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The Ethics of Sharing

May 11-12 2021

Centre for the Study of Ethics and Community
Aarhus University, Denmark



CARLSBERG FOUNDATION

THE ETHICS OF SHARING

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What do we share as human beings, what can we possibly share, and what are the limits of sharing? In the 20th century, death and birth took centre stage in discussions of the human condition. Debates concerning the anthropocene have since drawn attention to a further crucial dimension to our shared existential situation. We now acknowledge that our lives do not take place against the backdrop of infinite nature, rather we cohabitate and share the environmental "life-support system" of one limited planet, Earth. With this international conference, we want to explore what forms of ethical life these shared horizons afford, and how they relate to sharing as a social practice. If being is always being-with *on finite planet Earth*, the species' future of being may be said to hinge on the caretaking and maintenance of this life-support system. In so far as sharing implies sustainability, sharing should therefore be a central ethical concern for any community invested in its own reproduction. On the word of developmental psychology and evolutionary anthropology, humans are in this respect particularly gifted among mammals in our social ability to share not only food and resources, but also attention and intentionality. Human beings are conventionally thought of as separate, and yet sharing suggests a momentary suspension of this division in a joint partaking of (or caretaking for) something. The social anthropological record shows countless such cases of sharing as a living social and economic form across the world. Yet, this is perhaps principally the case with hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, which raises the tricky question of whether and how sharing practices common to small-scale societies may translate into forms that are viable in a contemporary world brimming with human activity.

With this conference, we aim to bring together scholars with diverse backgrounds (e.g. philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology) for the interdisciplinary exploration of the ethics of sharing, its phenomenology, its economy, and the ideological life of the notion of sharing. What can possibly be shared, how does sharing relate to other forms of social interchange, what are the limits of sharing, and what are viable forms of sharing for the future?

Organizers: Anders Sybrandt Hansen and Lotte Meinert, Centre for the study of Ethics and Community at AU. Follow the centre here: www.facebook.com/ethicsandcommunity/

Programme day 1: Tuesday 11 May

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, Aarhus University

AIAS Auditorium, Høegh-Guldbergsgade 6B, 8000 Aarhus C

Contact phone: +45 87153557

At all times when attending the seminar, we expect that you have a negative COVID-19 test taken within the last 72 hours.

Tuesday 11 May - Venue: AIAS Auditorium, AIAS. Høegh-Guldbergsgade 6B, 8000 Aarhus C

8:30-9:00	Meet and greet		
9:00-10:00		Thomas Widlok (Cologne)	The Ethics of Sharing Between Presence and Distance
		Discussant: Anders E. Rasmussen	
10:00-10:15	Break		
10:15-11:45	Session 1	Chair: Thomas S. Wentzer	
		Zdenka Sokolickova (Oslo)	Potential and Barriers for Sharing in Longyearbyen, Svalbard
		Jonas Holst (San Jorge)	Symbolics of Sharing: On Erotism, Hospitality and Commoning
		Anders S. Hansen (AU)	Subsistence, Solidarity, and Pampering, on Spaceship Earth
11:45-12:45	Lunch		
12:45-14:15	Session 2	Chair: Rasmus Dyring	
		Nicolai Knudsen (Oxford)	Shared Ethical Demands: Moral Responsibility and Group Agency from a Phenomenological Perspective
		Charlotte Christiansen (AU)	Does Fiction Reading Make Us Better People? Empathy and Morality in a Literary Empowerment Programme
		Maria Louw (AU)	Openings
14:15-14:30	Break		
14:30-15:30		Hans Bernhard Schmid (Vienna)	Sharing, Shares, and Sharers
		Discussant: Thomas S. Wentzer	
15:30-15:45	Break		
15:45-17:15	Session 3	Chair: Maria Louw	
		Mette Løvschal (AU)	The Ethics of Heathlands: An Archaeological Inquiry into Landscapes of Interspecies Sharing and Extracting
		Thea Skaanes (Human by Nature)	Ethics of Regeneration: Sharing Meat, Sharing Relations, Sharing Futures
		Jeanette Lykkegård (AU)	Sharing Landscape: Ethical Movements and Social Practice among Human Beings and Bears in Siberia

18:30: Dinner: Restaurant Pihlkjær, Mejlgade 28, 8000 Aarhus C.

Programme day 2: Wednesday 12 May

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, Aarhus University

AIAS Auditorium, Høegh-Guldbergsgade 6B, 8000 Aarhus C

Contact phone: +45 87153557

At all times when attending the seminar, we expect that you have a negative COVID-19 test taken within the last 72 hours.

