



MEGA SEMINAR 2023
**QUESTS FOR A GOOD
LIFE**
PROGRAM

Day 1, Monday, August 21st

Click the light blue boxes to see descriptions of the event!

	STALDEN 1 (72p)	STALDEN 2 (25p)	FORPAGTERBOLIGEN (25p)	BRÆNDERIET (48p)	ENGHUSET (36p)
11:00-11.45	ARRIVAL				
11.45-12.45	LUNCH				
12:45-13:30	WELCOME by the MEGA 2023 COMMITTEE + PhD 1 MINUTE PRESENTATION				
13:30-15:00	KEYNOTE I Joel Robbins (University of Cambridge) “Anthropology Light and Dark: Relativism, Value Pluralism, & the Comparative Study of the Good”				
15:00-15:30	COFFEE & CAKE				
	1 ST PANEL SESSION -PART I				
15:30-16:45	Everyday Care Crises	Emplacing good lives?	Engineering the Good Life	Encounters at the limits of the Welfare State	Good data/Data for good?
16.45-17.00	PART II: BIO BREAK + PANEL SHUFFLE				
17:00-18:30	Everyday Care Crises	Emplacing good lives?	Engineering the Good Life	Encounters at the limits of the Welfare State	Good data/Data for good?
18:30-20.00	DINNER				
20.00-21:30	Ethnographic Salon		Ping-pong Tournament		
21:30-??	SWIMMING & BONFIRE				

Day 2, Tuesday, August 22nd

Click the light blue boxes to see descriptions of the event!

	STALDEN 1 (72p)	STALDEN 2 (25p)	FORPAGTERBOLIGEN (25p)	BRÆNDERIET (48p)	ENGHUSET (36p)
07:00-08:00	SOCIAL RUNNING OR YOGA				
08:00-09:00	BREAKFAST				
09:00-10:30	KEYNOTE II Cymene Howe (Rice University) “Could Life? Elemental Encounters & Ecocentric Justice”				

2 ND PANEL SESSION					
10:40-12:40	The Screening Room	Capturing Love	Quests for Justice	Sustainability Laboratory	What life? Whose good?
12:40-14:10	LUNCH + RUNDBOLD				
14:10-14:55	Editors meet-up				
14:55-15:15	BREAK WITH COFFEE & CAKE				
3 RD PANEL SESSION					
15:15-17:45	Experimental Collaborations in Multimodal Anthropology		Biosocial relations in microbial anthropology	Poetics of Plurality	What life? Whose good?
17:45-18:30	SNACK BREAK				
18:30-21:30	CONFERENCE DINNER				
21:30-	AFTERPARTY				

Day 3, Wednesday, August 23rd

Click the light blue boxes to see descriptions of the event!

	STALDEN 1 (72p)	STALDEN 2 (25p)	FORPAGTERBOLIGEN (25p)	BRÆNDERIET (48p)	ENGHUSET (36p)
08:00-09:00	BREAKFAST				
09:00-09.45	PUB QUIZ				
09:45-11.15	KEYNOTE III Michael Jackson (Harvard Divinity School) "Quandaries of Well-Being"				
11:15-12:15	CLOSING REMARKS w. BRIEF FROM PANELS & GOODBYE				
12:15-13.30	LUNCH				

Everyday Care Crises and New/Emerging Forms of Solidarity

Conveners:

Line Hillersdal, Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Gitte Wind, Docent, Department of
Nursing and Nutrition, University
College Copenhagen

Jonas Winther, Assistant Professor,
Department of Early Childhood and
Social Education, University College
Copenhagen

Mikkel Rytter, Professor, Department
of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Description:

The background for the panel is what has been called “the care crisis”: the growing gap between the care needs of people and the resources available to meet them. With this panel, we aim to explore how this care crisis unfolds in people’s everyday lives and how various caregivers (family members, care professionals, volunteers etc.) experience and handle what we propose to call everyday care crises, i.e., situations in which people find their ability to care for another person challenged by, for example, welfare reforms, global events or changing life conditions.

How, we ask, do the growing gap between the care needs of people and the resources available to meet them unfold in different social contexts? How do everyday care crises spark novel care arrangements into being? How do care crises affect the relatedness between families and the welfare state? And what forms of moral experimentation and new forms of solidarity do everyday care crises call forth?

The central issue that we want the panel to delve into is that of care and solidarity: what forms of solidarity are practiced and negotiated in dealing with everyday care crises? What moral horizons do people navigate in their efforts to achieve “the good”?

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Papers:

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<p>Line Grüner:</p> <p>New lines of solidarity? Doubt, hope and helping hands in everyday encounters between new neighbours in Denmark</p>	<p>Anja Svejgaard Pors & Nana Vaaben:</p> <p>Hands on care – screens of care...on crisis of care in digitalized welfare.</p>	<p>Jonas Strandholdt Bach:</p> <p>Shed solidarity? Getting by with a little help from one's friends.</p>
<p>Sara Lei Sparre & Stine Hauberg Nielsen:</p> <p>Languages of care and changing relations: Older adults and SOSU students with a migrant background in Danish elderly care.</p>	<p>Kristina Grünenberg:</p> <p>Strangely, I see it not as an AI doll, but as my friend or granddaughter. Companion robots, sea-weed harvesting and (inter)generational care in South Korea</p>	<p>Rikke Sand Andersen, Lærke Bing Røikjer & Sara Hebsgaard Offersen:</p> <p>A crisis of what? Addressing Vulnerability, Crisis and Solo Living in the Context of Welfare.</p>
<p>Gitte Wind & Helle Vedsegaard:</p> <p>Together in sickness and care. Older couples' everyday life with care and shared illness.</p>	<p>Line Hillersdal & Jonas Winther:</p> <p>The Care Coordinator: Insights from an ongoing study on care coordination in local communities in Denmark</p>	<p>Mette My Madsen:</p> <p>More than mercantile relations.</p>
	<p>Kathrine Pii:</p> <p>Care, Solidarity, and Belonging in Older Migrants' Cancer Trajectories</p>	

New lines of solidarity? Doubt, hope and helping hands in everyday encounters between new neighbours in Denmark.

Line Grüner, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

5 years ago, Ulla's neighbour, Mohamad, suddenly left with his family without saying goodbye. Had he told her about their plans of leaving? Did she know? Ulla wonders out loud in front of the camera. No, he had not, she concludes. In 2015 and 2019 the Danish government introduced a series of legislative changes that fundamentally changes asylum practice in Denmark. These changes are referred to as the 'paradigm shift'. Focus is now on temporary protection instead of integration and consequently many refugees today live with a much higher degree of temporariness, uncertainty, and insecurity than before. The paradigm shift means a new relationship between the Danish welfare state and refugees, but how does it influence the relationship between 'new' neighbours and the kinds of openness, trust and care we are able to show each other in everyday encounters and as part of the same local society? Drawing on the case of Ulla and Mohamad and examples from the co-creation of an exhibition film for the exhibition *On Solid Ground?*, this paper explores how different kinds of doubt, care and (mis)trust emerge between 'new neighbours' in a time where new lines are drawn politically between those refugees who are considered deserving of state solidarity and protection and those who are not. Finally, I am curious to reflect upon the relational possibilities of co-creative film- and exhibition making and how the exhibition project *On Solid Ground?* became a space for reflection and imagining alternative ways of encountering each other.

Hands on care – screens of care...on crisis of care in digitalized welfare.

Anja Svejgaard Pors, Assistant Professor, University College Copenhagen & Nana Vaaben, Docent, University College Copenhagen

The paper explores how the care crisis is experienced and handled by care professionals in their daily working lives, where time is both something to be "allocated" by administrators via a digital care-system and time is a here and now, where the care professionals encounter elderly people with complex, time consuming and sometimes urgent needs, which means that the care professionals jump in and out of applications, while they handle the needs of the citizens and navigate in time scapes where different human and non-human agents tell the care workers what to do where and when (Adam, 1998; Adam et al., 2002; Vaaben & Plotnikof, 2019).

The paper draws on fieldwork conducted by the two authors in municipal elderly care in Denmark in 2022 and 2023 and analyses (digital) devices as carriers of certain understandings of time and shapers of the temporalities in our lives (Birth, 2012; Wajcman, 2015).

While Scandinavian welfare models are praised as Nordic exceptionalism and the public discourse underscore care and intimate relations as almost sacred in opposition to the scolded bureaucracy, it is interesting how care practices are increasingly becoming screen practices with an ideal of citizen proximity in documentation. We are interested in the interplay between the economic logics and systems hiding "behind the screens" and the

temporality of the daily working lives that unfold for the care workers. We connect the study to discussions of commodification of care work, invisible work and unpaid work (Fraser, 2016, 2017; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Raworth, 2017) and to ideas about professions and vocational work (Andersson, 2002; Birkelund, 2002; Du Gay, 2017; Staugård, 2014; Fraser 2017).

We see the crisis of care and the climate crisis as connected in the same crisis and suggest new forms of solidarity and alliances between those who struggle for sustainability in various ways.

Shed solidarity? Getting by with a little help from one's friends.

Jonas Strandholdt Bach, Assistant Professor, Center for Alcohol and Drug Research, BSS, Aarhus University.

The Danish welfare state can seem all-emcompassing. However, some of the most marginalized citizens often try to avoid welfare interventions. Instead, some of them rely, to some extent, on informal networks of support and care.

This presentation is based on more than three years of step-in step-out ethnographic fieldwork in a drinking shed in a suburb of a large Danish city. The shed doubles as an informal meeting place, an “outdoor living room” or “open-air bodega”, and as a place where support, advice, and sometimes medication, alcohol and drugs, are shared and exchanged. However, the “outdoor people” as the people who hang out in the shed are sometimes called by local professionals, do not live in a vacuum, out of reach from the tentacles of the welfare state. They try to navigate the system and pick and choose between the opportunities for assistance they are offered from social and health services, sometimes advised by other people from the open alcohol and drug scene they are part off on where to go for help and how to go about it.

Contacts to welfare services are often contingent on personal relations, nudging by professionals or fellow outdoor people, or caused by a sense of emergency – as one interlocutor put it when asked about when he had last seen a doctor: “I think that was when I was close to dying”. But how can we understand and analyze the complex relationship between these marginalized citizens and the welfare system? Is shed solidarity to be understood as an iteration of civil society? Can solidarity “both lift you up and keep you down”, to paraphrase one of the outdoor people?

Languages of care and changing relations: Older adults and SOSU students with a migrant background in Danish elderly care.

Sara Lei Sparre, VIVE & Stine Hauberg Nielsen, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Increasingly, migrants are employed in the formal, public care sector in Denmark. Due to lack of skilled SOSU workers in the elderly care sector, Danish municipalities are actively recruiting among migrants residing in Denmark to SOSU education and skilled work in public elderly care. Much literature on migration and care work in the Nordic countries focus on constructions of care workers' 'otherness', both in positive and negative ways, and how such categorizations affect workers' wellbeing and working conditions. But how does the multi-lingual and care workers' struggles with the majority language influence their care work and relations with the older adults? Our paper explores the relational and intersubjective spaces that emerge when SOSU students interact with care-demanding older adults in Danish public elderly care. The analysis is based on ethnographic data material from the research project 'From migrant to SOSU aspirant' (MIGSOSUS 2021-2024). We focus on shifts in 'care objects' (Law 2010) and the productive practice (Buch 2018) that emerge from challenges and misunderstandings in communication between these care workers and the older adults. By foregrounding language and verbal communication, while at the same time exploring the practice and affect of care in concrete situations, we show how lingual challenges and misunderstandings constitute productive 'cracks' in interactions between care workers and older adults. These 'cracks' enable or even demand that care and solidarity is negotiated, and that both parts assume different roles and positions. Thus, the productive practice of care thus lies in the transformations of relations and self-understanding among both care workers and older adults.

Strangely, I see it not as an AI doll, but as my friend or granddaughter. Companion robots, sea-weed harvesting and (inter)generational care in South Korea

Kristina Grünenberg, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

With the world's lowest fertility rate, a prognosis of becoming one of the worlds super-aged societies a few years from now and the world's most aged society by 2067, the South Korean state is looking for responses to what is believed to become a 'care crisis' in the form of an excessively economically burdened health care system in the near future.

As in many other countries part of the response is to look to technologies.

Departing in two different cases from South Korea

1. The allocation of the companion- or socially assistive robot 'Hyodol' to older Korean women in urban areas
2. The communitarian-based harvest of seaweed among older Korean women in rural areas

This presentation focuses on the types of care-arrangements and solidarities that emerge in these two different settings and the tensions related to intergenerationality in contemporary South Korean society that they might point to.

A crisis of what? Addressing Vulnerability, Crisis and Solo Living in the Context of Welfare.

Rikke Sand Andersen, Professor with Special Responsibilities, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University, Lærke Bing Røikjer, PhD Student, Research Unit for General Practice, Southern University of Denmark & Sara Hebsgaard Offersen, Senior Researcher, Steno Diabetes Center Aarhus

In Scandinavia people increasingly live alone. Four out of ten adults do not share a home with another adult, and in Copenhagen and Stockholm more than half of all homes are one-person-households. In Denmark, living alone has historically been sustained by an egalitarian care politics, that emphasizes state-supported social security and individual independence from the family. The aging of the Danish population means, however, that not only is there a dramatic growth in care needs, but also a diminishing workforce, and family and home-based care is increasingly seen as the solution to this.

Departing in prolonged fieldwork with young and elderly cancer patients who live alone in Denmark, we attend to the precarious negotiations of relatedness and vulnerability that make themselves visible in these emerging contexts. With inspiration from critical, feminist care theory and Judith Butler's (2020) notion of vulnerability as a way of understanding human subjectivity, we suggest that addressing the way in which people suffering from serious disease sustain an everyday life in the context of solo living, is a way to begin to understand not only the implications of the care crisis, but also to discuss 'of what is it a crisis?'

Together in sickness and care. Older couples' everyday life with care and shared illness.

Gitte Wind, Docent, Department of Nursing and Nutrition, University College Copenhagen & Helle Vedsegaard, Associate Professor, Department of Nursing and Nutrition, University College Copenhagen

One of the promises in wedding vows is "to have and to hold the other person in sickness and health". In this paper we will explore how to have and hold each other when both spouses are ill. Care in the context of serious or chronic illness is otherwise often understood as a one-sided affair. One person is ill and is taken care of by another person, presumably not ill. Furthermore, due to a growing older population and the associated increases in the prevalence of frailty and chronic conditions along with increased efficiency and bed closures in hospitals, patients are now being discharged more quickly with continuing complex care needs, and their relatives are increasingly expected to take on more caring responsibilities. Spouses and other relatives are thus seen as the savior of a stretched healthcare system. The question is how illness and care unfold between older spouses in everyday life where both are ill. The paper is based on interviews with 6 married couples aged 70-90 who receive district nursing care in the Capital Region of Copenhagen. In the analysis we draw on Sahlin's (2013) notion on mutuality of being and Tronto's understanding of caring (Tronto 1989, 1993, 1998, 2010). Sahlin argues that people who are close to each other are part of each other's lives to the extent that what happens to one is felt by the other. They participate in each other's suffering and joy, share each other's experiences, and are interdependent while taking responsibility for and

feeling the effects of each other's actions. According to Tronto caring is an on-going responsibility and commitment, it is acceptance of some form of burden, it can lead to conflicts between caring for the other and caring for yourself, and it is always linked to values regarding what is the right thing to do, which never can be answered by referring to pre-established principles. Care is thus contextual and surrounded by ambivalence, the good is inextricably linked to the bad, and multiple goods can coexist. With the paper we want to contribute to the discussion of what forms of solidarity are practiced and negotiated in the everyday life of older couples living with illness.

The Care Coordinator: Insights from an ongoing study on care coordination in local communities in Denmark

Line Hillersdal, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen and Department of Nursing and Nutrition, University College Copenhagen & Jonas Winther, Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood and Social Education, University College Copenhagen.

The declining ability in Denmark and other European welfare states to provide quality care for its young and old citizens entails that informal caregivers (family members, volunteers, and neighbours) are increasingly called upon to secure the provision of care. This shift is likely to redefine the meaning, enactment and societal importance of informal caregiving. In this paper, we draw on ongoing fieldwork in Høje-Taastrup among social housing workers, volunteers and other active citizens and propose the term 'care coordinators' to discuss the role and importance of people taking on the responsibility of coordinating care relationships in communities and families. Leveraging insights from anthropological research on care and solidarity, we explore how these 'care coordinators' negotiate and calibrate multiple—and sometimes conflicting—moral logics, when they engage in caring acts and arrangements at the margins of a changing welfare system.

More than mercantile relations.

Mette My Madsen, Postdoc, National History Museum.

Recent studies in Nordic and European urban history have emphasised the importance of commercial modernism in the making of European welfare societies. However, as this research has predominantly approached the significance of commerce from an urban planning and design angle, we still know little of how the relation between consumerism and welfare is negotiated on an everyday scale in commercial spaces. Focusing on four shops located in Danish public housing estates, the article draw on anthropological literature of the social nature of commerce and exchange, to unfold how the shops become places of care – especially to groups on the margins of welfare society. The article introduces the concept of 'more-than-mercantile relations' to capture the multifaceted negotiations and exchanges through which local actors mobilize consumerist logics to form and keep caring relations. Thus, the article demonstrates how welfare on a local level takes form and is negotiated through entwinements of practices (and logics) that might at first glance seen contradictory; commerce and care.

