

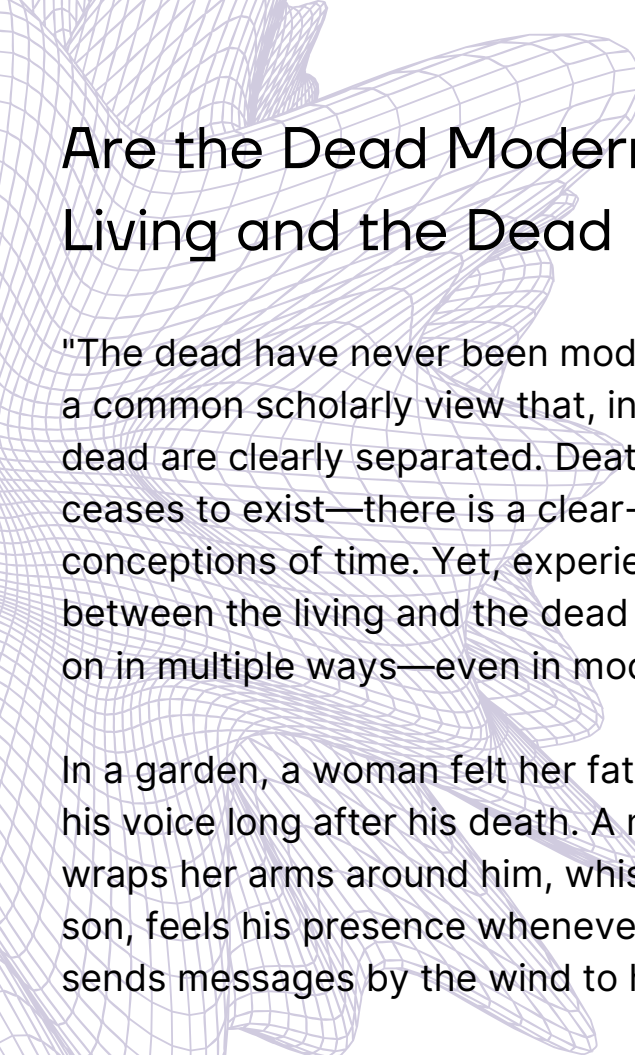
MEGA SEMINAR 2025

CO-EXISTING?

The Art and
Challenge of
Being Together

20-22
AUG

SANDBJERG
GODS



Are the Dead Modern? On the Co-Existence of the Living and the Dead

"The dead have never been modern," writes Stuart J. McLean (2017), highlighting a common scholarly view that, in Western, modern contexts, the living and the dead are clearly separated. Death is marked by a specific moment when someone ceases to exist—there is a clear-cut before and after, shaped by linear conceptions of time. Yet, experiences of loss and the ongoing relational bonds between the living and the dead suggest that the deceased may continue to live on in multiple ways—even in modern contexts.

In a garden, a woman felt her father's absence long before his passing and heard his voice long after his death. A man experiences how his deceased wife still wraps her arms around him, whispering as she did in life. A mother, having lost her son, feels his presence whenever a butterfly appears. And an elderly woman sends messages by the wind to her late husband, sensing his response.

This panel explores the co-existence of the living and the dead across what we usually define as separate realms. Through a multisensory approach, we dwell on the experience of being in the company of the dead. We are particularly interested in how certain places and phenomena evoke a sense of co-presence, where multiple forms of existence intertwine. We encourage contributions addressing this topic, for example by posing questions such as: How are relationships reshaped by death? How are presences and absences, the living and the dead entangled – through different places, landscapes, and sensations?

All formats are welcome, across traditional paper presentations as well as poetic, essayistic, audible and/or visual genres.

Conveners:

Trine Brinkmann, Anthropologist, PhD, Associate Professor, University College Copenhagen (TRBR@kp.dk)

Nanna Hauge Kristensen, Audio Artist and Anthropologist, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Co-existence in Institutional Contexts

This panel aims to bring together researchers examining the social imperative and dynamics of coexistence within institutional settings such as welfare and educational institutions, workplaces, cultural institutions, civil organisations and NGOs. By engaging research across different types of institutions, we seek to exchange insights into the processes, dynamics and challenges of 'existing together' within institutional spaces that is in contexts where people interact on a regular or daily basis and are bound together by institutional purposes, spatial constraints and cultural imperatives.