Wednesday 12 May - Venue: AIAS Auditorium, AIAS. Høegh-Guldbergsgade 6B, 8000 Aarhus C

10:00-10:30 Meet and greet

10:30-12:00	Session 4	Chair: Bjørn Rabjerg	
		Helene Grøn (Copenhagen)	Sharing Stories as a Homing Practice
		Lotte Meinert (AU)	Sharing Mountains, Sharing Faith and "Something for Something": Missionaries and the Ik in Uganda
		Anders E. Rasmussen (MoMu)	Sharing your Hand: Unhelpful Help and the Ethics of Sharing in Mbuke, Papua New Guinea
12:00-13:00	Lunch		
13:00-14:30	Session 5	Chair: Anne Marie Pahuus	
		Alfred Sköld (Aalborg)	Shared Finitude - A Social Ontology of Bereavement
		Line Dalsgård (AU)	Sharing the Unsharable: Maternal Experiences with Symbiosis and Beyond
		Marie R. B. Odgaard (AU)	Her Hands Would Tuck Us in at Night - Shared Sentiments of Queer Activism in Amman
14:30-14:45	Wrap up	Lotte Meinert; Anders S Hansen	Wrap up conversation/ sharing

Abstracts

The ethics of sharing between presence and distance

Thomas Widlok, University of Cologne

In this paper I examine the ethics of sharing with regard to the dimensions of presence and distance. Two contradictory assumptions are common in many theories of sharing and sharing ethics:

Firstly, there is the assumption that sharing is based on shared presence, more strongly on the absence of distance, on an intimate bond or even an unbroken identity between those who share and those who receive. The ethic of sharing here is conceived of the ethic of a small close community forming a corporate body. Sharing is here an ethical commitment of being an integral part of that community. Not to share would be de facto to exclude oneself and others from the community, the ultimate ethical offense and the ultimate sanction at the same time. I share with you because you are in some way a part of me anyway. This assumption, however, is contradicted by a whole series of empirical observations on sharing. Sharing typically and explicitly takes place also across the boundaries of corporate groups. In practice the ethical demand for a rightful share reaches beyond those who are part of "myself."

The second assumption considers sharing as being based on altruism, a principle that makes me overcome the distance between the self and the other even though distance here is bridged rather than eliminated. I am supposed to share with "others", not because of any personal relationships with them or due to situational circumstances but because when looking at it abstractly, from a distance, they are of the same value as I am, members of the same species. The ethical principle of altruism is defined by the fact that it extends indiscriminately of personal or situational properties since those specific properties disappear when considered from a distance. Altruism applies across distance, to all members of a species. In a sense, the altruistic principle makes distance between separate others its programme: the more of a distanced stance I take the broader my altruistic behaviour should extend - across race, class, gender, and possibly even across species boundaries. However, this assumption is also contradicted by a whole series of empirical observations. In practice, sharing very much follows practices of making oneself present (in that share-seekers establish proximity to those from whom they expect a share) and, conversely, it features many strategies of attempted withdrawal from proximity (for example, by hiding the objects to be shared or by consuming them away from others). Overall, sharing seems to be characterized by a large degree of situativity.

The ethics of sharing, then, is clearly neither simply explicable as a mere maximization of presence (in an ever more tightly integrated community) nor as a maximization of distance (in the social maxim of altruism), but is much more dynamic. In this talk, I examine, among other things, whether Knut Løgstrup's concept of "singular universality" is helpful when trying to get a better grasp on this dynamic between presence and distance in the ethics of sharing.

Unsustainable home: Potential and barriers for sharing in Longyearbyen, Svalbard

Zdenka Sokolickova, University of Oslo

In Longyearbyen at 78 degrees latitude north, a settlement of 2,400 inhabitants coming from 52 countries worldwide, the phenomenon of sharing is of vital importance. Being heavily subsidized by Norway, this geopolitically strategic microcosm located in an extremely vulnerable environment embodies the fundamental double bind of our time: How to live in a warming world where only few have what many