Care, Solidarity, and Belonging in Older Migrants' Cancer Trajectories

Kathrine Pii, Associate Professor, Department of Nursing and Nutrition, University College Copenhagen.

Older migrants face various challenges in their cancer trajectories where low socio-economic status, limited education, and language barriers generate different kinds of vulnerabilities. Their relatives, particularly their children, often play a crucial role in providing essential support and compensating for the vulnerabilities that emerge. They assist in facilitating communication with healthcare providers, actively participate in the care and treatment process, try to navigate within the welfare system, and uphold family cultural norms and role expectations in difficult and uncertain times.

Overall, this paper underscores the significance of care and solidarity in older migrants' cancer trajectories. It describes the vital role played by family members, in supporting and advocating for the well-being of the older migrant threatened by critical illness. Through interviews conducted with older migrants who have cancer and their relatives, the study unfolds the joint efforts to maintain older migrants' sense of belonging and significant position within the family as well as within the welfare state.

Emplacing good lives? Relations between place and liveability

Conveners:

Cæcilie Kildahl Kramer, PhD student,
Department of Anthropology, Aarhus
University

Frida Hastrup, Associate Professor in
Ethnology, The Saxo Institute,
University of Copenhagen

Description:

What does it mean to situate and localize quests for a good life? Arguably, modernity and globalization processes are characterized by fantasies of standardization and homogenization. Digitalization, too, have in the eyes of some rendered particular places more or less irrelevant, at least for people in the global north who have grown accustomed to remote working, online communication, and recreational travels. However, in these years, supply crises, geopolitical tensions, contagious diseases, and Covid lockdown have possibly contributed to making 'local living' into a new kind of resource – whether out of necessity or choice. In light of Covid and global ecological crisis, among other things, we seem to need new visions for ensuring the habitat integrity for humans and others. More than ever, we need alternatives to the runaway practices of transporting energy, commodities, and people around the world. Nonetheless, wherever possible, global trade, migration, urbanization, professional travel, and transnational networks of diverse kinds seem to have been resumed.

This panel explores how people in different settings relate ideas about a good life to particular places. How are past, present and future visions of liveability for humans and others emplaced? How are imaginaries of being or going home, or finding a future home, articulated? How do notions of self-sufficiency play out, and on what scales? In what ways does thinking in terms of 'habitats' or 'refuges' make sense for anthropology in the 21st century? These are some of the questions we want to address.

Whether explored through engagement with soil, companion species, agricultural development, landscape features, community housing, national infrastructure, generational succession, natural-cultural heritage, regional commitments, family histories, or what have you, we want to probe how good lives become emplaced, and/or indeed, uprooted and to what effects.

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Papers:

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<p>Anders Sybandt Hansen: Harmony, short and sweet, and high and mighty: Notes on socio-affective belonging in Beijing</p>	<p>Kathrine Dalsgaard & Inge-Merete Hougaard: The good life emplaced: Between continuity and reconfiguration</p>	<p>Mads Daugbjerg: My goodness in Gettysburg: Sacrality and Rehabilitation in heritage landscapes</p>
<p>Cæcilie Kildahl Kramer: Sustainable liveability: situated ethics of industrial crop production</p>	<p>Thomas Fibiger: Is Dubai a good place to live? Migrant Muslims and the framing of good life in a religious community</p>	<p>Matthew Carey: The wor(l)d isn't what it was...</p>
	<p>Mikel Venhovens: No Garden for my Roses: Chronic Displacement among IDPs in the Republic of Georgia</p>	

Harmony, short and sweet, and high and mighty: Notes on socio-affective belonging in Beijing

Anders Sybrandt Hansen, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

This paper discusses belonging as a socio-affective phenomenon as it plays out in three cases of social interaction and in the reflections of two Han-ethnicity Chinese interlocutors about these performances as they were presented to me during fieldwork in Beijing. I claim that interaction ritual is a key format of social life in contemporary China and suggest that participation in such ritual interaction for many persons occasion a socio-affective sense of belonging. I compare this to the outside viewpoint of a critical anthropologist and to that of one informant, who felt rather nauseous by such performances of harmony. Last I heard, she now lives in France, smitten I think with more existentialist notions of autonomy and of what is good to do with one human life.

The good life emplaced: Between continuity and reconfiguration

Kathrine Dalsgaard, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen/Danish Nature Agency & Inge-Merete Hougaard, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Landscapes are continuously shaped by everyday movements, agricultural practices, and engineering interventions. Past, current, and future landscape changes are reinterpreted and formed by the stories, which local actors tell about the landscape, and storytelling becomes a way of situating people in place. In this paper, we explore the stories and practices that attach people to particular places and shape the ways in which they understand 'the good life'. In the context of new landscape and nature management projects implemented by the Danish Nature Agency and three municipalities in Central Jutland aiming at lowering CO₂-emissions and increasing biodiversity, we explore how stories, practices, memories, and aesthetics connect people to particular landscapes. We explore how previous or anticipated changes in these landscapes can result in a loss of connection, disturb the feeling of 'home', and interrupt the peace and quiet of rural life that people see as a haven from the busy, urban society. We find that many farmers and other local citizens value their existing landscapes, including current agricultural practices and aesthetics, such as the open fields and the view of a lake. In this way they distinguish themselves from what they consider urban 'elites', who do not regard the intensively cultivated agricultural landscapes as 'real nature'. Some express a passive form of protest and defiance against external interventions, such as new nature management projects proposed by local and national public authorities. Simultaneously, in light of previous, current, and anticipated changes, some farmers and other local citizens seek to re-establish a connection to the landscape; for instance, by engaging in new farming practices, rediscovering the local village history, and finding new walking paths in their area. In this way, they continuously negotiate their place in the landscape, and create new havens as a way of finding 'home' again. This illustrates the ongoing work of landscape configuration as a tug-of-war between continuity and change in the quest for the good life emplaced.

My goodness in Gettysburg: Sacrality and Rehabilitation in heritage landscapes

Mads Daugbjerg, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, a major battlefield of the American Civil War (1861–65), the landscape is routinely referred to as ‘hallowed ground’. Its alleged sacrality is understood to derive from the mass death (or ‘sacrifice’) of thousands of soldiers who lost their lives here over three brutal days of battle in July 1863. Today, Gettysburg National Military Park sees millions of annual visitors, mostly domestic, who come to tour the 6000-acre (24,4 km²) area kept and preserved by the US National Park Service. Sacredness, however, is also a more general feature taken to inhere in the American national park per se, including natural sites such as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon understood as landscapes somehow set apart, outside of time, and as locales where nature and nation merge in unique and supposedly fulfilling ways for (patriotic) visitors. Furthermore, these qualities of ‘goodness’ and sacrality are closely connected to the soil, both as material, felt substance and as abstract, symbolic ‘ground’ binding people and nations together. In my paper, I inquire into the production and consumption of hallowed ground at Gettysburg – and, I suggest, in heritage landscapes more generally – and discuss how notions of the sacred, of time, and of nation are entangled in such setups. I devote particular attention to the National Park Service’s ongoing policy of ‘battlefield rehabilitation’, an ambitious landscaping program meant to not just preserve, modify, and care for the landscape, but also, by implication, to help ‘rehabilitate’ fatigued visitors and even – in the eyes of some – heal the torn American nation.

Sustainable liveability: situated ethics of industrial crop production

Cæcilie Kildahl Kramer, PhD student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In the past 5-10 years politicians, scientists and environmentalists have increasingly pushed for ‘sustainable development’ of the agricultural sector as the ‘better’ alternative to status quo. But how do future visions of sustainable liveability get situated in places such as industrial crop production, a production form berated for its environmental harms by environmentalists, left-wing academics, and urban elites? Based on fieldwork among large-scale conventional farmers I explore the situated ethics of industrial crop production as it figures in the production of high value crops, particularly seed potatoes. I also consider how ethics of ‘good farming’ and ‘good farming conduct’ tie to the historical development of a farming system based on an economic farm performance measure that deems ‘inefficiency as waste’. I ask what farmers’ situated and historically embedded ethics of ‘good farming’ means for sustainable liveability as it materialises in local landscapes, environments, and places.

Is Dubai a good place to live? Migrant Muslims and the framing of good life in a religious community

Thomas Fibiger, Associate Professor, Arab and Islamic Studies, Aarhus University

Dubai and other oil-rich Gulf states are often associated with good life for some – Arab citizens and high-end Western migrants – but much the contrary for most of the population, migrant labour from Asia and Africa with little salary and rights. In this

presentation I will focus on a middle category, members of a particular Muslim minority community coming to Dubai from India, known as Dawoodi Bohras. My recent ethnography, based on fieldwork within this community in 2022 and 2023, indicates that Bohras come to Dubai to find a good life, and most interlocutors feel that that they have succeeded in this or at least are on their way. In my paper I will include cases from families who have been in Dubai for generations, others who have come to Dubai with their family, and some who live in Dubai as young bachelors, hoping to settle. All find Dubai to be a place of possibilities and ease, in terms of jobs, family life and not least community life. Bohras have been welcomed to build mosques, schools, and residential complexes for the community in Dubai, and even if only a small community feel that they have taken part in developing modern Dubai. At the same time this 'good life' is framed very much by being active and loyal members of the religious community. The paper therefore aims to further develop and nuance a growing scholarly literature on migrants in the Gulf (e.g., By Neha Vora, Andrew Gardner, and Yasser Elsheshtawy), and in particular focus on the role of religious communities in framing ideas and practices of 'good life' among migrants (building on e.g., Iqbal Akhtar's studies of Muslims with Indian roots in East Africa or Mayanthi Fernando's study of Muslims in France).

The wor(l)d isn't what it was...

Matthew Carey, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

The remote valleys of Morocco's High Atlas Mountains are at the frontline of extreme climate change, and subject to radical and ongoing state and capitalist intervention and transformation. On a recent visit to the area, after eight years of absence, I was repeatedly asked if I thought the village was still a good place (is sul ihla aduwwar) and when I turned the question back on my interlocutors, I was met with the invariable refrain "the word isn't what it was" (ibddl wawal). By the word (awal), they mean not so much "speech", as the structured patterns of community, cooperation, communication, and co-existence. These things are not what they were. This paper asks what in the word has changed and what kinds of good can be envisaged in the new world.

No Garden for my Roses: Chronic Displacement among IDPs in the Republic of Georgia

Mikel Venhovens, Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

For the last 30 years, numerous internally displaced people (IDPs) that fled Abkhazia during the war in 1992-93 have been living in old, abandoned Soviet sanatoriums in the town of Tskaltubo, a famous Spa town during the Soviet Union. Meant as a temporary accommodation, they have been living there with little financial help from the government, often without electricity and running water. In recent years, the Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, also the founder of the current ruling political party: Georgian Dream, has been buying up these old sanatoriums, thereby making the presence

of these IDPs unwanted. For the last years, Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream government have been building new homes in Tskaltubo for relocation of IDPs, thereby engineering a “better” life. These are often high apartment buildings, in sheer contrast to the family homes they once left behind in Abkhazia. When talking to these IDPs, there is no mention of a good or better life, even though their situation has significantly improved. They merely speak of yet ‘another new life’, removing them even further from their life in Abkhazia and continuing the chronic crisis of displacement.

This paper aims to analyse the notion of forced protracted emplacement of IDPs in Contemporary Georgia. Having been emplaced in a chronic crisis for over 30 years, how do they envision a good life?

Engineering the Good Life

Conveners:

Nina Holm Vohnsen, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Lasse Bech Knudsen, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Mathias Levi Toft Kristiansen, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Description:

How do visions, dreams and fantasies of ‘the good life’ shape everyday individual, organizational, and corporate practices? What are the political, material, and economic effects of such visioning and dreaming? Based on the panel organizers’ own research into designs for floating cities, financial pyramid schemes, and outer space business models, this panel seeks anthropological contributions that examine ‘the good life’ as a project guided by grand political, existential, and economic visions of societal betterment. We understand engineering not only as a specific technical skill but broadly as the process of consciously attempting to bring about concrete outcome through meticulous engineering of physical, mental, or systemic structures. We want to discuss the motivations and beliefs people attach to the ‘tools’ and ‘blueprints’ they imagine will realize their quests for ‘the good life’. Furthermore, we contend that practical quests to bring about individual, societal, or corporate improvement emerge as a response to something unwanted that needs to be overcome, reconfigured, destroyed, or abandoned.

We therefore invite panelists to examine how ‘the good life’ relates to its opposite: what is explicitly or implicitly defined as the unwanted, the sickly, the sinister, or problematic. Theoretically then, we are interested in ‘the good life’ as a concept that mobilizes action, future making, and social criticism of the present state of affairs.

Important: This panel is structured as a discussion forum. It is presumed (although not required) that people who attend this panel has read the panelists’ seven case descriptions (5-6 pages each) in advance. The case descriptions will be made available from Friday 11 August through the following sharepoint: **[Engineering the Good Life MEGA 23](#)**. Should the link not work, please contact nina.vohnsen@cas.au.dk.

Structure: The panel allocates 25 minutes to explore each of the seven cases. Each period of 25 minutes is opened by the case-author who has a maximum of five minutes to explore the key questions addressed by the panel. This opening is followed by 20 minutes of free discussion shaped by the intellectual inclinations and analytical pursuits of everyone who turns up. People who have not read the case descriptions are equally welcome to participate actively and passionately in the discussions. People are welcome to drop in and out of the panel during sessions.

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Papers:

Click the boxes to see the abstract!

<p>Frederik Vejlin: The Future of (Good) Life: Experiments from Japan</p>	<p>Adrienne Mannov: Cryptographic Beauty, Digital Utopias and other Beasts: Engineering “the good” digital life anthropologically</p>	<p>Jonas Falzarano Jessen: Scaling ‘One Water’. Engineering water futures through diplomacy and digital data</p>
<p>Catrine Sundorf Kristensen: Engineering with Ideology: Future-making and agency among political youth in Denmark</p>	<p>Lasse Bech Knudsen: Life After Land: Engineering the Good Life at Sea</p>	<p>Nina Holm Vohnsen: Utopia in Outer Space: space ventures as social critique</p>
	<p>Mathias Levi Toft Kristiansen: Manifesting the Good Life</p>	

The Future of (Good) Life: Experiments from Japan

Frederik Vejlín, Postdoc, Department of Digital Design and Information Studies, Aarhus University

At the 2017 Niconico Chōkaigi, the annual festival held by the Japanese video platform Niconico, a team of roboticists led by Hiroshi Ishiguro prototyped the “Ishiguro Laboratory’s Experimental Love Shrine.” The Love Shrine tested how communication constrained by technological mediation might enable intimate connections. As such, the shrine invited pairs of strangers to meet in separate rooms with no visual access and talk only about one of two topics offered by a touch panel. After the first encounter, more than 80% chose to extend the meeting by walking out of the ‘Love Exit’ to great fanfare. Fast-forward to 2025, when the Osaka World Expo will host a signature pavilion designed by Ishiguro with the theme of “Future of Life: To live lives worth living.” In his vision, the future of lives worth living emerges by fusing humanity and technology through so-called ‘cybernetic avatars’, which will free us “from the limitations of the flesh or environment [...] and will start an exploration of new possibilities” (Ishiguro n.d.). In this talk, I use these events to anchor reflections on how roboticists experiment with the future of (good) life in Japan. Specifically, I suggest that these experimental performances restage and reconfigure the perceived loss of traditional relationality in contemporary Japanese society, sometimes described as *muen shakai* or the ‘society of no relations’ (Nozawa 2015). Lastly, I discuss how the experimental modelling of sociality performs alternative modes of relationality, a dynamic which I call artificial sociality (Vejlín 2022).

Cryptographic Beauty, Digital Utopias and other Beasts: Engineering “the good” digital life anthropologically

Adrienne Mannov, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University & Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, Associate Professor, Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University.

Our screens began to fill up with little zoom boxes, populated with figures that belong to eager, curious, or harried researchers. Each had agreed to join us across multiple time zones for a two-day online workshop entitled “Cryptic Commons” in which we (two anthropologists) claimed that “common language and understandings across disciplinary boundaries are necessary to secure the development of future cryptographic tools that are socially, culturally and ethically sound” (workshop call, see also Mannov et al 2020).

Participants, junior and senior researchers from around the world whose work focuses on cryptographic security and privacy, were asked to consider what it meant to be “stuck in the gap” between technically sound protocols and the everyday challenges of legibility, necessity, and power when those protocols were applied in practice. This gap, thus, also makes it clear how the development of digital and computational technologies simultaneously and ambiguously paves the way for both imagining the good life and envisioning dystopia. To be sure, our workshop participants had their own agenda about what it might mean to engineer the good digital life. But our call was in fact a similar endeavor.