We explore the imaginaries of belonging and similarity but ask also, how difference, categorisation, and boundary-making emerge and develop in everyday interactions within or in relation to formalised settings. Drawing on theories on social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004), orientation and proximity (Ahmed, 2006, 2007), dual institutionalisation (Gilliam & Gulløv, 2014), and imagined sameness and invisible fences (Gullestad, 1992, 2002) we wish to explore how individuals construct and reinforce understandings of who they resemble and who they differ from, who they are orientated towards, can socialise and collaborate with, and who they want to avoid. What dynamics of bonding and adaptation take place, and what explicit or subtle distancing practices occur? How does the institutional framework and its social scripts and cultural imperatives of interaction influence these processes and the nature of co-existence in institutions? Can we identify common patterns across diverse institutional settings?

By addressing these questions, the panel seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social and cultural processes that shape morality, identities and social modes of existence within, and in relation to formal institutional frameworks.

Keywords: Institutional co-existence, similarities and differences, adaptation and avoidance, cultural imperatives.

Conveners:

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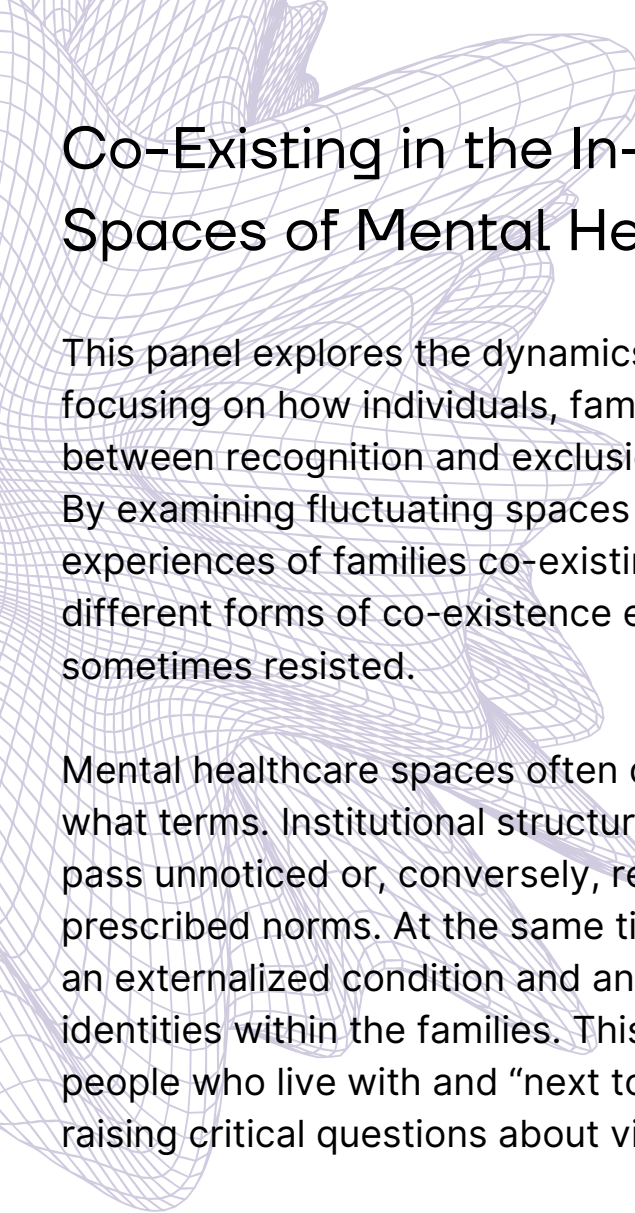
Laura Gilliam (lagi@edu.au.dk)

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Co-Existing in the In-Between: Navigating the Spaces of Mental Health Care

This panel explores the dynamics of co-existence within mental healthcare, focusing on how individuals, families, and institutions navigate the boundaries between recognition and exclusion, passage and obstruction, illness and identity. By examining fluctuating spaces within residential psychiatry and the lived experiences of families co-existing with mental illness, we interrogate how different forms of co-existence emerge, are negotiated, integrated, and sometimes resisted.