desire. The paper explores various facets of sharing and their ethical aspects in the local context of Longyearbyen. Residents and tourists share space, both in the urbanized area and in the vast landscape of the archipelago. Because of avalanche danger, housing units are being demolished, yet materials are being shared and reused, taking the enormous ecological footprint (and cost) of transporting anything to the island into account. In Bruktikken, a few square meters value laboratory, people donate clothes and household items they no longer need, so that other people can take them for free. On two lively Facebook pages used by the community, a parallel local economy is running, and members share concerns and emotions. There is specialized knowledge available for sharing thanks to excellent research, especially in natural science and Arctic risk&safety. And there is solidarity and care in the town where the shared destiny is encapsulated in a simple fact: that Longyearbyen would be uninhabitable without powers and resources that contribute to the overheating of our world, a world that is „too full and too uneven“ (Eriksen). The paper contrasts possibilities for sharing in Longyearbyen with its barriers, be it (geo)politics, life style relying on consumption, or cultural and language segregation. There might be a parallel between human existence on planet Earth and human existence in Svalbard: „We all are just visitors here“ and „We all share the same boat“.

Symbolics of sharing: On erotism, hospitality and commoning

Jonas Holst, San Jorge University

Sharing in the active sense of the word involves some form of partaking. Yet, for partaking to take place, a prior partition has had to come about, which leaves its mark on subsequent sharing processes. In an attempt to clarify and elaborate on this double dynamics of continuity and discontinuity in sharing, the presentation will argue that in order to investigate into the ethical meanings of sharing we need to think through the ways in which the continuities and discontinuities implied in sharing can be said to preserve and promote life and wellbeing on Earth. In a critical dialogue with Plato, Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt, I will present three different models of sharing and develop the ethical potential which they hold. Following upon this reflection on the different meanings of sharing, I will raise a series of questions concerning the limits of an ethics of sharing: Are there things which we may better not share with each other, if we wish to lead a good life? When and in which situations could that be? Is ethics as much about caring for oneself as it is caring for others, and how could we adequately address the relationship between ourselves and others in the light of what it means to share our lives with others?

Subsistence, Solidarity, and Pampering, on Spaceship Earth

Anders Sybrandt Hansen, Aarhus University

In the 20th century, death and birth took centre stage in discussions of the human condition. Debates concerning the anthropocene have since drawn attention to a further dimension to our shared existential situation. We now acknowledge that our lives do not take place against the backdrop of infinite nature, rather we cohabitate and share the environmental life-support system of one limited planet. How will this new horizon affect human life on spaceship Earth? Instead of a miserabilist critique of human shortcomings (Sloterdijk), I want in this talk to discuss subsistence ethics, solidarity, and pampering as three movements in an expansionist ethics of sharing. I do this in an attempt to model the interaction of the socio-symbolic and ecological dimensions of “human demand space.” I hope to hereby produce useful images for thinking about sharing on an abundant but finite planet that is marked simultaneously by plenty and poverty, wastefulness and want.

Shared Ethical Demands: Moral Responsibility and Group Agency from a Phenomenological Perspective

Nicolai Knudsen, University of Oxford

In recent moral philosophy, it has been argued that some groups—i.e., groups capable of deliberation, self-reflection, and coordination of action—are morally responsible for their actions in the same way that individuals are. These approaches accept a more or less Kantian conception of responsibility. The phenomenological tradition, however, offers a very different conception of responsibility in which the focus is no longer on the agent's capacity for deliberation and self-reflection but the agent's immediate relation to an ethically demanding situation. This paper aims to probe the phenomenological tradition (especially Løgstrup) for an account of shared or collective responsibility. Can we share ethical demands and how so? Focusing on random groups (that is, small-scale, unstructured associations), I make the case that ethical demands can indeed be shared among multiple individuals in such a way that the individuals share responsibility in a collective and not just distributive sense. I conclude by outlining how this phenomenological notion of shared responsibility differs from a more robust, quasi-Kantian notion of collective responsibility.

Does fiction reading make us better people? Empathy and morality in a literary empowerment programme

Charlotte E. Christiansen, Aarhus University

Empirical studies and philosophical works (here exemplified by Nussbaum) have proposed that participatory arts, particularly literature reading, can enhance empathy, and maybe even lead to stronger moral judgment. By imaginatively taking part in the adventures of literary characters, the reader becomes more attentive to other people's situations in general, the argument often goes. But to what degree can readers actually be said to share the experiences they read about? And how can sharing these experiences be said to lead to fruitful and 'educating' moral reflections?