For some participants, the ill to be remedied was digital surveillance. The good life, then – according to the standard tech myth – involved a fully digitized world, in which personal

data is hidden and thus “safe” in beautiful, mathematical plain sight. But cracks quickly appeared in this utopia and definition never stayed still long enough to tame it: Whose security, whose privacy, whose legibility, whose necessity, and whose power? Taussig’s thoughts on “terror” comes to mind. Such notions “undermin[e] meaning while [being] dependent on it, stringing out the nervous system one way toward hysteria, the other way toward numbing and apparent acceptance” (2004:3).

In this paper, we zoom in on our workshop as a case of our own attempt to engineer the good life anthropologically. Could our idea of a Commons offer something new – better? – to the forever-debated questions about data privacy, data security and digital surveillance? If a Commons is the antidote, is dissonance the poison? And what do these considerations mean for the role of researchers working across scientific disciplines for the sake of the common good life?

Scaling ‘One Water’. Engineering water futures through diplomacy and digital data

Jonas Falzarano Jessen, PhD Student, Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University

This paper takes its empirical point of departure in the ways in which the so-called ‘one water approach’ in Danish water management draws on collective imaginaries of sameness and equality (Gullestad 2002) to shape local water practices. Through the notion of ‘water diplomacy’, I engage critically and speculatively with the potentials, limitations, and possible consequences of scaling ‘one water’, and discuss how its repercussions reach far beyond both the Danish water sector and national boundaries.

In Denmark, water management practices are increasingly supported by interconnected, ‘smart’, and sentient tools and monitoring systems. These technologies are imagined by their main advocates – whom I call digital water pioneers – to carry the promise of a ‘paradigm shift’ in the water sector towards a ‘digital water utility’ that treats all kinds of water as a holistic ‘one source’. As the vision goes, such digitally enabled and integrated approach to water resources management replaces human ‘gut feelings’ with solid data-driven accuracy and predictive algorithms and breaks down the barriers that conventionally separate wastewater management, drinking water, and storm water by recognizing the local and global interconnectedness of water and data on water.

As a pathway towards ‘good water management’ by means of economic savings, increased efficiency, and algorithmic precision, this vision takes diverse local forms. However, by recognizing that ‘all water has value’, it is also global in its aspirations. The Danish government has recently published an export strategy for water that claims the ambition of doubling the export of water technology by turning “global water challenges” into “opportunities for sustainable growth”. The strategy aspires to unlock novel markets for Danish water solutions worldwide, resulting in economic profit and growth through global ‘strategic water alliances’ and by developing a national water hub to showcase intelligent and efficient Danish water solutions and knowhow: ‘Water Valley Denmark’.

Based on ethnographic observations and tinkering from fieldwork at water utilities and with digital water pioneers in Denmark and in Italy, I explore the ways in which the idea of 'one water' takes material and semiotic form by asking: what does it mean to engineer a 'one water' approach in the Danish water sector and beyond? Whose 'good life' might a 'one water approach' elicit, and whose might it silently constrain? What does it mean to govern water well in a future where access to data on water might mean access to water?

Engineering with Ideology: Future-making and agency among political youth in Denmark

Catrine Sundorf Kristensen, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In this presentation, I explore how members of two Danish political youth parties negotiate and seek to realize individual as well as collective imaginaries of 'good futures' for society – be it local, national, or global – within their respective ideopolitical and organizational frameworks. Here, societal engineering – to follow the theme of the panel – is debated and sought realized through negotiations of party programs at national conventions, during election campaigns, by writing reader's letters, and through participation in local demonstrations, weekly meetings, and in more informal conversation with fellow party members.

Being positioned in a somewhat autonomous relationship with their 'mother parties' in the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) who are not obliged to represent the views of their younger political fellows, the youth parties are left with limited direct political impact. At the same time, however, this position allows the youth parties' members to base their political practices in ideological and idealistic visions of 'the good' in contrast to the political compromises that they tend to associate with the Parliament.

The question arises of how the youth parties' members come to understand and utilize their political engagement as a tool for the practical realization of societal betterment, and furthermore, how they – individually and collectively – constitute themselves as agents of change from their position on the margin of the institutional political machinery.

The different ideological backdrops of the youth parties carry within them a seemingly defined opposition; liberalism as opposed to socialism and vice versa, with implications as to what characterizes desirable and undesirable future(s) for each youth party. Nonetheless, this binary at times – however momentarily – becomes blurred; when disagreement generates internal division or when societal issues, especially but not exclusively related to contemporary Danish youth, calls for joint action across different youth parties and ideological bodies of thoughts.

Life After Land: Engineering the Good Life at Sea

Lasse Bech Knudsen, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

This paper illustrates how the current pursuit of Dutch tech engineers to install floating cities maps into a global imaginary of technological development and capability that is deeply embedded in the intellectual history of Western science and philosophy. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Dutch tech elite in 2021 and 2022, I describe two specific attempts to install a floating city in French Polynesia and the North Sea and flesh out how these floating cities are, in different ways, perceived as a unique “testing space” to experiment with new forms of organising social life at sea. I foreground how the sea has long been perceived as a legal and political space outside of conventional politics and law and trace how it has actively served as a philosophical backdrop to analyse the shortcomings of society. Here, floating cities and islands have figured as an allegory for scientific innovation and critique underpinned by the belief that floating technology can serve as a vehicle to ‘engineer the good life’. Specifically, I discuss how current attempts to develop floating cities align with two key conceptions of technological development that trace back to the Enlightenment age. In doing so, I place the current pursuit to develop floating cities within a long intellectual history of technological capability, where now is the point in time that these ideas to technologise the sea can be materialised.

Utopia in Outer Space: space ventures as social critique

Nina Holm Vohnsen, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

This presentation explores the dream of improving the living conditions for humanity through building a successful and profitable business in Outer Space. The cases I present builds on my research into the NewSpace economy from 2019 and forward. ‘NewSpace’ refers to the acceleration since 2015 of private and commercial space activities associated with “the industrialization” of low Earth orbit, the mining of asteroids, and the colonization of Moon and Mars. My research into this economy includes participating in professional space courses co-organized by Colorado School of Mining and Luxembourg Space Agency alongside engineers, lawyers, physicists, government officials and investors who are hoping to set up business in space and to attend the various NewSpace congresses where commercial space companies and venture capitalists network while excited start-ups pitch the newest space tech ideas. Through all of these different venues government agencies and commercial business ventures employ an overtly utopian imagery, narrating the present moment as fateful and daunting and as an opportunity to ‘step up’ and apply technical skill to improve not only your investment portfolio, your national economy, or your business case but improve the conditions for humanity as a whole. In this presentation, I discuss three such corporate utopia.

The first is a highly successful start-up that aims to grow organs from stem-cells in laboratories installed in low Earth orbit. This corporate utopia is authored by a 40 year old woman who grew up in East Germany dreaming of becoming a cosmonaut and her best friend who never really dreamed of anything but who grew tired of being ‘ironic’ and ‘detached’ about everything. The second business venture is an established global space

company that specializes in space traffic management, Earth observation, and space debris control. This utopia is authored by a die-hard environmentalist who watched Kennedy Moon-speech in 1962 and who is terrified that a debris collision in low Earth orbit will clutter the orbits for good leaving humanity without access to our most crucial infrastructure. The third business venture is the number one commercial space company which was founded, built and continues to be governed by the over-arching goal of colonizing Mars. This utopia is authored by a serial entrepreneur who has dedicated his life to disrupt every established industry he deems destructive for humanity's future on Earth. In my presentation, I will explore the different ways each of these corporate utopia act simultaneously as a profitable business case and as social critique.

Manifesting the Good Life

Mathias Levi Toft Kristiansen, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

What if you could create the good life through the power of your own mind? This paper tells the story of how a tight-knit community of middle-class Californians attempted to become rich through their commitment to a contemporary New Age belief system called "the Law of Attraction". Through what my interlocutors in San Francisco called "manifesting and affirmation," they promoted the idea that humans can attract what they want by visualizing it, thinking about it, and speaking it into existence. Each week, they manifested together at each other's homes with the aim of conjuring the desired lifestyle of wealth and leisure into physical existence by creating an inner feeling of having already achieved it. This, they reminded everyone they met, was based on science - a physical law akin to Isaac Newton's Law of Gravity because thoughts and feelings are physical energies consisting of matter, and "frequencies" to which the universe causally responds; negative thoughts create undesirable material futures whereas positive thoughts create desirable ones.

The Law of Attraction is a contemporary social phenomenon that has seen a surge in popularity among middle-class people, social media influencers, entrepreneurs, and celebrities in the United States and elsewhere since the mid-2000s. The popularity of this practice comes at the intersection of the booming interest in New Age spirituality since the 1960s combined with more recent self-help culture which promote radical individuality as the answer to everything from health, finances, social relationships, work, and family life. This paper examines the Law of Attraction from a different perspective, namely as a form of serious play to collectively affect societal processes beyond most Americans' control such as the everyday effects of rising economic inequality, political turmoil, and social instability.

Encounters at the Limits of the Welfare State

Conveners:

Ida Vandsøe Madsen, PhD Student,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Olivia Marie Spalletta, Postdoc, Section
of Health Services Research, University
of Copenhagen

Laura Louise Heinsen, PhD Student,
Department of Culture and Learning,
Aarhus University

Ayo Wahlberg, Professor with Special
Responsibilities, Department of
Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Description:

The Nordic welfare state model is often imagined as the good or ideal state model and sets a global standard for achieving a high level of equal access to healthcare and for institutionalizing democratic ideals. In these systems, citizens are promised care from cradle to grave, including access to medicine, education, and social support: everything one needs to 'fare well' through life. Taking welfare states as its point of departure, this panel considers how encounters at the contours or limits of the welfare state materialize around experiences of disability, reproduction, aging, (im)migration and disease. We take a special interest in "zones of abandonment" (Biehl 2005) within welfare bureaucracies, and in what practices, experiences, affects, relations and notions of citizen and state that are produced here. This includes experiences of denial of care, privatization of services, and inaccessible or opaque bureaucratic processes. In a system where values of sameness, solidarity and universalism are enshrined in institutions, what does it mean to find oneself beyond the scope of care and recognition? Considering that citizenship is ascribed or inherited upon birth or legalized immigration, what does it mean when one's own or one's family's formal or moral citizenship is called into question and must be achieved through maneuverings and legitimation work (van Wichelen 2019)? What registers of distress are recognized by welfare bureaucracies, and what is 'responsibilized' back to the citizen? Finally, what do these limits reveal about who and what the welfare state ultimately sustains? By focusing on how care encounters materialize at the limits of the welfare state, this panel intends to bring together contributions to collectively think through the relationship between for example (but not limited to) various moralization practices, moods (Throop 2022; 2014), and modes of biological citizenship (Petryna 2016) and belonging (Gammeltoft 2014) in welfare state regimes.

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Papers:

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<p>Birgitte Romme Larsen:</p> <p>When the state came to Nakskov: On the endeavours of bringing “the good life” to peripheral Denmark through the redistribution of government work places</p>	<p>Anna Brueckner Johansen</p> <p>Individualized treatment and bureaucratic impartiality: the paradox of fairness</p>	<p>Turið Hermannsdóttir:</p> <p>Benefits of the Nordic Welfare Model for all?</p>
<p>Laust Lund Elbek:</p> <p>Locating the Friendly State? Affective Welfare State-Ments in 21st Century Denmark</p>	<p>Aske Tybirk Kvist:</p> <p>Nørrebro United. The place of a football association in its local community and welfare system.</p>	<p>Laura Emdal Navne:</p> <p>Citizens on probation: State care, Kinship and belonging in families with children with disability</p>
<p>Ida Vandsøe Madsen:</p> <p>The Welfare State Withdrawing: Women’s emotional, relational and financial losses as informal caregivers to people with dementia in Danish care homes</p>	<p>Olivia Spalletta, Laura Louise Heinsen & Anna Brueckner Johansen:</p> <p>Ordinary Suffering</p>	<p>Ayo Wahlberg:</p> <p>Predisposed in welfare state Denmark</p>

When the state came to Nakskov: On the endeavours of bringing “the good life” to peripheral Denmark through the redistribution of government workplaces

Birgitte Romme Larsen, Associate Professor, Educational Anthropology, DPU, Aarhus University

Since the grand structural reform of the Danish public sector in 2007, we have been witnessing a significant reduction in the number of state institutions and other public sector workplaces located outside Denmark’s larger cities. This has since led to various forms of demographic and economic ‘rural crisis’ – and, politically, today the return of the state and its institutions to peripheral Denmark is considered a prerequisite for, more evenly, making possible “the good life” across rural and urban areas. Hence, in 2015, the then Danish Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen launched a comprehensive national policy initiative of redistributing state jobs from the capital of Copenhagen to the Danish provinces: “Better Balance – government workplaces closer to citizens and enterprises”. Following from this, during 2016–19 close to 8.000 state jobs, spread across 89 state institutions, were relocated to 51 smaller towns across the country. Previous studies and evaluation reports on the outcomes of this major decentralisation initiative primarily address questions such as: “How much did the relocations cost?”; “How much did absence due to illness increase?”; and “How many employees moved with the workplace and how many resigned?”. In addition to their focus on quantifiable outcomes, what all these questions have in common is that they form a sort of enclosed knowledge circuit, asking how the relocation has impacted the various state institutions – and thus, ultimately, the state itself. In my presentation, based on an ethnographic case study of a state institution’s relocation in 2019 from Copenhagen to Nakskov on Lolland, instead I cast light on this encounter between centre and periphery as seen from an everyday local perspective (versus a state perspective). In so doing, I point to a fundamental paradox built into the existing Danish decentralisation approach. Namely, the way in which – at the level of everyday local life – the ‘redistribution of state jobs’ proves to manifest and materialise as a decentralisation on the premise of centralisation. In most public assessments of the outcome of the “Better Balance” initiative, this paradox means – I argue – that the vital role of various local economic systems and human resources already existing in the destination locale tends to recede into the background, in favor of a one-sided attention on the economies and resources brought in with the arrival of the state. Due to this state-centrism, the many local foundations for “a good life” already in place are often overlooked, rather than acknowledged and strengthened.

Individualized treatment and bureaucratic impartiality: the paradox of fairness

Anna Brueckner Johansen, PhD Student, The Danish Center for Social Science Research and Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

Advancements in biomedicine has made it possible to develop treatments for previously incurable diseases, targeting increasingly small patient populations. While posing new hopes, these medicines come with costly price tags. Building on scholarship at the intersection between the anthropological literature on value and on citizenship, in particular Ticktin’s (2016) work on politics of care and compassion, I explore how economic

considerations and prioritization of access to novel gene therapies affect patients' experience of belonging and nonbelonging in the Danish welfare state.

Danish authorities established the Danish Medicine's Council in 2016 to meet the challenges of prioritizing expensive treatments. The organ works to determine what treatments to offer patients to ensure equal access for all by guaranteeing a 'balance between price and effect'. However, when treatments are rejected, patients may be left without alternatives. Such was the case when the treatment for a rare, inherited eye disease, Luxturna, was rejected in 2019, leaving patients and their families disillusioned about the role of universal public healthcare in a welfare state setting. Without Luxturna, the few patients affected by the disease would gradually lose their vision and become blind in their 30s. While negotiations over pricing continued, patients told their stories to the media. Eventually, the treatment was accepted in 2020. Although the controversy settled, it left other questions unanswered: How do decisions about treatment access affect patients' experience of citizenship in the welfare state? If resources are limited, how does the welfare collective make 'good' decisions about whose health to sustain? And how do individual stories of suffering challenge bureaucratic ideals of impartiality?

In 2022, I did fieldwork at the Danish hospital that offers treatment with Luxturna and interviewed manufacturers, negotiators, clinicians, patients and relatives. Drawing on this material as well as document analysis, I suggest that Danish patients and their families face what I refer to as a "paradox of fairness": on one hand, bureaucratic measures seek to ensure equal access for the collective through indifference and impartiality. On the other, individual experiences of compassion, distress or anger towards bureaucratic judgement inform media stories and public sentiment. Could it be that exceptional stories of suffering inform public sentiment, which in turn informs how bureaucratic institutions perform 'good' decisions?

Benefits of the Nordic Welfare Model for all?

Turið Hermannsdóttir, Postdoc, University of the Faroe Islands and Roskilde University

The Scandinavian societies, with the Nordic Welfare Model, are commonly understood as having achieved gender equality, and have been referred to as being 'woman friendly' (Freidenwall 2015). Is this another myth of the Scandinavian societies? Does the Nordic Welfare Model secure sameness, solidarity and universalism for all, regardless of citizens' individual choices and 'ways of life'? Or how might the Nordic states govern its citizens in perhaps not so always visible ways, tucking under the cover of The Nordic Welfare Model? And how might the Nordic Welfare Model play out within relatively conservative and traditionalist Nordic societies, like the Faroe Islands?

Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, I will present and discuss women's experiences with requesting and achieving induced abortion care in the Faroese healthcare system. In the Faroe Islands, induced abortion is not on-demand at any point in the gestational age. Access to abortion care can be granted by first a general practitioner and then a gynaecological obstetrician at the National Hospital, who may perform the abortion care. Permit can be granted based on medical (risks to either the women's or foetus' health or life) or legal (such as rape or incest) reasons. Secondly, abortion is highly

stigmatised and a silent matter (Hermannsdóttir 2022) in the Faroese society. Women have to turn to highly sensitive navigational methods to achieve access to abortion care but also to maintain and care for their social status following an abortion (Hermannsdóttir, n.d.). In this process and meeting with the healthcare system, it seems as women find themselves in a paradoxical situation of feeling as citizens of a Nordic Welfare society however in this specific moment, not recognising what they have come to associate with being a citizen in a society with a Nordic Welfare Model. This creates a sense of mismatch to what they expected they were a part of, and they are almost left with a sense of 'astonishment' about the situation. The ethnographic material highlights that it is as if they are 'surprised' and 'unprepared' for the non-access. Is the benefits of the Nordic Welfare Model only for the good citizens of the society? Is 'bodily autonomy' and 'freedom' only preserved those who do not cross the borders of the constructed moral citizen? These, and other relevant, are some of the ethnographic and theoretical discussions I would enjoy bringing to the panel, as this speaks of the limits of the not so always 'female friendly' Nordic societies, and how this then is experienced on a subjective level but also reflecting on the formation of the 'reproductive citizen'.

Locating the Friendly State? Affective Welfare State-Ments in 21st Century Denmark

Laust Lund Elbek, Postdoc, Danish Centre for Welfare Studies / Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark

In 2020, the so-called 'proximity reform' of the Danish police was passed in parliament. Tapping into a general political concern with the welfare state's ostensible 'abandonment' of provincial areas, the reform aimed at making police – and, by extension, the state – more 'visible and accessible' beyond the country's urban centres by establishing new local police stations across the country. The debates framing the reform centered on the emic concepts of *nærhed* (proximity, closeness) and *tryghed* (safety, security), arguably pointing to an imaginary of a 'Gemeinschaft'-like state that links images of intimacy, care, warmth, homeliness, and close amicable relationships to the polity. Through an ethnographic engagement with the opening of one such police station in the town of Odder in Eastern Jutland, this paper shows how ideals of *nærhed* and *tryghed* are indeed mobilized as affective 'welfare state-ments' staging positive state-citizen relations. Such state-ments, however, are also powerful boundary-making devices: performances of a friendly 'Gemeinschaft' state in places like Odder certainly constitute a stark contrast to the increasingly punitive and draconian ways in which the Danish welfare state makes itself present in other kinds 'marginal' locations, particularly urban neighborhoods with large immigrant populations, where a whole other sort of 'welfare state-ments' (e.g. stop-and-frisk zones and collective evictions) stage very different formations affective citizenship. With a nod to Vanessa Barker's analysis of the 'Janus-faced' Nordic welfare state, these contrasting forms of geographically targeted policies do, however, seem intimately linked through their implication in a wider topology of welfare state care.

Nørrebro United. The place of a football association in its local community and welfare system.

Aske Tybirk Kvist, PhD Student, Nørrebro United and Roskilde University

As a so-called gang war occupies Nørrebro, especially the neighborhood's multiethnic and neglected housing areas, and the police seems unable to stop it, the public discourse starts to focus on the 10-year-old soccer club Nørrebro United as a "good community" that can break the gangs' chain of recruitment and a where the neighborhood's increasing segregation can be mitigated. Nørrebro United is hoped to unite a neighborhood that is drifting apart.

"Foreningsdanmark", Denmark of Associations, and voluntary civil society are considered to play a central role in the creation and sustenance of communities, as locus of social capital and trust, which some argue is a foundation for the acceptance of high taxes and redistribution, which fund the welfare state. The voluntary associations are celebrated as promoters of the common good and social integration of society. As the welfare state neglects and withdraws from certain areas, voluntary civic actors from the associational life is hoped to fill in, but associations are rarely capable of picking up the pieces, as many of them are struggling to sustain themselves.

From my position in Nørrebro United I inquire into how the soccer club with the motto "Local and Social" works to increase its capacity to become a central uniting place in the neighborhood and I identify three kinds of theoretical attitudes and practical capacities that are cultivated in the club as part of the pursuit: the association as a urban commons (Huron 2018), the association as an open and accessible community, (Esposito 2020) and the association as part of larger societal interplay (Easterling 2021).

Citizens on probation: State care, Kinship and belonging in families with children with disability

Laura Emdal Navne, Associate Professor, The Danish Center for Social Science Research, Center for Medical Science and Technology, Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

Why does the welfare state - renowned for providing universal and high levels of publicly funded care - constitute a core concern about privacy violation for parents presented with the prospects of a newborn child with severe disabilities? Conducting almost a decade of fieldwork among families with children with disabilities, I have explored the experience of encounters and contours between welfare state and family in Denmark. The welfare state being a family member these families did not choose, they endure intimate relations with state representatives who are massively present in their daily lives. In the shoes their child wears, the bed he sleeps in, the car you drive (accounting for every mile you drive) and even in your child's first friend who may be a care worker who quits without saying goodbye. This paper demonstrates that families living with a child with disabilities in Denmark experience living at one and the same time in zones of abandonment (being

denied state care) and zones of retaining (being kept in state care). I argue that this double bind situation produces experiences of uncertain belonging and of being citizens and parents 'on probation'.

The Welfare State Withdrawing: Women's emotional, relational and financial losses as informal caregivers to people with dementia in Danish care homes

Ida Vandsøe Madsen, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

The Danish welfare state is built on the premise that every tax-paying citizen gain access to a wide range of benefits, among these affordable care homes with extensive care. Family norms regarding responsibility for taking care of people with dementia are there for unclear as the state has historically been the main caretaker. However, recent reforms have resulted in a restructuring of the Danish dementia care sector. The reforms are built on inclusion of *pårørende* (related persons), loosely defined as family members, friends or colleagues, in tasks that before were the state financed care homes' responsibly. Yet, it often ends up being one woman in the family, a daughter, sister or wife, who take on these tasks. Based on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork and via a critical phenomenological perspective on familial and structural disregard, I explore this phenomenon. I show how, in several cases, these women quit their job or take leave as both having a job and attending to the tasks as informal care takers are too much, and leaves them physically and emotionally exhausted and with symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Their relationships to romantic partners, friends, family members and general social network are also highly affected and in some cases falling apart. I thus argue that the consequences of the resent restructuring of Danish dementia care mainly affect women, which is striking in a context focused on and praised for working towards high levels of gender equality.

Ordinary Suffering

Olivia Spalletta, Postdoc, Center for Medical Science and Technology and Section for History and Philosophy of Science, University of Copenhagen, Laura Louise Heinsen, Københavns Kommune & Anna Brueckner Johansen, PhD Student, The Danish Center for Social Science Research and Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

This paper explores the positioning and uptake of suffering in the Danish welfare state. Inspired by Miriam Ticktin's attention to the relationship between the suffering of immigrant bodies and access to care, we investigate the role of suffering in Danish residents' quests to access welfare services. We ask: Whose suffering can be used to claim rights or benefits? Whose suffering is responsabilized back to the citizen, family, or community? And whose suffering is taken up as a critique of—or a threat to—the welfare state? This paper analyzes several cases in order to explore how suffering leads to life-changing support for some, and for others, marginalization or even death. Paradoxically, we find that suffering can become a basis for both justifying state interventions and limiting access to care. This is the case, for instance, in prenatal screening programs designed to detect fetal abnormalities, including Down syndrome. Based on the potential for suffering of family

and fetus, Down syndrome is designated a 'serious' condition and is almost automatically approved for late termination. When born, however, children with Down syndrome and their families do not automatically qualify for support. Rather, they face a precarious and time-consuming process of rendering their experiences visible and pertinent to welfare authorities. In our analysis, we develop the concept of ordinary suffering to explore how suffering is metabolized by the state, resulting in ordinary—and often insufficient—care for some and extraordinary measures for others. Looking beyond the borders of the welfare state, we show how positioning and uptake of suffering differ in weaker welfare states, such as the US, where more emphasis is placed on the role of community and private industry in responding to suffering. This paper contributes important insight into how inequities persist and become normalized in Denmark and beyond.

Predisposed in welfare state Denmark

Ayo Wahlberg, Professor with Special Responsibilities, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

The ever-expanding segmentation of populations into differentiated 'at risk' groups with attendant routinization of pre-emptive augmented vigilance trajectories is leading to what might be termed "surveillance life" for increasing numbers of people. This augmented vigilance is aimed at detecting (signs of) a disease that likely/potentially will strike. In this paper, we will explore how a preventive healthcare complex has stabilized around interrelated forms of transmission prevention, lifestyle prevention, pharmaceutical prevention and genetic prevention. Using Lynch syndrome as a case involving the latter, we will ask what living surveillance lives entails for families with a known inherited elevated risk of colorectal cancer and show how they at times can fall through the meshes of the Danish welfare state's healthcare services.

Good data/Data for good?

Conveners:

Annika Isfeldt, PhD Student,
Department of Educational
Anthropology, DPU, Aarhus University

Sarah Seddig, PhD Student, Danish
Institute of International Studies &
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Eva Otto, Postdoc, University of
Copenhagen

Description:

Following the recent digital transformation, societies are increasingly datafied and life “translated into quantified form so that it can be tabulated and analyzed” (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier, 2013, 78). At the same time, the use of data is increasingly perceived to “do good” across scales and by a host of actors, such as non-governmental organizations, states and market actors. With the promise of improving individual lives, data is being extracted for projects ranging from helping actors prefigure global refugee crises with predictive algorithms, to supporting individuals tracking and analyzing bodily processes, for example. However, the use of data “for good” is also contested.

We are interested in the ways empirical struggles for “the good life” configure both data and “the good” in the wild. We posit that the use of data both enables and challenges what a good and desirable future may look like. Struggles over what “good data” is and what data to “use for good”, are thereby of increasing importance, and of timely relevance to anthropological inquiry interested in how people engage in “quests for the good”.

This panel invites papers that explore the ways in which data become an increasingly pertinent element of “doing good” and a part of quests for what the good - human and more-than-human - lives entail. In this we aim to keep an open analytical space for the nature of data which has been described as diversely as a natural resource, commodity, relation, materiality, and narrative.

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Papers:

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<p>Tamara Gupper:</p> <p>Collaborating on “Good” Data in a Competitive Research Environment</p>	<p>Emilie Munch Gregersen & Sofie Læbo Astrupgaard:</p> <p>Embracing tech for better or for worse? Developing a digital fieldnote tool</p>	<p>Steffen Dalsgaard:</p> <p>Is carbon to climate change mitigation as data is to ‘the good life’?</p>
<p>Vladimir Alejandro Ariza Montanez:</p> <p>Prioritize and measure: itineraries and meanings of anthropometric measurements in two nutritional recovery programs in Puerto Carreño (Colombia)</p>	<p>Annika Isfeldt:</p> <p>When data sings gospel</p>	<p>Sarah Seddig:</p> <p>Care(ful) Extraction and Bodies of Data: FemTech across Nairobi’s Tech- Ecosystem and Informal Settlements</p>
	<p>Eva Otto:</p> <p>Turning user-data into good data – moral navigations within app production</p>	

Collaborating on “Good” Data in a Competitive Research Environment

Tamara Gupper, PhD Student, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

Getting hold of “good” data to train neural network models can be difficult, especially if large-scale databases are not available for specific use cases. Based on my ethnographic and autoethnographic research with a team of computer scientists who program humanoid robots to play soccer, this paper will address two questions: First, what qualities do training data sets need to have to be considered “good” in this specific context? To answer this question, I will specifically refer to annotated images needed to train a model that enables the visual detection of robots on the soccer field.

Second, what do the computer scientists consider good ways of obtaining training data? There are multiple teams that program humanoid robots to play soccer, and they regularly compete against each other in robot soccer tournaments. Generating and labeling data manually is a tedious task, which has motivated various practices of collaboration within this research initiative. With the aspect of competition in mind, this paper will thus also discuss practices of collaborating on “good” data sets both within and between teams. Getting hold of “good” data to train neural network models can be difficult, especially if large-scale databases are not available for specific use cases. Based on my ethnographic and autoethnographic research with a team of computer scientists who program humanoid robots to play soccer, this paper will address two questions: First, what qualities do training data sets need to have to be considered “good” in this specific context? To answer this question, I will specifically refer to annotated images needed to train a model that enables the visual detection of robots on the soccer field.

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Embracing tech for better or for worse? Developing a digital fieldnote tool

Emilie Munch Gregersen, Research Assistant, Center for Social Data Science, University of Copenhagen & Sofie Læbo Astrupgaard, PhD Student, Center for Social Data Science, University of Copenhagen

As anthropologically trained junior scholars, we have been taught to gather thick descriptions of what we encounter, as advised by Clifford Geertz. While we value this approach to the field, our experiences with working in an interdisciplinary team has motivated us to try and experiment with a different approach to ethnographic data collection. In preparation for a collaborative field study at a Danish politics festival, a team of observers aspired to produce fieldnotes that were similarly structured and with a shared analytical lens to study political events occurring in different places at the same time. Such

aspirations caused us to rethink the notion of ‘thick’, not to collect ‘thin’ data, but to collect what we have come to think of as ‘broad’ data. With broad, we mean ethnographic data that is: 1) comparable across a team of observers meaning that they share a similar structure and analytical objective 2) more easily integrable with a range of other data types such as spatial data or social media data and 3) computationally processable for making automated analysis to finding patterns. Importantly, we do not think ‘broad’ as a replacement of ‘thick’ but rather an alternative or complementary addition to the ethnographic toolbox. Building on our experiences from the field, we have developed a digital tool for collecting, organizing, and storing fieldnotes through which one could use to produce ‘broader’ fieldnotes. We find the tool particularly useful in cases of collaborative or multimodal fieldwork. In this paper, we present our tool and the framework it builds on to discuss possible implications of introducing technology and structure already from the data collection phase, as well as the notion of ‘broad data’.

Is carbon to climate change mitigation as data is to ‘the good life’?

Steffen Dalsgaard, Professor, IT University of Copenhagen

Taking stock of the results of a research project on ‘sociocultural carbon’ which is soon coming to an end, the paper will elucidate the different meanings of ‘data’ in the world of climate change mitigation, and how data is mobilized for a variety of purposes and interests. The framework for the discussion is that ‘carbon’ as a shorthand for greenhouse gas emissions has gone from scientific ‘fact’ to being a signifier in public consciousness but that this translation rarely comes across as focused on ‘data’. It is, however, an indicator of how to pursue a life that is ‘good for the climate’. The paper summarizes the results of the research project with a focus on how ‘data’ has appeared as an empirical reference point sometimes connected to climate change, sometimes detached from it or acting as a proxy, but always connected to ideals for ‘good’ and in this way marking ‘climate change’ as anthropological and ‘sociocultural change’.

Prioritize and measure: itineraries and meanings of anthropometric measurements in two nutritional recovery programs in Puerto Carreño (Colombia)

Vladimir Alejandro Ariza Montanez, Phd Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

In Colombia, multilateral agencies, governments and non-state organizations have promoted some programs and initiatives to prevent and attend to children with acute malnutrition and women with insufficient gestational weight. Besides the efforts to provide them complementary feeding, a part integral in those programs corresponds to the adoption and application of different anthropometric measurement such as child growth standards, mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC), pre-pregnancy Body Mass Index, and Gestational Weight Gain, among others. These have been incorporated and used during different stages of the nutritional recovery, becoming a fundamental source by which hunger is to be understood and managed (Lock & Nguyen, 2018; Niño Machado, 2018). Those measures provide for experts and technical teams a trust source of

data which advantage is to make human needs –such hunger- something “commensurable”, what is applied for focalization and admission criteria in feeding programs, but also in the production of national surveys and in the making of public policy (Glasman, 2018; Scott-Smith, 2013). In this exploration, I analyses the use and interpretation of those anthropometric measures by the technical staff and users of two programs in Puerto Carreño (Colombia): an extramural home modality called “1000 thousand days to change the world”, and a Nutrition Rehabilitation Center (NRC). During the last seven years, this city has been at the center of a humanitarian crisis that affects mostly migrant populations and binational indigenous communities with a significant influence on food insecurity and an increase in malnutrition rates.

When data sings gospel

Annika Isfeldt, PhD Student, Department of Educational Anthropology, DPU, Aarhus University

All predictions suggest that the global number of displaced people will to continue to rise dramatically in the future, as crises become much more frequent, protracted, and complex. At the same time, many governments are cutting back on humanitarian and development aid. This leads to an increasing funding gap to cover the needs of the globally most vulnerable people, and there is a growing consensus within the humanitarian sector that novel solutions are needed in order to meet and mitigate these crises. On this dire background, humanitarian INGOs have begun developing so-called predictive technologies that build on historical data to predict future hazards enabling preventive work to mitigate or event prevent acute humanitarian impacts.

Predicting the future is obviously not a straightforward business. It begs both methodological and ethical questions when human stories are converted into calculable data, when relationships of the past are assumed to be the same in the future, when the most vulnerable aspects of human life become technologically mediated, when predictions will be publicly available for governments and non-governmental organizations to use for their respective purposes - and so on.

These are some of the questions that the data team and predictive analytics pioneers at The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are grappling with as they develop global and local models to predict e.g., droughts, pastoralist movements, and escalation of armed conflict. The prognosis of their models is good, and the model often performs better than human judgement. But are the pitfalls of the technological developments greater than the promises, and have we lost our critical sense to these promises? The head of DRC’s data team is afraid this is the case. As he says: “People get so data excited, once data is there... they just can’t hold back. It’s like data is singing gospel to them.” Based on an ethnographic fieldwork at DRC, I will investigate and critically challenge the production of and practice with data that is collected to ‘do good’.