Mental healthcare spaces often determine who and what is allowed to exist and on what terms. Institutional structures may tacitly permit marginalized individuals to pass unnoticed or, conversely, restrict their access to care unless they conform to prescribed norms. At the same time, within families, mental illness exists as both an externalized condition and an ever-present reality shaping relationships and identities within the families. This panel examines how co-existence between people who live with and “next to” mental illness takes form across these contexts, raising critical questions about visibility, acceptance, and resistance.

Through interdisciplinary and multimodal approaches, we invite contributions that critically examine how mental healthcare and societal norms construct conditions of co-existence, both enabling and constraining certain ways of being. By questioning the limits of recognition, inclusion, and survival within psychiatric and familial spaces, this panel engages with the broader theme of co-existing as an ongoing negotiation of power, identity, and belonging

Conveners:

Natasja Eilerskov, cand.scient.anth. from Aarhus University PhD student at Roskilde University (natasjae@ruc.dk)

Sofie Heidenheim Christensen, cand.scient.ant. from University of Copenhagen PhD student at Mental Health Services in the Capital Region of Denmark (sofie.heidenheim.christensen@regionh.dk)

"Co-Exiting: The Social Lives of Extinction"

Death, as Robert Hertz asserted, is not a natural event but a social process. Can we extend this claim to the “double death” of extinction as well? How might extinction as a natural event also be understood as a social process, especially at a moment when the Anthropocene is no longer officially defined as a geological period but as a mass extinction event? Anthropology has a long tradition of studying complex events. How might we extend this tradition to extinction?

Extinction events are complex and contradictory by nature. In public environmental discourse, extinction is usually bad. But scratch that environmentalism even a little and the picture is more complex. In conservation biology, for instance, the eradication of undesired species is often an explicit aim in what has been termed “triage conservation”, an emergent field of environmental ethics. In public health, global extinction is often a goal, too. The eradication of smallpox has been celebrated as the greatest public health success so far, and numerous other microbes are targeted with elimination or eradication programmes. What are the biosocial dynamics surrounding such massive global efforts to achieve the extinction of some species while watching other more desirable (from a human perspective) species go extinct? And what may the biosocial consequences be?

This panel invites ethnographic studies of the often ambivalent nature of extinction events and processes, especially ones that are transdisciplinary and multispecies in nature.

Conveners:

Nils Bubandt (bubandt@cas.au.dk)

Jens Seeberg (jseeberg@aias.au.dk)

Stine Krøijer (stine.kroijer@anthro.ku.dk)



Co-existing through the lens?

In order to expand this year's theme on co-existing, we propose to establish an exhibition space for young scholars that explores framing, dilemmas, and positioning in visual representations. Can visual representation communicate ethical positioning through expression, intention, and relationship to lived experiences? This exhibition raises critical questions about the politics of representation, especially in research conducted in challenging environments or when representing interlocutors who are seen as powerful or engaged in illegal/illicit activities. We invite participants to reflect on the ethical complexities of representing individuals and groups whose power or social position challenges traditional notions of marginalization.

As photography condenses relationships, intimacy, and trust, the exhibition space explores what it means when photography becomes an integrated part of doing ethnography. As such, it touches upon the core of our discipline: how do we, as anthropologists, navigate co-existence with our interlocutors during and after research? How does framing reflect our physical and ethical positioning? We invite discussions on the strategies by which we (visually) represent, on the idea of unimpeachable witnessing, on decisions that open some messages and foreclose others.

We invite PhDs and postdocs to participate in this exhibition space and discussions on visual representation. Please submit 10-15 photos (maximum 25MB in total) accompanied by a short statement (200 words) that responds to the call and explains the coherence of the submitted series. The photos should be part of anthropological research.

