lecture hall at Moesgaard Museum (4240/020)

#### **PROGRAMME**

13.00-13.15

**Welcome** - by Felix Riede & Michael Eilenberg, Aarhus University 13.15-14.00

Heritage and Climate Change Relations: Loss, Adaptation and Creativity - by David C. Harvey, University of Exeter 14.00-14.45

The Question of Heritage in a Hunting Community: Living with Climate Change in the High Arctic

- by Kirsten Hastrup, Copenhagen University 14.45-15.00

Coffee break

15.00-15.45

**Dscussion & questions** 

16.00-17.00

**Reception** (in the canteen at the manor)

17.00-

Friday Bar





## Heritage and Climate Change Relations: Loss, Adaptation and Creativity

# Professor David C. Harvey University of Exeter

THIS PRESENTATION EXPLORES the relations between heritage and climate change; two of the most high profile concerns of the contemporary world. Climate change is undoubtedly one of the key threats to world heritage, as iconic sites, natural habitats and ways of life are coming under increasing pressure from environmental and climatic stresses that most people would agree are human-induced. What is less often acknowledged, however, is the way that debates and processes of climate change make reference to, and draw sustenance from, notions of heritage – a present-centred and future-orientated processing of a tangible and intangible sense of the past. This can be seen both in the way that climate change processes are understood through reference to the past acting as an analogue for the present; and also the manner in which climate change debates are often channelled and popularised through reference to ideas about supposed threats, practical solutions and speculation over future scenarios of change.

In both cases, there is an ideal of 'global stewardship', but also a realisation of a political and socio-economic context that appears difficult to rectify with the responsibility for our 'common inheritance'. Perceptions of the past inform our understandings of climate change processes, while public and policy engagement with our changing climate routinely draws on an idea that we have an obligation to 'future generations' to take care of 'our heritage', and the connections between past, present and future. Reviewing the terrain of these heritage-climate change relations, this presentation offers some theoretical guidelines for how we might move forward in an equitable manner.

## The Question of Heritage in a Hunting Community: Living with Climate Change in the High Arctic

### Professor Kirsten Hastrup University of Copenhagen

"HERITAGE IS OUR LEGACY from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration" – as UNESCO has it on World Heritage. The question is what this may mean in actual practice.

The presentation will explore this on the basis of work in a High Arctic community of hunters in North West Greenland, numbering some 700 people. They may be geographically isolated, but are evidently part of a larger national and global order, and deeply affected by the current climate change, accelerating in the North. This seems to undermine their very way of life – and both their natural and cultural heritage. At closer inspection, the community has faced environmental challenges since the earliest times. They are living on the edge of the humanly possible and from the outside they may still be perceived as 'traditional', in spite of the manifest shifts in their position in a larger social and political order. Their technological ingenuity is legendary, and historical sources from the past 200 years show how they have survived against all odds during previous periods of environmental insecurity. In the process, their material culture has been strained to the limit.

The presentation will focus on some of the salient points in this development, from the 'first encounter', through a colonial moment of some magnitude, and until the present where the community seems under siege by global warming. This brings us back to the question of heritage, which seems to be bound up with an idea of naturalized cultural identities that cannot be sustained even in the most 'isolated' and 'traditional' social communities.