Care(ful) Extraction and Bodies of Data: FemTech across Nairobi's Tech-Ecosystem and Informal Settlements

Sarah Seddig, PhD Student, Danish Institute for International Studies & Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

The recent emergence of Female Technology (FemTech), a growing digital health market specifically aimed at women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH), poses novel questions about control and power over women's bodies – and their respective data. While smartphone apps, wearables, and digital diagnostic devices expeditiously collect, analyse and store personal data, concerns about modes of surveillance, the ownership, and the value of health data become more relevant than ever. FemTech solutions seem particularly attractive for low-resource contexts in which access to healthcare facilities and women's SRH services remain limited whilst tech-solutionism and “data4good” movements are thriving. Intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and its exacerbation of SRH inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa, the pandemic contributed to pervasive shifts to digitalise and privatise healthcare delivery across Kenya - where private enterprises are increasingly filling the void of healthcare provision. This paper is based on 8-months of ethnographic fieldwork among HealthTech startups in Kenya's tech-ecosystem ‘Silicon Savannah’ and healthcare practitioners/patients in private health clinics across Nairobi's informal settlements between 2021-2022. It traces commodification practices targeting healthcare disparities and socio-economic inequalities in a new data-specific context. By drawing attention to capitalist relations of power and their intersection across race, class, and gender, it investigates how data becomes an essential commodity of expansion through processes of extraction.

Turning user-data into good data – moral navigations within app production

Eva Otto, PhD, Center for Tracking and Society, University of Copenhagen

User-data increasingly shapes digitally mediated markets by becoming an integral part of algorithmic ways to ‘classify’ and ‘nudge’ customers. Processes of datafication (van Dijck 2014), in which not only more and more online actions are turned into user-data, but which also relate to a general valuing of data, are therefore essential for understanding the trajectory of modern markets. At the same time, collecting and using user-data is increasingly a morally contested practice, with recent developments in the EU such as the implementation of GDPR, highlighting the value and dangers of user-data. This paper is based on a year-long fieldwork with a Danish app agency, Monocle, which designs and develops apps for a Northern European market. Monocle play an essential role in the processes by which user-data is collected. However, to the people at Monocle user-data is a morally ambiguous entity. In this paper I argue that understanding how Monocle navigates the moral ambiguity of user-data is essential for understanding how they end up building particular user-data flows.. I detail how they construct particular user-data flows as particular (morally suffused) “goods”, which allows them to navigate the moral ambiguity of data. Their moral navigations thereby shape the software infrastructures they build. Looking at the ways actors such as Monocle navigate moral valuations of user-data paints a larger picture of both the heterogeneity within markets of digital (app)

production, rejecting the seamlessness that is often assumed when describing processes of datafication. And further, it demonstrates the moral work required within digital markets to make “good data”, through linking it to projects that are seen as “for good”.

Ethnographic Salon

Conveners:

Helle Bundgaard, Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Line Dalsgård, Professor, Department
of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Description:

Continuing from the last years' successes, we invite you to participate in the Ethnographic Salon. Contributions in both English and Danish are welcome. We invite poems, short stories, essays, or other formats, written for the occasion or released from their hiding place in the drawer. Classical "thick description" or fiction, as you wish. Texts that keep interpretive possibilities open instead of striving for closure. Texts that provoke or charm the listener with their beauty, wit, or both. We wish to explore ways of being alive in the ethnographic writing.

As before, we propose the following 'obstructions' (benspænd):

- Write from field experience
- Experiment with the format
- Write yourself into the text
- No references or other academic scaffolding
- Allow yourself to focus on literary qualities

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The Screening Room

Conveners:

Kenni Hede, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Steffen Köhn, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Karen Waltorp, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Description:

We are thrilled to introduce the Screening Room as a new addition to the MEGA seminar program, offering a dedicated space to exhibit the diverse range of multimodal projects developed within the Danish anthropology landscape. This initiative aims to provide a platform for practitioners to present their work-in-progress or recently finished films, installations, podcasts, photography projects, websites, or any other multimedia format that amplifies the power of anthropological narratives and engages audiences on a deeper level.

Presenters invite into an investigation of the highlights of their projects, sharing methodologies employed, and showcasing preliminary findings that exemplify the value of integrating multiple modes of data collection and analysis. We encourage presenters to not only showcase their projects but also engage in discussions that foster critical reflections on the use of multimodal approaches in anthropological research.

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Capturing Love: Ethnographic Reflections

Conveners:

Susanne Bregnbæk, Associate Professor, University College Copenhagen

Tine Gammeltoft, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Anne Line Dalsgård, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Description:

This panel explores the ethnography of love. Across the globe, many people would probably place love – in one form or another – at the heart of their quest for a good life. But what is “love” in a given local context? How do people live it, experience it, suffer it, miss it, share it, mobilize it, manipulate with it, write, or sing about it? These questions also invite discussions about love as an analytical concept. What do we as anthropologists see in the field and talk about when we see and talk about love?

Hannah Arendt famously argued that love is “not only apolitical but anti-political, perhaps the most powerful of all anti-political forces.” How does this resonate with ethnographic insights? While accounts of love are abundant in literary, philosophical, and artistic work, studies of love are relatively rare in anthropology. It is our working hypothesis that ideas and experiences of love – in some form or shape – are always there, wherever we go to carry out fieldwork, although they are not often foregrounded in our ethnographic writing. We therefore propose examining what constitutes love in different socio-cultural contexts and intersubjective relationships around the world: How does love manifest in our fieldwork settings? What is the role of love in the creation of ethnographic knowledge itself, and how can we attend to and write about it?

Wishing to escape European romanticism we understand love not only in an ethereal and idealized form but as a practiced, embodied, experienced, contested, endured, longed for, desired, denied, repressed, awaited, fulfilled or unrequited force of life. We invite presenters to examine the cultural idioms and repertoires that give shape to “love,” but we also aim to move beyond cultural tropes to explore love phenomenologically – as subjective and intersubjective experience – and socially, as a force of power and politics. In this way we wish to examine person-centered accounts of love, be they romantic, conjugal, filial, sexual, religious etc., while also considering love as a political force. A force which may drive human efforts to address problems such as capitalism, colonialism, or climate change, and also a force with darker potentials.

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Papers:

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<p>Flora Botelho:</p> <p>When love is secondary: making (a good) life with restricted means.</p>	<p>Anne Line Dalsgård:</p> <p>The neutral crafting of life: mother love as timework</p>	<p>Cecil Marie Schou Pallesen:</p> <p>Can money buy love? Power, money, and affection among the Dawoodi Bohoras</p>
<p>Trine Brinkmann:</p> <p>For love. Reflections on love in a life, that seems to lack it.</p>	<p>Lærke Cecilie Anbert & Nana Clemensen:</p> <p>Like a Politics of Love: Social Justice Activism and Affective Engagements at UC Berkeley</p>	<p>Marie Leine:</p> <p>Enduring Love, Enduring Violence: Love as a burdened virtue among women staying at domestic violence shelters</p>
<p>Nanna Schneidermann, Jónleyp Djuurhus & Turið Hermannsdóttir:</p> <p>Gendered Island Futures: what if mother love is really driving social change?</p>	<p>Tine Gammeltoft:</p> <p>Self-care as an elegiac act of love: Family responses to gestational diabetes in Vietnam</p>	<p>Cameron Warner:</p> <p>In Love with the Dalai Lama: Devotion and Social Dis/unity among Tibetans</p>
	<p>Susanne Bregnbæk:</p> <p>Woman, Life, Freedom: An Iranian story of intergenerational love, loss and resistance</p>	

When love is secondary: making (a good) life with restricted means.

Flora Botelho, Postdoc, Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen

Whenever I ask my informants about love, be it romantic, neighbourly, sororal or parental, they invariably reply that in Mozambique, love comes second to the harsh realities of existence. They emphasise the obstacles to an experience of love as free-flowing sentiment. In this paper, I want to temper this bleak appraisal by exploring the role that love, however secondary it may be, plays in people's everyday and affective lives.

Through the ethnographic stories of three generations of one family living in a poor neighbourhood of Maputo, Mozambique, this paper explores intimate love in women's efforts to raise children, tend to their marriages, and make a better future for themselves. In conversation with Hannah Arendt's understanding that intimate love brings new beginnings with "the fact of natality", which she considers a political force of renewal, I show that the obstacles women focus on in their life stories are also evidence of love's central role in their lives. Precisely because it allows them to overcome these obstacles. I thus argue that love is a driver of change, and the force that makes living together with very limited means possible.

The neutral crafting of life: mother love as timework

Anne Line Dalsgård, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Whenever I ask my informants about love, be it romantic, neighbourly, sororal or parental, they invariably reply that in Mozambique, love comes second to the harsh realities of existence. They emphasise the obstacles to an experience of love as free-flowing sentiment. In this paper, I want to temper this bleak appraisal by exploring the role that love, however secondary it may be, plays in people's everyday and affective lives.

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Can money buy love? Power, money, and affection among the Dawoodi Bohoras

Cecil Marie Schou Pallesen, Postdoc, KØN Gender Museum & Science of Religion, Aarhus University

The Dai, Syedna Saifudeen, is the religious leader of the Dawoodi Bohoras, a transnational Khoja Shia community with roots in western India. Leading the community like a modern welfare state across national borders, the Dai is both a CEO and the direct link to Allah, and his followers worship him, travel the world to see him, and even pay money to have him visit their home. He decides the names of newborn babies, he blesses marriages, new businesses, and new houses, and through personal meetings and online consultations, he guides personal decisions among Bohoras around the globe. Bohoras are encouraged to share a large portion of their income with the community, and huge amounts of capital flow across the Indian Ocean to the Dai and his family. It is all framed and explained by love: The Dai's actions and choices are based on affection and care, and so are his followers' respect, loyalty, and engagement. Based on fieldwork among the Bohoras in Tanzania and Dubai, this paper explores how love, power, money, and religiosity intersect in the transnational systems and practices of the Bohoras. What does it mean to be a good Bohora in terms of loving and honoring the Dai in the right way? Can money buy love?

For love. Reflections on love in a life, that seems to lack it.

Trine Brinkmann, Associate Professor, University College Copenhagen

Annie is a forty-year-old woman, whose life has unfolded in the socio-economic margins of Denmark. She was born in the Western part of Jutland, brought up in violence, moved out of her childhood home as soon as she could, and as far away as possible. When I met her a couple of years ago, she lived in Lolland, had four children, all placed, was unemployed and on social support, described a continuity of relationships with men, and only explicitly talked about love in relation to her pet rat, who, as she said, brought her love, by licking her tears. Thus, one could easily describe Annie's life as one defined by a series of neglect. But has there been love too?

In studies of marginalized people in Western societies, historically often centering on urban poor, there is a tendency, either to lean into sociological reflections on weak, strong, or disposable ties, the latter perceived as simulating intimacy and offering (pragmatic) alternatives to kin relations, where love seems to have gone wrong – or to delve into the psychological consequences of what unfolded, where love should have been. Following such kinds of thinking, Annie has not experienced love, and to the extent she has, it has been distorted. This is how Annie would generally be perceived by those welfare professionals, who one way or the other engage her life, and this is also how I find myself representing her life in my own ethnographic work – always with a clear sense of letting something important slip. Thus, in this paper, I look for love in Annie's life, first and foremost with an ambition not to dismiss the kinds of love, that seems to linger in her words, and in the choices she has made.

Like a Politics of Love: Social Justice Activism and Affective Engagements at UC Berkeley

Lærke Cecilie Anbert, PhD Student, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University & Nana Clemensen, Associate Professor, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University

At UC Berkeley, like elsewhere in the world, students are concerned with social (in)justice at their university. This is evident in discussions focusing on choice of curricula and how to teach about the settler colonial (past) of USA and of UC Berkeley. Some students are working to influence these discussions through ongoing demands to lecturers, administration and fellow students to focus more on inclusion and creating feelings of belonging for all students on campus. This work is strongly inspired by poststructuralist theory insisting that language creates reality, thereby placing special demands on the social and linguistic behavior of all parties involved.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in 2021-22, this presentation examines how love and forgiveness was hailed as a dogma among students at UC Berkeley, as a political strategy to create feelings of belonging. We focus particular on how this politics of love effects language activism among students at UC Berkeley and the vulnerabilities, paradoxes and insights this focus on language entails. We show how the students work with socially just and acceptable language use as a fundamentally changeable practice that is continuously negotiated.

Drawing on literature on affect, we home in on the students' cultivation of collective forms of expression and ask what role love plays in creating a more socially just university (cf. Ahmed 2007, Lorde 1984, Pryse 2000). Further, based on linguistic anthropological approaches – including feminist linguistics and queer linguistics (Cf. Butler 1997, Cameron 1998) – and studies of language activism, performativity and social communities (Avineri et al. 2019, Årman 2021), we explore the students' linguistic practices and negotiations in interaction with the social, political, institutional and structural conditions that surround them.

Enduring Love, Enduring Violence: Love as a burdened virtue among women staying at domestic violence shelters

Marie Leine, PhD Student, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen

In this paper I engage with an overall framework of how we can understand the experience and workings of love when love becomes intimately woven together with violence (Das 2014). My ethnographic material is based on conversations and relations I have built with two women staying at domestic violence shelters, who in different ways seek to repair damaged relationships with their mothers - mothers they have sought refuge from at the shelter. I specifically wish to interrogate how love becomes a burdened virtue (Tessman 2006). A burdened virtue designates those types of virtues which, instead of leading to the flourishing and well-being of the Self, become disjoined from the bearer's wellbeing. The two women independently told of how their love for their mothers remained intact, and how love had been the driving force in their attempts at reconnecting with their mothers. These attempts of repair, however, failed miserably for both women. They led to deep, devastating disappointment. Yet, the women still voiced a deep felt,

although conflicted, love for their mothers – a love that became an imagined source of moral repair (Walker 2005), and a driving force for the hopes of mending their relationships sometime in the future. As such, love stands out as a virtuous thing indeed, but a burdened one. One that, within the women's attempts and modes of enacting, giving and embodying it, seems disjoined from their wellbeing, endlessly leading to disappointment and a continued exposure to violence and abuse. I seek to explore how love here might be seen as a burdened virtue: both enduring against violence and neglect, and enabling the women to endure violence.

Gendered Island Futures: what if mother love is really driving social change?

Nanna Schneidermann, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University, Jónleyp Djuurhus, PhD Student, Aarhus University & Turið Hermannsdóttir, Postdoc, Aarhus University

As a newly established research group on motherhood and social change in the Faroe Islands, we collectively present initial inspirations and experiences with a research project initiated by mother love, and about how motherhood as both an institution and lived experience drives social change. Policies towards reproduction and gender in the Faroe Islands have historically been restrictive and more conservative than in the rest of Scandinavia. Recently, however, there is an increased focus on women and gender equality in heated public debates about same sex marriages, parenthood and legislation that bans abortion. Yet, motherhood is often seen as a naturalized aspect of female personhood, and women are valued as primary caregivers to children and families in what Faroese scholars term a “child-centric society”. Fertility rates are relatively high with a 2.4 child average and 30% of women work only part time. Despite motherhood being a central underlying theme in politically contested issues about the future of Faroese society, it has not been directly tackled as a unit of analysis. This research project analyses transformations in imaginaries of motherhood and experiences of mothering in the Faroe Islands as a lens through which to understand social change in island life. We may develop this initial presentation as poems or autoethnographic snippets from our first research workshop taking place in August.

Self-care as an elegiac act of love: Family responses to gestational diabetes in Vietnam

Tine Gammeltoft, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Since the covid-19 pandemic ravaged the world, self-care has moved to the top of the agenda in global health policy and practice. In anthropology, self-care is gaining traction too as a term with significant analytical potential, yet with widely varying theoretical roots. Some scholars use the term with reference to Michel Foucault's philosophy of the care of the self; while others draw inspiration from black feminist thinker Audre Lorde's radical definition of self-care as “political warfare”, pointing to the political power of caring for the self in situations of social inequality and disregard.

In this paper, I take the term self-care in a different direction, applying it as a lens for understanding in phenomenological terms the varying forms of attention at play when pregnant women confront new biomedical technologies – in this case, technologies for the diagnosis of gestational diabetes. Unlike selective reproductive technologies – which focus on the nature of the fetus – technologies for diagnosis of gestational diabetes place the mother-to-be and her metabolism at the center of biomedical attention. When elevated blood glucose levels are detected, the pregnant woman’s self-care practices attain critical medical importance, as “lifestyle” modifications are considered key to preventing maternal and neonatal complications and disease.