Conveners:

Felipe Roa Pilar, University of Copenhagen (froa@anthro.ku.dk)

Christian Vium, University of Aarhus (cvium@cas.au.dk)

Julie Nygaard Solvang, University of Copenhagen (julienso@anthro.ku.dk)



Depth and return: Rethinking possibilities and challenges in ethnographic research

The classic ethnographic fieldwork has as one of its central features co-existence with our informants in order to gain a unique insight into their way of living and existing. Contemporary data collection often takes diverse forms far from this approach. Today we collect data online, on social media, through delimited and focused interviews, through engaging with NGOs, private companies or public institutions as employees, consultants etc., where the co-existing is limited or at least takes a different form. Many of us also work in inter-disciplinary settings where different epistemologies, norms, and standards for doing proper research co-exist – sometimes side by side, sometimes in rewarding cooperations, sometimes in confrontation – in a competitive environment where resource allocation depends on fast delivery of high impact results.

However, our points of reference when it comes to quality in data are often still based in the more classical approach. The ideal is still to obtain a deep knowledge of our informants' existence and of our field, of being able to make thick descriptions, of learning 'the language' (national language, professional jargon, disciplinary discourses, social terminologies), maybe even get included as an insider and obtain some level of co-existence.

In this panel, we want to discuss how ethnographic research can be carried out in contemporary research environments, with innovative methods and with new ways of communicating our research and results. We want to discuss what is 'quality' in contemporary qualitative research? Can we set some standards, or can qualitative research not be standardized? Are our ideals still 'co-existence', 'deep' and 'thick' and is it meaningful to talk about 'our field' where recurrent visits deepen our ethnographic understanding? Or do we need some other quality markers for data collection, methods of analysis and communication of our results?

Panel format: Workshop with short presentations based on participant submissions.

Conveners:

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Ethnographic Salon

Writing about Lisa Stevenson's *A Proper Message*, Angela Garcia notes how the text "proceeds through vivid and fragmentary images: singing, dreams, listening, friendship, a child's voice on tape, to name a few," and cites Stevenson, who writes that these images "seem to have no end." Garcia reflects that it is not that there are more images, but that "each of the images Lisa offers us already has too much to say" (2017: 223). What if our ethnographic texts always spilled over like this? What if they refused neat conclusions and instead lingered, pulsed, accumulated, or haunted? For this Ethnographic Salon, we invite contributions that dwell in excess — of feeling, of anger, of bleakness, of repetition, of beauty, of silence — and stay with what merges when ethnography overflows conventional writing.

Building on the success of the last two MEGA events, we invite you to take part in the Ethnographic Salon — this year also in English (Danish presentations are welcome). We welcome poems, short stories, essays, or other formats, whether written for the occasion or released from their hiding place in the drawer. Classical "thick description" or ethnographic fiction — as you wish. Texts that keep interpretive possibilities open rather than striving for closure. Texts that provoke or charm the listener, or both.

We believe we can learn from art and literature and experiment with words in order to explore alternative ways of being alive in the writing.

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

Please join us for an unusual evening and a glass of wine. In 2021 and 2023, we had inspiring sessions with contributions from both PhD students and more seasoned participants. We hope this year's event will be equally enjoyable.

Let us know if you wish to read aloud or perform your work in some other way, by writing to:

Helle Bundgaard (helle.bundgaard@anthro.ku.dk)

Maria E. Louw (etnolouw@cas.au.dk)



From resistance to engagement: Within and over time

The process of turning resistance into engagement is incremental to transformative change. In our own research on green transitions and community building in various contexts, we see how acts of resisting towards governed initiatives do not end with rejection but often turn into engagement and proposed alternatives. In this panel we are interested in exploring how multiple modes of relating can co-exist and when and how transformation occurs.

On the relation between resistance and transformation, Lila Abu-Lughod asked in 1990: “[W]hat are the implications of studies of resistance for our theories of power? For at the heart of this widespread concern with unconventional forms of noncollective, or at least nonorganized, resistance is, I would argue, a growing disaffection with previous ways we have understood power, and the most interesting thing to emerge from this work on resistance is a greater sense of the complexity of the nature and forms of domination.” (p. 41)

From her argument that resistance should never be seen in isolation but entangled in complex structures of power, we take that transformation is not just fueled by opposition or support but may take form through more complex expressions – ones that we might attend to as forms of engagement.