Building on fieldwork in a Literary Empowerment Programme for people with mental vulnerabilities in Denmark, I seek to qualify the role of empathy, understood as the ability to imaginatively put yourself in other people's shoes, when reading literature in a social setting. Here, I found that my interlocutors experienced instances of empathic attunement towards other readers and literary characters. But people also often told me about encounters with what I call the limits of empathy, understood as encounters with unfathomable, radical alterity. Nevertheless, readers often reported on fruitful moral reflections as a result of participating in the programme. I situate encounters with empathy, and the limits thereof, within the overall objectives of the Empowerment Programme, which was to create 'litterære frirum' (literary free spaces). I connect this free space-objective to Scandinavian values of spaciousness and equality and Scottish Enlightenment ideas of the role of empathy in civil society. Inspired by Jarett Zigon's notion of moral and ethical assemblages, I conclude by suggesting that what might lead readers towards an 'enhanced moral position' was not a training of empathic abilities, but instead taking part in a particular moral assemblage heralding freedom and equality.

Openings

Maria Louw, Aarhus University

Questions about whether we share the world or not, whether there are many worlds or one, and what a world actually is – has recently occupied many anthropologists. In discussions around the ontological turn,

in particular, questions like these are often posed in structural and highly abstract terms. In this paper, I will explore them as existential and ethical questions which become pressing to people as they encounter alterity, sometimes where they least expect it; in worlds they thought they knew; in intimate relations, or in their own worlds of experience. More particularly, my empirical point of departure will be young Kyrgyz converts to Christianity and their experiences moving between - and being moved by - different worlds which offer their own premises for understanding and claim to encompass each other. Inspired by Lisa Stevenson who, in *Life Beside Itself. Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic* (2014), suggested that what is peculiar about images is that they, rather than being straightforward representations, “express without formulating” and “drag the world along with them”, I will explore images as openings toward worlds which are experienced as moments of alterity but also offer occasions for sharing in unexpected ways.

Sharing, Shares, and Sharers

Hans Bernhard Schmid, University of Vienna

The ethics of heathlands: An archaeological inquiry into landscapes of interspecies sharing and extracting

Mette Løvschal, Aarhus University

In the light of the Anthropocene, great debates are unfolding about interspecies relationships and the rethinking of ethical approaches to nature. But there is little focus on whether or how nature itself encompasses its own ethical values and predicaments. Referring to an ethics of nature - rather than only for it - would allow us to open up intriguing avenues for inquiring into the ethical potentials of sharing within nature by engaging with questions of deep-time ecocultural constellations. Taking the example of heathlands, I set to explore how nature itself develops its own modes of ethical expression. Heathlands are open, treeless landscapes, dominated by heather and thriving on sandy, nutrient-poor soils. The world of heather is one of extraordinary reach gained through its connections with ericoid mycorrhiza, pollinating insects, lichen, podzols, grazing animals, and herders. Such connections ensure the distribution of space and governing of flows of nutrients and water. At the same time, heathlands are intrinsically unstable landscapes drifting towards self-eradication. Reforestation however can be halted, owing to heather's ongoing capacity to rebound from extraction-oriented disturbances. Heathlands also exhaust their accompanying others. Abundances and nutrition do not build up in heathlands, but leak and disappear. Heathlands therefore seem to be disowned and degraded surfaces, heavily altered and exhausted, yet somehow still alive. I envision how these contours of sharing and exhaustion unfold in their prehistoric specificity. My aim is to explore how such affordances were discovered and twisted by humans – and consequently how particular ethics of sharing, non-accumulation and preservation emerged from this twisting. My proposition is that given the interconnected lives of humans and heaths, they reinforce persistent rhythms of resetting of interspecies hierarchies – with each drawing the other into particular deep-time trajectories.

Ethics of Regeneration: Sharing meat, sharing relations, sharing futures

Thea Skaanes, Human by Nature

Hunted meat is a cherished food for both bellies and thought among the hunting and gathering Hadza. It is festive, celebrated, and in poetics – in both the crude and the elegant variants - it is metaphorically associated with sex. Like sex, it is both ordinary, mundane yet also celebrated and extraordinary.

Unfolding big game hunt and meat-sharing among the Hadza, we find aspects of esotericism in combination with the mundane. Such multivalence, we also find with transaction regimes. They too are seldomly pure, unequivocal and stable. What might appear as sharing in the situation might turn into exchange with the passing of time. Or playfully be hinted to as beguilement, keeping such a potential in play. “If gifts make friends, friends make gifts”, Marshall Sahlins (1972) wrote. Yet, if we consider the ethics of sharing, we might ask what the means of sharing look like in practice, and what the ends of such transactions are? The Hadza have provided scholars with insights on egalitarian meat-sharing, demand-sharing, immediate-return systems and how to live a society where accumulation is regarded as anti-social, as indeed unethical. Yet accumulation occurs with the big game hunt, but why then is the surplus shared and not exchanged? With this paper we ask what relations are established with meat sharing? What are the social and esoteric relations in an ecology of human and non-human persons sharing meat-matter? Ambiguity, multivalency, and changeability are key in the dynamics of such an ecology, and holding space for multiplicity, letting go of being ‘monomorphous’, are techniques of working actively with regeneration. Sharing meat is profoundly anchored in ethics and with ideas of prosperity, collective regeneration and for carving out a shared future.