Drawing on collaborative ethnographic fieldwork conducted in northern Vietnam, I highlight how the biomedical attention through which a diagnosis of gestational diabetes emerged is often accompanied by a striking lack of attention when the pregnant woman shares her diagnosis with family members. While in biomedical worlds, gestational diabetes is defined as a dangerous condition in need of daily self-care and self-monitoring, in social worlds of family and community the condition is most often categorized as “an ordinary affair” (*chuyện bình thường*), a transient phenomenon that does not demand particular precaution or care. Women with a diagnosis of gestational diabetes therefore often describe their daily self-care as a lonely and elegiac act of love; one that was driven by an urge to protect the child they expected, informed by digital sources of knowledge, and suffused by sentiments of longing for family members’ attention and support.

In Love with the Dalai Lama: Devotion and Social Dis/unity among Tibetans

Cameron Warner, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

The Dalai Lama is 87 years old, has served as Tibet's religious and political leader for 72 years, and has lived as the world's most famous refugee for 64 years. Though countless popular books, articles, and films trade on the value of his name, very little scholarly attention has paid to what Tibetans themselves make of their leader. This paper will first overview collective acts of devotion performed by groups such as rituals for the Dalai Lama's long-life, birthday celebrations, and ritual subservience of Buddhist organizations whose leaders need his approval for their own legitimacy. I will compare these acts of devotion to individual acts of allegiance paid to the Dalai Lama in response to "Tonguegate," a recent controversy manufactured by social media influencers who support the government of the PRC. I query how love for the Dalai Lama relates to Tibetan social unity and disunity, an ontological pendulum pervasive in Tibetan society for centuries.

Woman, Life, Freedom: An Iranian story of intergenerational love, loss and resistance

Susanne Bregnbæk, Associate Professor, University College Copenhagen

According to Rozerin, a Kurdish Iranian woman living in exile in Denmark, being a woman in Iran is “hell on earth”. She echoes the slogan, “Woman, Life, Freedom” (Jin, Jiyan, Azadi), which became the hallmark of the mass protests following the brutal killing of the young woman, Mahsa Amini in September 2022. It has since then become popular in protests and artwork around the globe, including in Copenhagen. The slogan, which dates back to the Kurdish women’s movement of the late twentieth century was later popularized by Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). The recent uprising’s use of the slogan has led to imprisonment and killing of hundreds of protesters- including children - by the Iranian regime, thus thwarting hope. And yet the Iranians I know all agree that Iran is forever changed. In this paper I will give an account of Rozerin’s family history, spanning three generations. I try to convey how her parents’ shameful divorce has cast a shadow over her life, is implicated in her own situation of being twice divorced and since then having fled Iran, only end up unhappily married in Denmark. The paper reflects on the role of love as the driving force in her narrative. At the same time, love and the quest for freedom seem inseparable from loss and new forms of dependency.

Quests for Justice

Conveners:

Clara Rosa Sandbye, PhD Student,
Department of Anthropology, Aarhus
University

Christian B. N. Gade, Associate
Professor, Department of Anthropology,
Aarhus University

Petya Mitkova Koleva, PhD Student,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Sofie Budhoo Bjerregaard, PhD
Student, Department of Anthropology,
Aarhus University

Description:

Justice in its most basic sense refers to experiences of fairness and equality and is closely related to morality and ethics. The ways in which individuals, communities and societies perceive, experience, and strive for justice are closely interlinked with - and instrumental to - quests for a good life. Justice is often associated with binary understandings of right or wrong, good or bad, fair or unfair. While some notions of justice focus on guilt and punishment, others emphasize elements of reconciliation and forgiveness. While these categories are often framed as dichotomies by scholars and practitioners, the ways in which they are asserted vary between local contexts and across different justice interventions. This panel explores examples of quests for justice and challenges prevailing binary perceptions in contemporary justice debates. It seeks to inspire a discussion of how we can engage with justice as a concept and how we ethnographically examine processes and perceptions of justice.

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Papers:

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<p>Petya Mitkova Koleva:</p> <p>De-spectacularised Justice: Reimagining the Role of Civil Society in International Criminal Justice</p>	<p>Sofie Budhoo Bjerregaard:</p> <p>Waiting in the social aftermath of Access to Justice</p>	<p>Clara Rosa Sandbye:</p> <p>Victim and Offender Stories – and how they are constituted, negotiated, and challenged in victim- offender mediation</p>
<p>Erika Skov:</p> <p>Making 'Justice' through Exclusion: Mexican neighbors' rejection of migrants and their quest for preserving the good neighborhood</p>	<p>Christian Gade:</p> <p>Embedded Distant Justice: Re-framing the International Criminal Court</p>	

De-spectacularised Justice: Reimagining the Role of Civil Society in International Criminal Justice

Petya Mitkova Koleva, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology and Center for Global Criminology, University of Copenhagen

The paper explores the emergence of new, civil society-led modalities for the investigation of core international crimes in response to the Syrian conflict. Empirically anchored in ethnographic fieldwork with the Commission for International Justice and Accountability, the paper illuminates the organisation's model of international criminal investigations as a de-spectacularised form of justice delivery. In contrast to advocacy-oriented documentation which leans on the spectacular, the CIJA model which is ethically bound by strict principles of confidentiality focuses on the collection of prima facie evidence which links those most responsible to crimes observed on the ground. As such the model articulates a radically new vision for the role of civil society in international criminal justice. In order to reveal the model as a de-spectacularised form of justice delivery, the paper situates CIJA's work in relation to the Syrian conflict that it addresses, the history of civil society organisations in the international criminal justice apparatus, and the role of spectacle in the field of practice. The paper thus clarifies the potential of de-spectacularised justice and its limitations.

Waiting in the social aftermath of Access to Justice

Sofie Budhoo Bjerregaard, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

With a focus on waiting time, the presentation explores how local social dynamics and perceptions of justice are developing long-term after the conclusion of the ICC's Access to Justice Project (AJP) in Odek, Uganda. During the trial of former LRA commander, Dominic Ongwen, the local community members had the opportunity to attend an array of outreach activities, allowing them to follow the court proceedings. Following the conviction, information has been limited to rare visits to the village by the ICC's outreach team and while the community members have been told that the court is working on a reparations scheme, they do not yet know which forms reparations will take, who will receive them or when. Thus, the community members effectively find themselves in a state of waiting where talks of 'discriminations of victimhood' and fears that the expected reparations will cause social disunity or maybe even future conflict are currently very present. I argue that the current negotiations of victimhood and justice, and the hopes, fears and expectations in the current waiting time are already impacting the social environment. The long-term implications of making international criminal justice as locally accessible as was done in the AJP could then potentially be counterproductive in improving the quality of life and creating sustainable peace in Odek if the following reparations process is experienced as unjust. This prompts the question: would it have been better if the trial had remained a more distant kind of justice after all?

Victim and Offender Stories – and how they are constituted, negotiated, and challenged in victim-offender mediation

Clara Rosa Sandbye, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Victim-offender mediation is one example of a restorative justice process which aims to repair harm, restore dignity, and ‘give back the conflicts’ (Christie 1977) to the parties involved that the criminal justice system has ‘stolen’ from them. Victim-offender mediation in Denmark is most often initiated on the basis of police reports, which include a description of the offense and a clear definition of who is victim(s) and offender(s) in the conflict at hand. But often the conflict between the parties presents a more messy picture. With this study, I investigate the dynamics of criminalization and victimization that occur through victim-offender mediation. Drawing on interviews with Konfliktråd coordinators and mediators who facilitate victim-offender mediation as well as situational analyses of mediations, my analysis is two-fold. First, I examine the narratives about victims and offenders that direct the functioning of the victim-offender mediation programme, and second, how the ‘conflict narrative’ and the roles of victim and offender are constituted, negotiated, and challenged in victim-offender mediation.

Making 'Justice' through Exclusion: Mexican neighbors' rejection of migrants and their quest for preserving the good neighborhood

Erika Skov, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

This paper presents the case of a group of Central American migrants from the LGBTQ+ community who were rejected by neighbors in an upper-middle class neighborhood in Tijuana, Mexico. The marginalization of Central American migrants and LGBTQ+ people in Mexico ties to historical, colonial processes of racial and gendered exclusion, and inequalities produced by the current migration and border regime. Shifting the perspective towards how neighbors in Tijuana conceived their rejection as a just practice however complicates the moral landscape around processes of exclusion. How can we deepen the anthropological understanding of processes of exclusion through an ethnographic examination of local notions of justice? By exploring how neighbors in Tijuana justified their rejection of migrants, this paper shows how local conceptions of justice were interlinked with a presumed entitlement to control neighborhood space based on moral and territorial belonging to a community of 'good' neighbors and citizens. The paper shows how exclusionist practices were not only acts of distancing and abjection, but also practices of civic sovereignty through which collective, moral and political subjectivities of 'good' neighbor-citizens were shaped and (re)enacted.

Embedded Distant Justice: Re-framing the International Criminal Court

Christian Gade, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Drawing on Paul Gready’s framework of embedded and distanced justice, Phil Clark has argued that the International Criminal Court (ICC) represents a problematic form of ‘distant justice.’ Based on data from my impact assessment of the ICC’s Access to Justice Project in the case of Dominic Ongwen in Uganda, which I conducted for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I argue that the ICC may more accurately be framed as a form of

'embedded distant justice' that combines both distance and embeddedness. The distance of the court was perceived as something positive by the large majority of my 3,000 local informants from Northern Uganda, which stands in contrast to Clark's findings. The court's embeddedness did, however, receive more mixed results. On the one hand, most of my informants appreciated the access and information that came with the court's embeddedness. On the other hand, my data suggests that the embeddedness may cause local trauma, conflicts, and disappointed expectations in the reparations process.

Sustainability Laboratory

Convenors:

Birgit Bräuchler, Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

James Maguire, Associate Professor, IT
University of Copenhagen

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen,
Associate Professor, Department of
Culture and Learning, Aalborg
University

Heather Swanson, Professor,
Department of Anthropology, Aarhus
University

Description:

The main aim of this laboratory is to develop ideas on how to generate environmentally sustainable academic practices. While there are many initiatives geared towards making anthropological departments 'greener,' there are few of a collective nature and even fewer that reach out to broader societal collectives engaging with the climate emergency. This laboratory aims to fill that gap by bringing colleagues together to discuss, experiment, and strategize around a common, yet locally differentiated, set of principles and approaches to the four areas mentioned below. Our ambition is to learn from each other's interventions (both successes and failures) in the hope of creating a more collectivized set of approaches that speak across departments, universities and society more broadly. The laboratory will focus on questions of sustainability in four different areas:

1. research and departmental practices,
2. education and supervision practices,
3. academic exchange (challenging established formats like conferences and developing new ones), and
4. community building (within and beyond academic organisations; with NGOs, activists, etc.)

We invite participants to debate and experiment with (provocative) ideas for one of the four areas mentioned above. Depending on how many participants we have, each group will discuss options, propose actions and visions, and then share their reflections. We will then open to a broader conversation including anthropology colleagues in leadership roles. As an outcome, we hope to develop overlapping visions and some concrete ideas or guidelines for more environmentally sustainable academic practices and exchanges, both now and in the future.

The *laboratory format* accommodates more people than a regular panel. Therefore, we invite anybody who is interested in pro-actively joining and shaping our discussions around the climate emergency and making our scholarly practices more sustainable! We are very much looking forward to seeing you there!

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What life? Whose good? Multiple quests in the green transitions

Conveners:

Matti Weisdorf, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Andreas Brandt, Postdoc, Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University

Description:

For some, the prospect of comprehensive green transitions heralds an unwelcome departure from the liberated lives and material comforts to which we, in the Global North, have grown accustomed. For others, it constitutes an opportunity to furnish or cultivate modes of living there are less extractive, but also more balanced, meaningful and perhaps even good.

The latter is no doubt an enticing proposition, one with which it is easy to sympathize for the anthropological community, but as Jessica Smith and Mette High (2017, 2019) reminds us in the specific context of energy, ethical sensibility permeates the everyday thoughts and practices of all sorts of people, whether they work in or support renewables, nuclear energy, or fossil fuels; whether they work in industry, legislation, or advocacy; whether they produce or consume energy (Smith and High 2019: 11). This panel asks what it would mean to take this seemingly banal point seriously. It encourages contributors to illuminate lives and testimonies of interlocutors who do not necessarily share our views of how the world should and could be, what kind of societies to pursue, or how to relate to environments and other forms of life. This would allow us to see that any quest for the good is a situated one.

Moreover, a suspension of the knee-jerk conflation of green transition quests with the good also frees us to ask ‘whose quests for the good life are relevant?’ and ‘what forms of life count as relevant in these quests?’ Such questions can obviously be brought to bear on regional contexts that, on a whole, are less privileged than the Global North, let alone lives in the North that are not as privileged as any hemispheric signifier might have us believe: What good and whose good is served by exercising taxes on gasoline or by the extraction of minerals needed for supposedly green batteries from Ghanaian mines? What and whose good is accommodated as people, cities, or municipalities execute landscape interventions in the name of climate adaptation? Importantly, who might be done a disservice?

As importantly in this respect are considerations of nonhuman life. What role does consideration of bees, beetles, and butterflies play in the political willingness to establish massive wind-turbine or so-lar parks? More generally, what does the flourishing of nonhuman lives mean vis-à-vis our desire to become independent from Russian oil and gas – and to mitigate global warming and climatic changes?

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Papers:

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<p>Sally Anderson:</p> <p>Green transitions as grey transitions</p>	<p>Line Vestergaard:</p> <p>Realizing an inclusive just transition with Doughnut Economics in the Municipality of Amsterdam</p>	<p>Kasper Tang Vangkilde:</p> <p>Doing Business Right: Regenerative Leadership in Corporate Organizations</p>
<p>Julie Nygaard Solvang & Henrik Vigh:</p> <p>Externalizing environmental harm: the transfer and transformation of electronic waste in Ghana</p>	<p>Christina Jerne:</p> <p>Breathing off-grid: Capitalizing on escapism and inaccessibility to repopulate remote Italy</p>	<p>Inge-Merete Hougaard & Kathrine Dalsgaard:</p> <p>Competing interests and the quest for multifunctionality</p>
<p>Anna Frohn Pedersen:</p> <p>'Finding life' in a gold mine. On hope, survival, and degradation.</p>	<p>Andreas Brandt:</p> <p>Experiences from an ethnographic living lab: From the 'lab' of flood management toward 'living' with floods in the city</p>	<p>Matti Weisdorf:</p> <p>On the Horizon. The lives of green energy in Bornholm.</p>

Green transitions as grey transitions

Sally Anderson, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Anthropology, DPU, Aarhus University

Standing in front of the Porjus dam, one of the oldest and largest power plants in Sweden, Nils Johan Utsi, a Sámi reindeer herder remarks to the camera that while most people see the dam as green infrastructure, he sees only lifeless grey cement. Grey too are the huge swatches of northern forests, clear cut and plowed under and the high voltage power lines marching across migration routes from mountain top wind parks to cities below. For Sámi reindeer herders, decades of 'transitions' to green energy production has drowned grazing lands, restricted reindeer migration routes, created rivers and lakes unsafe for transportation and given many a sense of deep loss and resignation. Paulus Utsi's moving farewell to the grazing lands of his childhood in the poem Guohttu eadnan, Bazedervan has become a symbol of ongoing loss and ongoing protest against what governments tout as pioneering feats of engineering - of constructing "reliable, safe and renewable" sources of energy in the 'wilderness'.

This paper opens three discussions. First, I juxtapose the hyped language of engineering feats of green energy construction in the 'wilderness' with pragmatic Sámi constructions of meahcci as seasonal taskscapes. Second, drawing on Joks et al. (2020), I present how the legal mistranslation of meahcci (S.) as utmark (N.) or wilderness (E.) constructs collective Sami taskscapes as unpopulated landscapes open to resource extraction and outdoor recreation for the common good. Finally, drawing on Hastrup and Lien's discussion of welfare frontiers, (2020) I discuss how green resource development linked to welfare state projects and crafted in terms equality, sustainability, livability and good governance, appears in Sápmi as a grey colonization of land, livelihood and cultural heritage. The paper reflects on how different conceptualizations of landscape, indexing contrasting understandings of both 'common' and 'good', gain and hold political legitimacy. It concludes with a question of whether notions of biodiversity and animal welfare have more political sway against grey-green colonization than the lifeways of a small indigenous minority.

Realizing an inclusive just transition with Doughnut Economics in the Municipality of Amsterdam

Line Vestergaard, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Climate crisis and ecological collapse demand huge systemic transformations with cities playing pivotal roles. In 2020 the city of Amsterdam announced the ambition to apply the Doughnut Economics framework in a down-scaled city version to approach the challenges inherent in circular economy and energy transition from a more holistic perspective attuned to social dimensions and addressing underlying structures – "otherwise we are just replacing one bad system with another bad", as the then deputy mayor expressed.

This paper explores how this economic vision for societal transition is realized, reworked, and challenged in municipal projects and processes in Amsterdam. Energy transition, circular transition, housing shortage, limited green spaces are all pressing agendas or quests encompassing ideas of the good, but how to approach the plethora of quests in an integrated way in a 17.000 people big organization and what does it exactly entail to work

holistically in a Dutch municipal context? Based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Municipality of Amsterdam, this paper will explore how all these agendas and quests can co-exist and sometimes merge. But also collide and even compete with one another e.g., the energy transition being prioritized over other transitions or the very present dilemma in Amsterdam between increasing housing or reducing material usage. These colliding quests create tensions and dilemmas which brings to the forefront questions of what the good is, which is negotiated in the work of my interlocutors working with different aspects of sustainability. This paper shows how working integrated and holistically is easier said than done, how sustainability and the good is constantly negotiated and how civil servants experience working in this context. But also, I explore which roles a popular framework as Doughnut Economics plays in realizing different quests and influence organizational ways of thinking about transitions.