In this panel we welcome ethnographic insights into a variety of different aspects, including ones that challenge the perspective laid out in our abstracted invitation. From mobilised resistance to everyday resistance, from rebellion to rejection, from dissent to imaginaries, from trauma to prospects, contrarian actions as constructive actions, we wish to explore the multiple expressions of these co-existing types of engagements. We also welcome contributions in different experimental as well as more traditional formats.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. “The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women.” *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (1990): 41–55.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/645251>.

Conveners:

Freja Bach Kristensen (freja.bach.kristensen@anthro.ku.dk)

Caroline Salling (csa@anthro.ku.dk)

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A Gossip Manifesto

We live in a social world profoundly shaped by gossip. From coffee-room whispers about one's work community to wild speculations about national politics at a dinner gathering, gossip is a taken-for-granted situated engagement through which we make sense of the peculiarities and uncertainties of our changing worlds. People seldom like to admit they engage in gossip, endowing the practice with a flavor of taboo, but as observed by Claudia Fonseca (2000: 41), in the South Brazilian neighborhood she studied, everyone knows that gossip is everywhere.

Some evaluate gossip negatively, dismissing and relegating it to malicious storytelling – and gossip may contribute to reproduce uncertainty and tear known worlds apart. However, others argue that gossip can not only be a vehicle of positive political change, a testament to words' perlocutionary force (Das 2006: 119), but also an ethics of mutual dependency and relational truth-making.

Gossip takes shape according to the different configurations of its form and content; where form designates the how – who you gossip with and how you communicate – content designates the what: is the object of the gossip a significant other, a political figure or maybe a non-human actor? To understand how to coexist with others in a heterogenous world, we must take gossip seriously. This includes being attentive towards its ability to inquire into ecological alterations, and its transformative potential in an era of profound polarization and hyperpolitics (Jäger 2024).

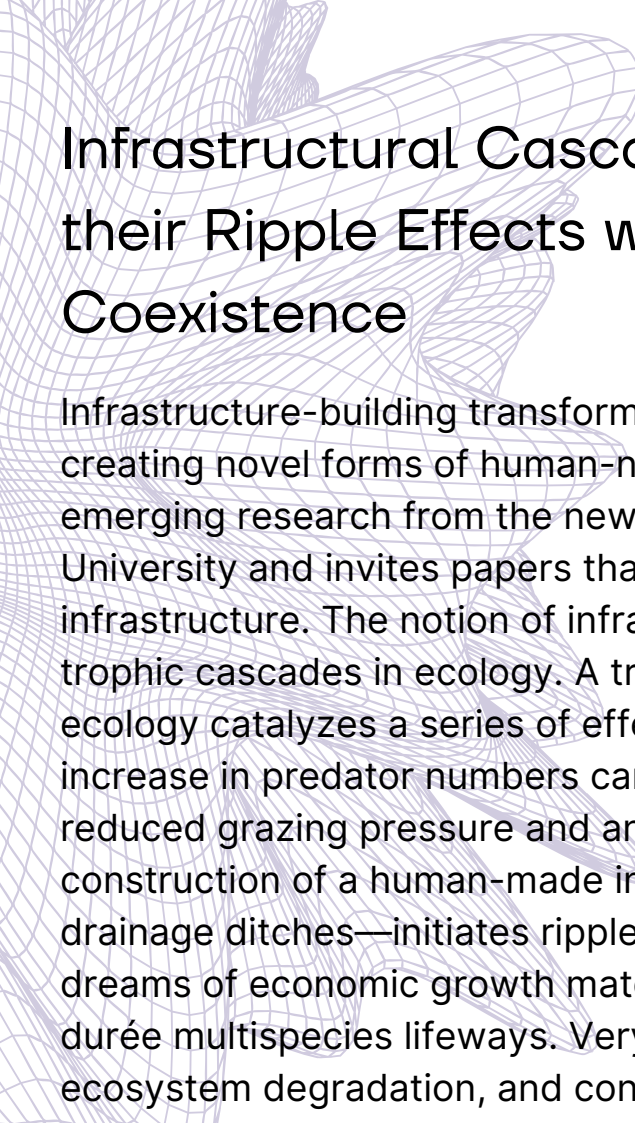
We invite participants to a round-table discussion where each contributor will present bundles of raw ethnographic speculation with relation to gossip from a wide range of ethnographic fields. We ask for abstracts of 150-200 words, for short (5-10 minutes) presentations, followed by a panel debate also inviting questions and commentary from the audience. Among other things we will explore ethnographic accounts from a Northeast Brazilian migrant community, Bolivian peasants, and wildfire victims in Central Chile to open a critical new space for relational gossip.