Sharing Landscape: Ethical Movements and Social Practice among Human Beings and Bears in Siberia
Jeanette Lykkegård, Aarhus University

In Northern Kamchatka reindeer herders, reindeer, bears, wolves and several other beings – visible as well as invisible - share the tundra as their home. Through empirical examples this paper explores the necessary ethical choices and movements made by particularly human beings, but also animal- and spiritual beings, to make this possible. Once speaking the same language, now many of these cohabiting beings have to rely on particular inherited practices to get along. When one species fail to live up to their ethical obligations, a kind of social mirroring may take place and spread the bad behavior to other beings. Failing to adhere to the prescribed practices, by for example falling into laziness, may lead to war-like life, destructive kinds of deaths or even extinction of one or more groups of beings.

Sharing Stories as a Homing Practice
Helene Grøn, University of Copenhagen

This paper will reflect on the process of writing poetry, performing plays and sharing stories with two different groups of refugees and asylum seekers: a women’s group in Glasgow, and a group living in deportation centre Sjælsmark in Denmark.

The ethics of sharing becomes a starting point for exploring how the process of making theatre and telling one’s story can be considered world-making and homing practices, countering an asylum processes that often deliberately unhomes. As part of a project that asked how we can still think of home in the wake of the so-called refugee crisis, the ideological life of sharing stories was explored as a question of what kind of home is made possible by ‘open[ing] up a space for the other, for a world different than ours’ (Irigaray 2008).

At the same time, the participants in Sjælsmark called for a more radical approach of ‘not just theatre, also politics, law’ (Payman, participant), able to go beyond the moments of making to engage with the political structures at play living as a rejected asylum seeker or ‘living in limbo’ (Nuha, participant) while awaiting the result of an asylum claim. Payman thereby formulated the need for a way of sharing that could hold in view difference in legal status and life-conditions, while suspending divisions. This

process birthed the term ‘dramaturgical ethics’ as an aesthetic and practice able to think through responsibilities and relationalities involved in research, theatre making and entering into the world together. Speaking to the interdisciplinary exploration of the conference, this paper hopes to open up further conversation between anthropology, theatre and politically engaged arts-practice.

Sharing Mountains, Sharing Faith and “Something for Something”: Missionaries and the Ik in Uganda
Lotte Meinert, Aarhus University

When do principles and ethics of sharing apply? Or ‘something for something’ logics of exchange? How are nuances between sharing, borrowing and stealing negotiated when groups have different ideas about what can and should be shared?

Based on fieldwork among missionaries and Ik in Uganda, this paper describes varying ethics of sharing and exchange, and how they create situational communities as well as friction. Different sharing principles are central to Ik moralities. First, the common sharing of the mountains and their resources with fellow Ik and other species are fundamental to existential ethics. Second, sharing of land for agriculture is based on entrustment from clan leaders to younger generations. Land is shared according to need, it can be borrowed, but not sold. A third sharing ethics relates to hunting practices of immediate-return: after a hunt meat is shared according to roles and statuses. These and other ethics of sharing are part of everyday life; yet seldom without friction. Other resources; grains, honey, beer are traded based on principles of exchange.

Missionaries are in the mountains to spread the word of God. They too are driven by ethics of sharing: their call is to share Christianity. In their view, the wisdom of the bible is a resource that increases with sharing, and God’s love is infinite. Other resources follow transactional logics of exchange: an egg for 500 shillings, you borrow a tool and bring it back, you don’t take fruits from trees others ‘own’. The ethics of exchange are also crucial for missionaries to convey. Nuances between borrowing and stealing are a source of disagreement. Thus, missionary and Ik ethics of sharing create situational communities when sharing rain water, solar power and the gospel. In other situations, they create friction when trying to share land or property.

Sharing your hand: Unhelpful help and the ethics of sharing in Mbuke, Papua New Guinea
Anders Emil Rasmussen, Moesgaard Museum

‘You should eat, also!’ ‘- But I am not helping?’ ‘... true, but you are here’ (conversation between a Mbuke man and the author during canoe building).