Doing Business Right: Regenerative Leadership in Corporate Organizations

Kasper Tang Vangkilde, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

A popular saying has it that the business of business is business. While such a saying may very well indicate perceptions and practices that have contributed significantly to the many crises of the world, there are other indications today that things may be changing; at least in some spheres of business. This paper will explore what has recently been called “the dawn of a new leadership era”, currently gaining traction among a global community of leaders who, while still on the margins, make potent calls for a novel version of capitalist business, if not for the end of it. Under the concept of regenerative leadership, a number of ideas have converged to foster a field of leadership which aims to depart from the dualisms of Western modernity that is perceived to have separated humans from nature and mind from matter. Instead, leaders endorsing regenerative leadership strive to run organizations and do business based on principles that serve life; that is, to approach organizations as living systems, learn from nature’s cyclical rhythm of life, and embrace the interconnectedness of humans and non-humans. Drawing upon on-going research in this field of business, this paper will explore the moral ideals and “good” visions for doing business right – that is, the forms of good – that are promoted among regenerative leaders and, more broadly, business thinkers who seek to make business “good”. Also, the paper asks how these forms of good are staged in order to create widespread appeal around their distinct set of ideas for making positive change.

Externalizing environmental harm: the transfer and transformation of electronic waste in Ghana

Julie Nygaard Solvang, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen & Henrik Vigh, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Ghana’s position in the global order of things is currently an awkward one in environmental terms. Torn between green potentials and polluting practices, it stands out as an ambivalent entity. On the one hand, with strategic minerals aplenty, the country is quickly becoming a key player in the move away from carbon-based energy and a supplier of the resources needed for climate smart solutions. On the other hand, as a prime

node in the illicit movement of waste, Ghana stands as a global epicenter for the dumping of (toxic) waste and is consequently struggling with dire environmental pollution from it.

This paper investigates one type of such trade, namely the movement of electronic waste (e-waste) to the country. Building on recent fieldwork in and around Accra, the country's capital, it looks empirically at the way e-waste is shipped into the country and how it becomes part of the country's large informal waste management sector. Employing thousands of workers, this sector dismantles products into pieces and 'mine' them for any valuable remains in terms of metal scraps and electronic parts. In many ways this industry could thus be seen as part of a sensible circular and green economy as any remaining resources are extracted from the e-waste and exported out of Ghana to be reintegrated into the production of novel electronics – a circuit of recycling and reuse. Yet, in the process, large amounts of toxic parts of no value are left scattered on the Ghanaian ground polluting human- and waterbodies in the process.

Theoretically, the paper looks at the harm produced and uses a zemiological framework to explore the nuances of the trade. While the trade currently navigates the grey-zones of international rules and regulations – being illicit if not illegal – a focus on harm, zemia, enable us to move beyond the legalistic and zoom in on its social impact and environmental impact. While e-waste adds value to the local economy in a short-term perspective and does immediate good as an available way of making a living to the most marginal, the pollution that follows in its wake has long-term detrimental social and environmental consequences. Rather than a circular economy, the trade represents a critical circuit, a profit-driven and polluting process that masks the dumping of waste and externalizes environmental harm.

Breathing off-grid: Capitalizing on escapism and inaccessibility to repopulate remote Italy

Christina Jerne, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Italy is currently facing its worst demographic crisis since World War I. The most remote areas of the country, such as islands and internal regions skirting the Apennine Mountains, are the most affected by "brain drains" and drops in birth rates. Essentially, they have become ghost towns for old people and represent forms of human settlement that are on the verge of extinction. To counter this phenomenon, several villages and national policies are increasingly promoting these spaces through place-branding strategies that seek to attract migrants, specifically digital nomads, by capitalizing precisely on their remoteness in place and time. Villages have thus made the discursive transition to "smart villages" or "borghi," branding themselves by promising a space to breathe, disconnect from hectic city life, and detox by being in touch with "nature" and old, more "authentic" ways of living. Much like other forms of transitions framed within the idea of sustainability, this demographic project is only relevant for a select few; for the only kind of worker that in effect prioritizes slowness, remoteness, and breathing as relocation parameters, is the digitally literate, mobile, highly educated, middle/upper-class worker. However, it seems that the main challenge to attract these types of settlers lies in the capacity of these villages to offer Ethernet, fast and reliable public transport, and public services such as hospitals and daycares. All of these services, in fact, make life more convenient and in a

way faster. This paper explores the discursive and pragmatic discrepancies inherent in these relations of velocity that animate these visions of progress and the good life, and the consequences these bear for the types of repopulation desired and achieved. For it seems that for this targeted class of workers, the premise for slowing down is, in fact, some degree of acceleration.

Competing interests and the quest for multifunctionality

Inge-Merete Hougaard, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen & Kathrine Dalsgaard, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen/Danish Nature Agency

In recent decades, state and municipal actors have turned towards the concept and method of 'co-creation' to address the increasingly complex tasks in public administration. Recently, this phenomenon has entered the field of nature and landscape management, and citizens are now invited to engage in the development of their local landscapes. This raises questions of who is invited and whose interests and values are taken into consideration when 'the good life' in rural areas is to be defined. In this paper, we explore the dilemmas that public sector actors face when seeking to address climate and biodiversity challenges through landscape interventions in the form of nature management projects. In the context of a collaborative research project with actors from three Danish municipalities and the Danish Nature Agency, we interrogate the different forms and interpretations of 'the good life' that emerge in the process of co-creating the future rural landscape. While a current management trend seeks to embrace landscape 'multifunctionality', yielding space for both farming, recreation, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and rural development, individual public sector actors have different interpretations of the concept and emphasize different aspects when implementing projects. Moreover, local actors (farmers and other local citizens) have different visions of the good rural life and some contest the 'cobblestone biologists' ('brostens-biologer') ideas of what good nature is. While public sector biologists and nature managers seek to protect and enhance rare species and vulnerable nature types, farmers (and other local citizens) value the open views and well-trimmed fields, and understand the agricultural landscape as part of nature. Similarly, as public sector actors seek to promote the 'good rural life' by developing recreational opportunities in collaboration with local citizens, farmers feel trapped when other local citizens start to make plans for 'their' lands and landscapes. Finally, state-citizen dialogues and local land-use debates are saturated with ideas and values of what the good life of non-human species is, in particular those of grazing cows, rare plants and cherished bird species. Thus, various competing interests and values are found in the landscape, and new alliances and positions emerge in the process of co-creation. This may create conflicts and contestations, but also provide opportunity for new creative configurations of landscape co-creation.

'Finding life' in a gold mine. On hope, survival, and degradation.

Anna Frohn Pedersen, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In Geita, the soil is red and sandy, not different from many other areas in Tanzania. There is a difference, however. Underneath the red sand, there is gold. Women and men migrate to Geita to find employment, underground tunnels are dug, processing plants are established, and mercury is widely used in the process of extracting ore. Occasionally, gold rushes occur and in a matter of days, thousands of people rush to the area. Temporary houses and infrastructures are built, and without the pits dominating the landscape, the rush could be mistaken for a refugee camp. Plastic waste is piling up and the shafts and tailings are creating an uneven landscape dominated by holes and dirt piles.

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), defined by its rudimentary practices, is one of the most important non-farm rural livelihoods in the Global South, engaging an estimated 40 million people worldwide. For the people in Geita, gold is a prerequisite for food, shelter and school fees. ASM also spurs hope: as a young miner expressed it, ASM is a way to 'find life' and, when lucky, get rich. Besides supporting livelihoods, ASM activities provide the Global North with the minerals needed for a decarbonised energy sector. Yet, they do so while polluting and degrading landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa. As such, ASM activities simultaneously support and impede sustainability agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, scholarly attention has been given to how ASM can become more sustainable and just, including how to govern value chains and improve production standards. These measures, however, rarely account for the local perceptions of sustainability, justice and the good life.

In this paper, I explore sustainability and prosperity from the perspectives of ASM workers, asking how they envision a prosperous and sustainable future. I discuss how sustainability in Geita is about maintaining a livelihood and I illustrate how ASM produces not just one, but various futures, depending on where and how far we might look. Like many of capitalism's irregular livelihoods, ASM fosters hope, opportunity, hardship, inequality, precarity and degradation. These ambiguities are not irrelevant, I argue. They point to the structural inequalities on which capitalist value chains feed.

Experiences from an ethnographic living lab: From the 'lab' of flood management toward 'living' with floods in the city

Andreas Brandt, Postdoc, Department of Culture and Learning, Aalborg University

Living labs have gained increasing attention as a design research method for bringing emerging technologies and prototypes out of innovation laboratories and into authentic environments in society. While living labs are seen as a way to govern green transition and climate adaptation processes in cities, there has been little attention given to the social relations and knowledge produced by living labs in practice. This paper draws from a recent anthropological research project where two anthropologists worked conceptually and methodologically with a living lab conducted in the city of Vejle, Denmark in collaboration with public officials and urban residents. The background of the living lab was the municipality's initial plan of testing a flood emergency app called I-REACT. The purpose of the ethnographic living lab, as we ended up coining this "experimental

collaboration” (Estalella & Criado 2018), was to reconfigure the test of the app to call forth an investigation of urban residents’ experiences of combatting floods in their homes and communities. By articulating people’s mundane flood experiences and bringing this knowledge to the attention of public officials working with flood management in the municipality, the paper shows how we challenged certain assumptions about the practices and livelihoods of people affected by floods in Vejle. Based on our attempt to work ‘with’ a living lab as a framework for ethnographic inquiry on the politics and practices of climate governance in Vejle, the paper raises critical discussions about the role of anthropologists in the production of ‘participation’ and what counts as ‘public goods’ in quests for transitions and climate adaptations in cities.

On the Horizon. The lives of green energy in Bornholm.

Matti Weisdorf, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Andel Energi (AE) is an unpopular entity on the southern coast of the treasured Danish holiday destination Bornholm. This is a recent development. In 2022, the largest energy provider in Denmark earwormed an advocacy for sensible energy consumption in light of the energy shortage – promotions so benign that one could hardly hold anything against them. Shortly after, though, AE launched a campaign in favor of green energy in general and wind turbines in particular. This move, safely anchored in a sense of the common good (i.e. a green energy future), challenged Danes to renew their aesthetic sensibilities, to accept wind turbines as part of the natural landscapes of the future. Indeed, it claimed that Danes need to rid themselves of the very (romanticized) idea of unperturbed nature, famously bequeathed through Danish Golden Age art works, if anything like Danish idyll is to be preserved for future generations.

This campaign has caused considerable ire on southern Bornholm, which currently face the development of a sizeable, much-hyped yet still fuzzy energy project, complete with countless wind turbines at sea, a bulky transformer station on land, massive cables, and possibly PtX facilities. For the way people see it here, AE – and the larger climate-industrial complex they represent – deliberately focus heavily on the aesthetic element of green energy plants; how they look and sound in particular, effectively dressing up any hesitancy or resistance to such plants as plain NIMBYism. Taking the case of the projected Energy Island Bornholm as a point of departure this paper shows that much else and much more is at stake. Deploying the notion of horizons, I explore how large energy projects such as Energy Island Bornholm – certainly do disturb vistas, but that they also muddle with the lives of the island’s inhabitants, human and nonhumans both, in rather profound ways. At the risk of taking the term too far, the paper proposes that green energy developments might even occasion a cross-species approximation of horizons (if not a fusion of horizons, cf. Gadamer 1975)

While the case of Energy Island Bornholm is a spectacular one, given its intended dimensions and its location with a particular and peculiar (political) history, the issues raised here go beyond the specificities of Bornholm and even Denmark. Indeed, the way that moral economies of green energy vis-à-vis local livelihoods – let alone the eco-authorities (Howe 2014) ascribed to climate mitigation and biodiversity respectively – develop and

interact are bound to condition the planetary transitions that we all face (albeit with very different perspectives and mandates).

Editors Meet-Up

In this MEGA match-making session we will facilitate meetings between participating editors and participants around ideas for articles, special issues etc.

Experimental Collaborations in Multimodal Anthropology

Conveners:

Karen Walторp, Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Steffen Köhn, Assistant Professor,
Department of Anthropology, University
of Copenhagen

Kenni Hede, PhD Student, Department
of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Description:

Current discourses on multimodal approaches in anthropology recognize media production as central to the everyday lives of anthropologists and their interlocutors, who now have access to the same means of representation and often share the same (if not greater) technological capabilities (Cizek et al. 2019, Favero 2018). Studying the increasingly media-saturated worlds of participants in ethnographic research inevitably generates data in various media, such as voice messages, images, social media posts, chat logs, and videos, that are predisposed to new forms of representation that challenge the primacy of textual representation and potentially create new forms of public scholarship that can engage both non-academic and local audiences and even change the very ways we do research. The new possibilities for research and dissemination of knowledge in the various media formats that digital technology offers allow us to capture the increasingly complex relations we form with our interlocutors and engage with them along media forms that they find relevant to their lives (Collins et al. 2017, Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón 2019, Pink 2021, Westmoreland 2022).

In this panel, we want to discuss how this democratization of media production enables us to enter into new “experimental collaborations” (Estalella and Sánchez Criado 2018) with our research participants that originate from - and invite the audience into - the complex media worlds they inhabit. We will explore how such collaborations might go beyond the neat division of roles between researcher and researched and the established modalities of both distant and engaged participant observation that characterize conventional ethnographic research.

Our panel, however, will also point to the limits of such collaborations. Multimodal methods are not collaborative by default, and collaboration itself risks replaying neocolonial power relations if invoked only for virtue signaling to Western audiences (Lea & Povinelli 2018). Horizontal modes of collaboration, which are guided by an ethics and aesthetics of accountability (Ginsburg 2018) and in which all parties have a real stake, often require the negotiation of divergent interests and conflicting goals (Nayar & Kazubowski-Houston 2020). We will debate how multimodal anthropologists can live up to these ethical demands by sharing authorship and discursive authority and involving participants not as token collaborators but as co-creators.

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Papers:

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<p>Karen Walторp:</p> <p>Diplomatic Rebel: Experiments in Multimodal Co-Creation in an Afghan-Danish Collective</p>	<p>Kenni Hede:</p> <p>Ethnofaction: Negotiating the future present through 'Collaborative Interfaces'</p>	<p>Steffen Köhn:</p> <p>Collaborative Interventions: Reflections on producing the ethnographic video game PAKETOWN.</p>
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Diplomatic Rebel: Experiments in Multimodal Co-Creation in an Afghan-Danish Collective

Karen Waltorp, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Diplomatic Rebel is a RolePlaying Game for Smartphone and Tablet. You play the 16-year-old 'Ariana' navigating the Afghan and Danish cultures, earning both Rebel points and Diplomatic points along the way as you create a space for yourself without burning bridges. You are invited to a party at your Danish high school and you need your Afghan parents' consent. One of several dilemmas that might seem simple but, as you will figure out along the way, is more complex than appears at first sight. You have to navigate different expectations and norms to earn points in the game, as you move across two worlds; the physical and the metaphysical (alam al-mithal, Corbin 1969, Marks 2016). The portal between the two is an Afghan carpet, which you get transported to when your magic lajwar amulet lights up. In the metaphysical world you obtain wisdom in the form of globes that light up – these globes of wisdom help you to understand and navigate your physical world. You are a success in the game if you reach a better understanding with your family, friends etc., and have learned something about yourself, your roots and your everyday world.

This collaborative multimodal- and multi-platform research experiment combines research-through-collaborative-filmmaking, co-authorship, and most recently a digital game from the ARTlife Film Collective (2021). New methodologies and conceptual frameworks are emerging (Cizek et al. 2019, Pink 2021) in response to the growing digital dimension of our everyday life, which poses important epistemological questions in terms of what and how we can know as anthropologists. The digital media ecology has the potential to both threaten and nurture the role social sciences and humanities play in democratic societies – and in terms of the (de)escalation of othering and conflict (Bateson 2000). How might we produce and share ethnographic knowledge in a world where people receive and circulate images, information, and knowledge via digital devices on an unprecedented scale?

Ethnofaction: Negotiating the future present through 'Collaborative Interfaces'

Kenni Hede, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In this presentation, I will reflect on my involvement in the *Imaginational Labor* (Ho, 2009) of developing a Danish folk high school in Gellerupparken on the western outskirts of Aarhus in Denmark – an area designated by the Danish government as a disadvantaged housing estate. Since 2017, a collaboration involving community members, municipality employees, and a diverse group of consultants and specialists has embarked on a journey to bring to life a Danish folk high school in the heart of Gellerup. Since then, the project has navigated a perpetual state of uncertainty, existing in a liminal space between a conceptual aspiration and a tangible actuality. Even now, in 2023, the realization of Gellerup Højskole remains more or less as undetermined as it was at the project's inception. With this presentation, I intend to discuss, through ethnographic examples, how my application of a multimodal research design was recognized and

adopted by my interlocutors and how it became a way for *us* to manifest, albeit momentarily, tangible reference points in time and space of ephemeral moments of Gellerup Højskole. This was done through a series of co-created multimodal products such as video portraits, an art installation of analog photographs, and several shorter films. These products came to represent actual instances of the folk high school project in Gellerup and the imaginational labor comprising this work by its participants. In order to unpack the significance of these multimodal collaborations as references pointing toward a shared Future Present (Luhmann, Morgner, & King, 2017), I propose a line of investigation in this presentation that tentatively develops the framework for two novel concepts, namely, *Collaborative Interfaces and Ethnofaction*.