Literature

- Das, Veena. 2006. *Life and Words. Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Fonseca, Claudia. 2000. *Família, fofoca e honra. Etnografia de relações de gênero e violência em grupos populares*. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade
- Jäger, Anton. 2024. *Hyperpolitik*. København: Informations Forlag

Conveners:

- Frederik Andersen Tjalve (fatjalve@cas.au.dk)
- Marius Marques Siersbæk (marques@cas.au.dk)
- Fernanda Gallegos Gutiérrez (fan@anthro.ku.dk)



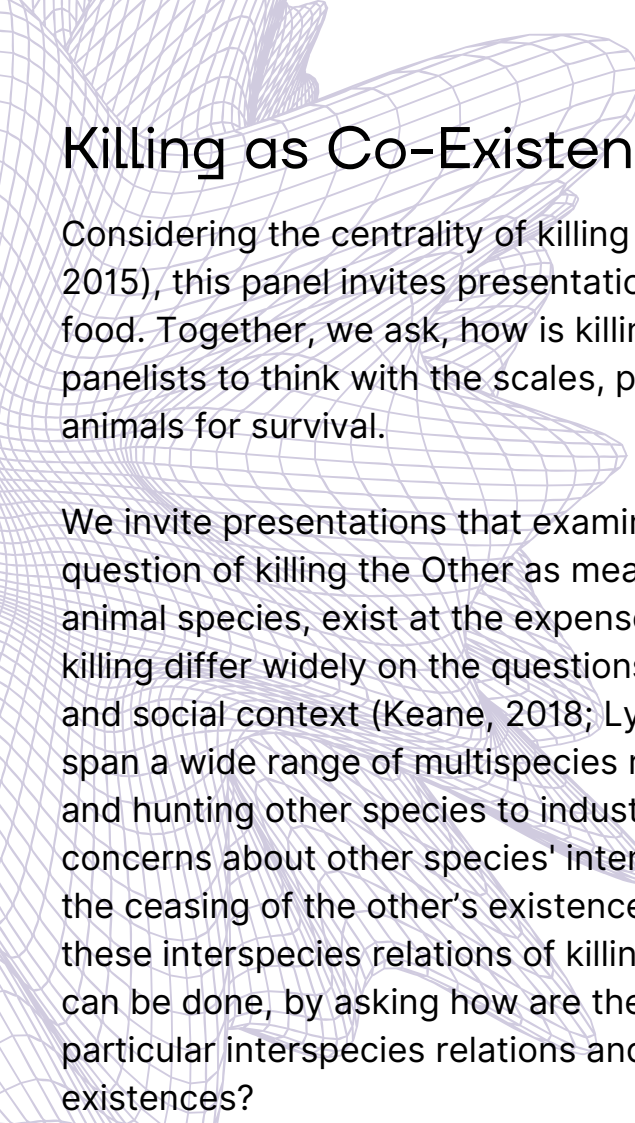
Infrastructural Cascades: Industrial Systems and their Ripple Effects within Landscapes of Coexistence