In the anthropological literature on Melanesia, sharing is often overshadowed by formal exchange. But as I and others have shown, sharing is present also, as a kind of ‘kindred economy’ among the closest of kin. However, as I demonstrate in this paper, kinship is not always the key: even within the same social activity, reciprocal exchange and sharing are coeval and differ in accordance with skill and reason for presence, not relationship.

During the building of houses and large sailings canoes on Mbuke Islands in Manus, PNG, much physical labour is needed. During such activity the owner of the house or canoe is expected to feed everyone present. Once a large log for a canoe is landed on the coast many men spontaneously volunteer. Meanwhile, a few specific men with specialized skills have been asked for help. When someone communicates that they will not be needing the voluntary help, but rather intend to do the work alone, or with the help of a few specialized builders, they can expect be criticized with the same terminology as

people who refuse to share food or money (selfishness, 'wanting to be alone'). The specialized builders are crucial for the project, and they help because you have helped them in the past, or because you will in the future. The rest show up and help with simpler tasks, and otherwise hang around during the building process. Even if they are not always particularly helpful, they are still treated with food, because they are present. Sharing is therefore, in this case, not a kindred economy. And in this case, it becomes clear that sharing and formal exchange co-inhabit the same social space, even the same physical activity.

Shared finitude – A Social Ontology of Bereavement

Alfred Bordado Sköld, Aalborg University

In this presentation, I wish to question the generally taken for granted notion that we're born into a world of others and die alone. "If being is always being-with" - as stated in the program, is there not a way of understanding death as less individualizing and *eigentlich*, and more communal and relational? If we *share life*, don't we share death? Given that any account of who we are is only conceivable with reference to the lives that we share, don't we lose part of ourselves upon the death of the other? Isn't my death always partly yours and the opposite? And can these potential overlaps inform our ethical sentiments?

I will explore these questions, drawing on a recently submitted Ph.D.-study: *Relationality and Finitude – A Social Ontology of Bereavement* (Sköld, *forthcoming*). I argue that grief is dialectically situated in the intersection between relationality and finitude, and can be utilized as a prism into a deepened understanding of vulnerability, love, and mortality. Drawing on a longitudinal interview study with recently bereaved life partners in different generations, I will thus discuss to what extent death "can possibly be shared".

Even though grief ultimately point to one person being alive and another being dead, the dead often tends to haunt the land of the living, and the living might reasonably wonder what it means to be alive when everyone we love gradually disappear. In grief, the most fundamental of all borders, the one between the living and the dead is threatened from within. This generates a perplexity that is inherently normative, and reckoning with and responding to these predicaments in culturally distinct ways, might be said to be part of what mark our species. Can grief tell us something about who we are - that is, who we might become?

Sharing the unshareable: Maternal experiences with symbiosis and beyond

Line Dalsgård, Aarhus University

The experience of pregnancy is extraordinary. Two bodies in one. The fetal mode of being-in-the-world qua being-in-the-mother can be described as a resonant relationship, not between a subject and an object or between two subjects, but rather as "an initially inseparable, bipolar entity" (2019: 49). A child makes the woman a mother (Guenther 2006: 3) and as a mother a woman substitutes her public significance with "a whole spectrum of private significances and like sounds outside a certain spectrum they can be difficult for other people to trace" (Cusk 2001: 11). This symbiosis and realm of private significances may be closely tied with moments of separation and loneliness, and depression may be the effect of it. I search for experiences of pregnancy and mother-child symbioses in contemporary Danish prose and poetry and try through shared readings of the mentioned literary works, together with pregnant women and new mothers, to explore the unshareable.

Her hands would tuck us in at night – Shared sentiments of queer activism in Amman

Marie R.B. Odgaard, Aarhus University

Starting from two stories of grandmothers in Amman, this paper discusses the activism of queer Jordanians living in the city. We will see how queer people both flourish through and are delimited by the relationships and the urban surroundings that a Middle Eastern capital like Amman provides. Through generational histories, we perceive how individual acts of queer self-care are negotiated and articulated as belonging to a historical world, too. The urban landscape provides a shared ground for activist experimentation in spaces where the “private” body can become a matter of heated debate and sentiment. This landscape has hosted generations before - and queer acts are thus felt to transgress the confines of a given current moment. The investigation of activism and queer life in Amman aims to encourage a wider critical phenomenological discussion. A discussion that delves into subjectivity and the persistent existence of ethical potentiality in the gaps between bodies, generations and sentiments we share.