Collaborative Interventions: Reflections on producing the ethnographic video game PAKETOWN.

Steffen Köhn, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

In this presentation, I will discuss the production of my ethnographic video game, PAKETOWN, as a "collaborative intervention." The aim of this project was to engage with the alternative Cuban media ecology, not merely as an outside observer, but to explore new modes of shared anthropology and experimental approaches to producing and communicating anthropological knowledge.

PAKETOWN is a documentary mobile phone video game created in collaboration with ConWiro, an independent software studio based in Havana, and Nestor Siré, a Cuban media artist. The game is the result of extensive research on the alternative media distribution networks developed by Cubans to compensate for their limited internet access. It invites players to immerse themselves in the informal Cuban media sector through a business simulation game format, allowing them to experience the role of entrepreneurs. Despite the stringent regulations on the Cuban private sector, games like Pizza Syndicate, FarmVille, and Resort Tycoon enjoy immense popularity and are widely consumed and shared offline.

By co-producing a video game aimed at the local Cuban audience, I had the opportunity to delve into the everyday realities of independent Cuban media practitioners. This immersion provided me with unique insights into the intricate economic, social, and political frameworks they navigate. Through collaboration with these specialists, I firsthand encountered the challenges of acquiring scarce technical equipment or materials, adapting to restrictions on internet access, and navigating interactions with Cuban state representatives. These experiences yielded valuable fieldwork data, shedding light on the opportunities, limitations, and power dynamics faced by my interlocutors as both citizens and entrepreneurs within the predominantly constrained private sector.

Working with the Bad Guys of the Good Life: Biosocial relations in microbial anthropology

Conveners:

Eimear Mc Loughlin, Postdoc,
Department of Anthropology, Aarhus
University

Jens Seeberg, Professor, Department of
Anthropology, Aarhus University

Description:

Anthropological engagements with microbial worlds highlight the unbounded nature of bodies, human and otherwise, interrogate the implications of microbiological concepts on what it means to live amidst microbes, and reconceptualizes how we think about the troubled ecologies we move in. Microbial worlds have been primarily engaged as 'bad life', as pathogens to be aggressively controlled with e.g. disinfectants, antibiotics and pesticides, what Jamie Lorimer describes as an antibiotic approach based on practices of purification, rationalization, and sanitization. These dominant interventions, designed to promote 'good life' are increasingly causing more problems than they solve, with for example deaths from antibiotic resistance to rise to 10 million by 2050. The illusory promises of purification call for more nuanced understandings of microbial biosociality. Anthropological engagement with microbial worlds was relatively limited to a niche of medical anthropology prior to the corona pandemic; it exploded during and following this event – at least if 'microbial' is stretched to also cover 'viral'. The notion of 'biosocial' has worked as an important lens through which to understand the human condition beyond the empirical category of organisms as distinct and sociality as analytically specific to one species. This panel insists on the continued anthropological engagement with microbial worlds as a vital and methodologically exciting part of multi-species ethnography beyond (but not excluding) the pandemic event.

The panel invites contributions that are based on ethnography of more-than-human biosocial entanglements and engagements with our microbial world. From the pathological to the symbiotic, from the antibiotic to the probiotic, what are the good, the bad, and the ugly relations that proliferate in microbial worlds?

We hope that discussions will stimulate theoretical and methodological work that furthers our understanding and conceptualizing of the concept of biosocial. Thus, inspired by the unbounded movements of microbes across space and time, we welcome audience participation as we collectively work through, figure out, and contemplate how the microbes we are working with are challenging us to think and work differently. Reflecting the wider creative impulse of MEGA seminars, this panel will include artefacts from research projects, not biologically infectious but creatively transmissible, through which the murkiness of biosocial relations in microbial worlds can be explored.

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Papers:

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<p>Rashmi Upadhyay:</p> <p>Antibiotics as a biosocial technology in hazardous steel production</p>	<p>Anisa Bhutia:</p> <p>Shitty Fieldwork: Reflections on Awkward Cultures and the Bio-Social in Eastern Nepal.</p>
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Antibiotics as a biosocial technology in hazardous steel production

Rashmi Upadhyay, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Aalborg University

This paper explores on the rising use of antibiotics among different health care providers in Nepal. Based on the six months of ethnographic fieldwork among migrant workers in a steel factory, I explore the role of antibiotics as a biosocial technology that enables steel production in a context of hazardous work conditions.

I argue that the network of health care providers including referral hospitals plays an important role in prescribing antibiotics for work-related injuries among the workers.

The study will furthermore explore how in the factory clinic, the precarious workers are exposed to antibiotics and painkillers consumption on a regular basis for the treatment of common illness like cold, body ache, stomachache, etc. to be able to function in the workplace.

Shitty Fieldwork: Reflections on Awkward Cultures and the Bio-Social in Eastern Nepal

Anisa Bhutia, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

This paper delves into biosocial relationality in the borderlands in Province 1 of Eastern Nepal. Through fieldwork in a tea estate, I elaborate on the entanglements of cultures of the indigenous population and their outlook on researchers. Further after the examination of the fecal samples, this paper aims to develop the interrelation between the bacterial and the social cultures. As of now through the specific case of stool collection, I show how different cultures and people understood shit. Some related it as the part of their body almost as an extension and for some it was something dirty. Most participants were receptive whereas some outright rejected giving us the samples. Phrases like, 'Ask us anything but not that kind of thing (referring to shit)' were common in the group of young girls who denied giving the sample.

In this study, we engage with microbiologists, anthropologists, pharmacologists, and others to understand the bio-social nature of different worksites. For the current piece, this paper focuses on the process of stool collection beginning with strategies that were developed before the arrival of the lab team. Ultimately, I argue that a collaborative and participative method of engaging with various components of the field forms the core of any interdisciplinary study. The main part of the current phase during stool collection in the field were the participants, lab team and the ethnographer.

Poetics of Plurality: Imagistic Defrostings of The Good Life

Conveners:

Lotte Meinert, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Katrine Pahuus, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Cheryl Mattingly, Professor, Departments of Anthropology & Philosophy, Aarhus University & Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California Los Angeles

Description:

In this panel we invite papers, presentations, and imagistic contributions that engage in critical phenomenological defrosting and rethinking of the concept of the good life. We take inspiration from Hannah Arendt's ideas about defrosting concepts with thinking (2003) and we suggest doing this with ethnographic "perplexing particulars" (Mattingly 2019) that may help us destabilize "frozen" political and normative perceptions of the good life. How might we better envision a poetics and ethics of plurality, uncertainty, alterity, or something else altogether? We also look to Edouard Glissant's (1997) proposal for a poetics of relation that insists on a "right to opacity" and eschews reductive "transparency," or the illusion of certainty. With the concept of the imagistic, we refer to the growing field of anthropology exploring how images may "express without formulating" (Foucault in Stevenson 2014), and manifest hauntingly (Desjarlais 2019, Gammeltoft 2014, Louw 2018), or demonstrate forms of care (Mattingly and Grøn 2022, Meinert 2022). Finally, we ask about the quality of critique and insight that might come out of this imagistic phenomenology and defrosting of canonical concepts we hold in our analytical repertoire.

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Papers:

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<p>Cheryl Mattingly:</p> <p>Category Trouble: An Errant Phenomenology of Stigma and Care</p>	<p>Lotte Meinert:</p> <p>Time Poetics, Aging and Plurality in the Ik Mountains</p>	<p>Katrine Pahuus:</p> <p>Defrosting the Concept of Mission</p>
<p>Ida Hartmann:</p> <p>The smiling face of Islam: Serving God through situated exemplarity</p>	<p>Gitte Vandborg Rasmussen:</p> <p>Everyday mysteries of ADHD in family temporalities</p>	<p>Anne Toft Ramsbøl:</p> <p>Family life with autism – images of distance and nearness</p>
<p>Mette Lind Kusk:</p> <p>Fieldwork Drawings as Imagistic Expressions of The Good Life</p>	<p>Marie Rask Bjerre Odgaard:</p> <p>The Image of the Gap</p>	

Category Trouble: An Errant Phenomenology of Stigma and Care

Cheryl Mattingly, Professor, Departments of Anthropology and Philosophy, Aarhus University & Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California Los Angeles

Could an errant version of critical phenomenology help us see spaces of potentiality even in the grimmest circumstances? Could it help “defrost” our understanding of a concept like stigma? Stigma theory foregrounds the work of social identity categories in creating shaming dramas. It is a very familiar – a too familiar – concept within critical theory. How to think it anew? To disturb its certainties? “Defrosting” is a metaphor borrowed from Hannah Arendt. She pondered the problem that dominant political and moral concepts freeze when they become canonical. She asked: what kind of thinking is required to address this? Within the Black radical tradition, Glissant, Moten, Sharpe and others also raise Arendt’s problem, but from a more poetic direction. I suggest an errant critical phenomenology that builds upon this work but foregrounds ethnography’s “perplexing particulars.” More concretely, I ask: How do African American mothers (and grandmothers) nourish personal and familial moments of potentiality that disturb normative expectations? How do they try to combat stigma by cultivating these moments, offering elsewhere worlds that live alongside, even within, ordinary life? My focus is on small domestic landscapes that interrupt the dominant sociopolitical order and its stigmatizing gaze.

Time Poetics, Aging and Plurality in the Ik Mountains

Lotte Meinert, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

How do being a ‘time being’ and ideas about ‘the good life’ change with age, technology and history?

This paper challenges one of our favourite concepts: ‘the good life’ for its tendency to focus on the singular and pure, leaving the plural and mixed as a kind of second rate good. I follow the elder seer Komol in the Ik mountains to explore how changing time measures influence the experience of time, aging and ‘the good life’. Komol’s gathering of several different ways of doing and measuring time and age points to ‘the good life’, not as a singular neat timeline, but rather as a carrier bag of multiple embodied tempi and cumulative ages. This good has a creolised and shifting plural quality. With the term time poetics, I draw attention to the creative aspect of giving form to varieties of temporal experience and the value of keeping plurality as a central part of the dynamics.

I dwell on a perplexing particular word and expression of *bas*, with which Komol points to something being over and readiness for the new. The value of the expression *bas* challenges frozen prototypes of elders as nostalgic and emphasizes their pragmatic natality and value pluralism. It may help us defrost our thinking and ideas about ‘the good life’ as a singular phenomenon. The practice of saying *bas*, and another common practice of keeping quiet, could be regarded as imagistic figures that express (without formulating) a form of care that preserves the right to opacity and a poetics of plurality.

Defrosting the Concept of Mission

Katrine Pahuus, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

For at least 20 if not 40 years, Danish Pentecostal missionaries have lived in Tanzania to bring people to God. Some do this through agricultural development, primary education, or food distribution and all of them engage in evangelism. All of the activities are considered form of missionization. This paper explores the activities of missionary couples in Tanzania to think differently about what mission in a charismatic Christian context actually is. I offer different images of how morality, or what Jason Throop terms moral moods, is carried in certain activities, encounters and materialities. By attending to the ways that not only words of evangelism give witness to the good life, as one together with God, I attempt to help defrost the concept of mission.

The smiling face of Islam: Serving God through situated exemplarity

Ida Hartmann, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Within Hizmet, a once flourishing Sunni Muslim community in Turkey, the primary way to serve God and prepare for the afterlife goes through the performance of exemplarity. While this draws on the longstanding Islamic tradition of imitating the Prophet, for people in Hizmet exemplarity also entails showing “the smiling face” of Islam to the world. Concomitantly, what it means to serve God through exemplary conduct shifts according to context and audience and can, in some situations, entail downplaying or even transgressing Islamic norms. Zooming in on a particularly perplexing performance, this paper explores exemplarity as a modality of virtue ethics that is internally plural and constituted in dynamic relation to concrete Others and to broader societal tensions and transformations. Exemplarity, as it is understood and practiced among Hizmet members, thus offers an ethnographic ground for unsettling – or defrosting – the binary between transcendence and immanence that structures much anthropological thinking and writing about ethics.

Everyday mysteries of ADHD in family temporalities

Gitte Vandborg Rasmussen, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Inspired by ideas about the value of perplexing particulars, this paper investigates aspects of well-being and the good life in families living with ADHD. On the one hand ADHD is a diagnosis - a fixed category with clearly defined core symptoms and corresponding evidence-based treatment. On the other hand, ADHD is experienced as a heterogeneous condition differing from individual to individual and changing over lifetime and from one social situation to the next. This heterogeneous aspect of ADHD is challenging in family life, because sometimes medicine works - sometimes it does not, sometimes time schedules work - sometimes they do not. This phenomenon is what I term everyday mysteries. Drawing on Kenny’s case, I will elaborate on these mysteries.

Kenny is diagnosed with ADHD, he is a truck driver, and when he rides his truck, his ADHD disappears. When he lost his temper as a kid, his father took him driving in his truck for days, and Kenny’s ADHD quickly calmed down. Kenny has a tattoo on his arm with his

family members and his truck. Kenny's case raises many questions, and in this paper, I ask: What can we (re)learn about ADHD from looking into the perplexing particulars of Kenny and his family situation?

I will explore this with a particular focus on time. Experiences of living with ADHD are closely connected to experiences of time, e.g., being too fast/too slow, having decreased sense of time, experiencing lack of time/too much time. I take temporality as my analytical starting point when investigating the dynamics and well-being in the families. Examining ADHD from a family systemic perspective, through perplexing particulars of everyday mysteries in the families, I hope to contribute to defrosting the concept of ADHD or help keep the concept of ADHD dynamic and alive.

Family life with autism – images of distance and nearness

Anne Toft Ramsbøl, PhD Student, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In this paper, I present ethnographic pieces and preliminary analytical thoughts from my PhD project, 'Family life, autism and adolescence in the 21st Danish Welfare State'. The ethnographic pieces, I will present, offer perplexing images (Grøn & Mattingly 2022) of uncertain relationships between distance and nearness in families living with autism. In several of the families, I do fieldwork with, it seems that different kinds of distance - keeping distance or being distant from each other are important aspects of how to do family life and family relations. I ask what might 'The good' (Robbins 2013) family life look like in different terms than the idealized, "Family of Denmark - as a site of intimacy, coherence, sameness, and "hygge" (coziness) (Rytter 2010)? Thinking with Rupert Stasch's work on kinship in West Papua, where distance and avoidance is understood and practiced as essential parts of enacting kinship relationality (2009), and Lisa Gunther's formulation of an ethics of dwelling (2002), I reflect upon what the role of distance in family life with autism might be. I suggest that distance might be understood as a quality by which forms of nearness and meaningful or 'good' ways of being together can emerge in kinship relations and family life with autism.

Fieldwork Drawings as Imagistic Expressions of The Good Life

Mette Lind Kusk, Postdoc, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

In this paper, I explore how ideas about the good life can be captured and expressed in fieldnote sketches and drawings made by the children I work with and myself, as part of an ongoing fieldwork among UN quota refugees from Congo recently resettled in Denmark. Drawing on the concept of imagistic inquiry (Grøn and Mattingly 2022), the paper unfolds the imagistic potential of such sketches and drawings, which both point to material and social particulars as well as to potentials, imaginations, and open-ended uncertainties related to the children's ideas about the good life.

The question pursued is not whether the drawings are 'ethnographically valid' in the sense of representing persons or things realistically or objectively. While this has been the aim of much ethnographic sketching historically (i.e. Carocci and Prat 2022: 4-6), it is rather the unfinished (Ramos & Azavedo 2016), fragmentary, and suggestive (Taussig

2011) character of fieldnote sketches and drawings I wish to highlight here. I argue that it is through their selectivity and pointing away from realist description that such drawings hold imagistic potential: by combining inner and outer worlds and relating to past, present, and future they may disturb or destabilize dominating ideas about the good life upon resettlement.

The Image of the Gap

Marie Rask Bjerre Odgaard, Incoming Postdoc, Aarhus University

This paper is thinking queerly about the existential uncertainties and lives of artists and activist in Amman, Jordan. Parallel to this, it thinks about the image of the gap. A gap that emerges when it is unclear what the good life or future might be. Through the image of the gap, I suggest a form of hesitation that allows us to dwell in the materiality of “ordinary” life, whilst developing concepts that express a certain analytical potential. The image of the gap and the slowing down and staying with uncertainty it suggests, has developed through years of fieldwork in and on living queerly, activism and artistic creation in Amman, Jordan. A sense that artistic and affective events or situations produce an excess and productive uncertainty that, due to our anthropological methodology and sensibilities, we are able to dwell in through the image of the gap. Even, or perhaps especially, when this excess does not visibly manifest as “legitimate” ways of living on a larger social or political scale.