Infrastructure-building transforms landscapes, altering ecosystem dynamics and creating novel forms of human-nonhuman co-existence. This panel presents emerging research from the new Infrastructural Cascades (IC) collective at Aarhus University and invites papers that examine the cascading ecological effects of infrastructure. The notion of infrastructural cascade builds on the concept of trophic cascades in ecology. A trophic cascade occurs when a change in predator ecology catalyzes a series of effects through a food web. For example, an increase in predator numbers can cause herbivores to decline which results in reduced grazing pressure and an increase in plant growth. In an IC, the construction of a human-made infrastructure—a dam, a highway, a network of drainage ditches—initiates ripple effects within an ecosystem. Here, human dreams of economic growth materialize in infrastructures that clash with *longue-durée* multispecies lifeways. Very often this clash leads to local extinctions, ecosystem degradation, and conditions of strained livability. IC analysis has two components: an “upstream” component focused on the historical emergence of infrastructure and a “downstream” component examining its ripple effects within landscapes. Integrating upstream and downstream stories allows us to explore how infrastructure projects warp ecological landscapes and create new dilemmas of more-than-human coexistence. As such it encourages new modes of collaboration between social and natural scientists for mapping the ecological violence of a new superpredator: industrial humanity.

We invite papers from colleagues who wish to engage the IC concept and explore the challenges to human-nonhuman coexistence posed by infrastructural landscapes.

Conveners:

Zachary Caple (zcable@cas.au.dk),
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Sara Asu Schroer (s.a.schroer@ikos.uio.no)
Shuhei Tashiro (shutash@cas.au.dk)



Killing as Co-Existence?

Considering the centrality of killing to sustaining life itself (Haraway, 2008; Singh & Dave, 2015), this panel invites presentations that think critically with what it means to kill for food. Together, we ask, how is killing the other co-existence? This provocation invites panelists to think with the scales, politics, and affects of killing more-than-human animals for survival.

We invite presentations that examine a range of social and political attitudes towards the question of killing the Other as means to (co-)exist. As hungry bodies, humans, just as all animal species, exist at the expense of others' existences. However, these relations of killing differ widely on the questions of how and ought depending on historical, cultural, and social context (Keane, 2018; Lynge, 1992). We are interested in presentations that span a wide range of multispecies relations; from hunting societies' ways of living with and hunting other species to industrial slaughter of animals bred for food, and political concerns about other species' intentions on preying on human people. As killing involves the ceasing of the other's existence, this panel will discuss if and how we can think of these interspecies relations of killing as coexistence and from whose perspective this can be done, by asking how are the deaths of individuals woven into the continuation of particular interspecies relations and how are these entangled with other multispecies co-existences?

We encourage creative submissions, from poetry to multimodal works, that provide new ways of thinking through killing in various contexts, including religious and secular, rural and urban, industrial and domestic. Depending on the panelists, the panel format will include presentations that will then be followed by an open discussion with room for questions from the audience.

List of references

- Haraway, D. (2008) When Species Meet. University of Minnesota Press.
- Keane, W. (2018). Killing Animals: on the Violence of Sacrifice, the Hunt and the Butcher. *Anthropology of this century*, 22, 1-5.
- Lynge, F. (1992) Arctic Wars, Animal Rights, Endangered Peoples. University press of New England
- Singh, B., & Dave, N. (2015). On the killing and killability of animals: nonmoral thoughts for the anthropology of ethics. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 35(2), 232-245.

Conveners:

Emilie Jensen (e.e.jensen@cas.au.dk)

Eimear Theresa Mc Loughlin (e.mcloughlin@anivet.au.dk)

Re-Engineering Co-Existence

This panel explores how sociotechnical creativity, infrastructural innovations, and alternative imaginaries of the future reshape modes of being and living together. We are interested in how attempts at re-engineering co-existence materialise alternative futures through the use (or abuse) of emerging technological systems for innovative, experimental, and disruptive purposes. We understand engineering as a technical practice and a broader ensemble of world-making techniques: as deliberate efforts to configure social, material, and systemic arrangements in pursuit of new forms of co-existence. Further, while such efforts might be deliberate, their consequences remain unpredictable and their modes of existence beyond control. As such, this panel welcomes anthropological inquiries into how alternative forms of future co-existence are envisioned, contested, and enacted—whether through infrastructural projects, ecological interventions, algorithmic governance, or speculative design.

We ask: which imaginaries and aspirations drive such projects? Which technologies, experiments, and infrastructures are designed and deployed to bring them into being? And how do such efforts navigate the tensions between control and improvisation, design and emergence?

By emphasizing re-engineering, we are also interested in how such imaginaries are articulated in opposition to what is deemed undesirable, unviable, or threatening—and how these oppositions generate forms of governance, intervention, and critique? Thus, we also seek panelists to critically explore the political and ethical stakes, for humans and non-humans, of re-engineering co-existence in an era of profound uncertainty and transformation.

Panel Structure: The panel is structured as a discussion forum. Participants prepare a short case descriptions (5-6 pages) circulated in advance (also available at Sandbjerg). Each section is opened by a five-minute introduction by the author followed by discussion time shaped by the intellectual inclinations of the audience. It is presumed (but not required) that the audience has read the case descriptions, but everyone is welcome to participate actively in the discussions.

Conveners:

Lasse Bech Knudsen, PhD student, Anthropology, AU (lbk@cas.au.dk)

Thea Skjødt Engstrøm, PhD student, DPU

Frederik Vejlin, postdoc, STS, AU

Nina Vohnsen, associate professor, Anthropology, AU

REGENERATION: Bodies, landscapes, and being in (post)conflict times

War and violent conflict interfere radically with existence: They disrupt communities, scar landscapes, devastate infrastructures, and contaminate eco-systems; they maim bodies and souls, cut across time as intergenerational trauma, and endanger the survival of species. And yet, such disruption of material, ecological, affective and social worlds also etches new avenues for coexistence.

In this panel, we explore various processes of regeneration in the aftermath and alongside violent conflict. Controlled efforts of regeneration – reconstruction, repair, rehabilitation, reconciliation, recovery – happen alongside slower ecological processes, as wind, weather, fauna and flora reinhabit and reanimate the ruins of what once was. As a process, regeneration takes place in time, on several scales and across built environments, landscapes, borders, ideas and bodies of diverse species.

We invite classic and experimental papers and multimodal contributions that explore questions such as:

- What stories and histories coexist during and in the aftermath of wars and violent conflicts, and how do these shape the rebuilding of societies, infrastructures, political bodies, and ideas of the future?
- How do different understandings and measures of justice influence the regeneration of social trust and the rebuilding of community ties during and after conflict?
- How do animals and other species create spaces for existence and relations of coexistence alongside and in the aftermath of human wars and violence?
- How does trauma live on in bodies and across generations, and how does it reconfigure relations to others and the self?
- How can artistic and creative practices contribute to processes of healing and reconciliation alongside and in the wake of violence?
- What role do marginalized communities, such as refugees, displaced persons, or indigenous groups, play in the regenerative processes in and after violent conflicts?
- How do the scars of wars and conflicts – on bodies, landscapes, histories – form part of narratives of regeneration?
- Which role may anthropologists and the discipline of anthropology play in processes of regeneration?

Conveners:

Mads Daugbjerg (mads.daugbjerg@cas.au.dk)

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Speculative and Unfinished Practices

We are looking for papers that explore the nuanced, often under-theorized dimensions of co-existence as a practice, particularly in contrast to collaboration. We invite contributions that explore how co-existence operates as a relational mode that resists the pressures of productivity, instead embracing open-endedness, ambiguity, and the speculative. How does co-existence manifest in diverse cultural, social, and political contexts, and what forms of relationality does it engender? How might co-existence challenge or expand anthropological understandings of togetherness, temporality, and affect?

For the purposes of this panel we would like to focus on sensorial and affective dimensions, i.e., how do sensory environments—such as darkness, soundscapes, or tactile spaces—facilitate or complicate co-existence? How do emotions, intimacies, and affective labor emerge in these contexts? We also welcome papers that discuss the temporalities of co-existence. Questions include: how do different temporal frameworks—such as the afterlives of cultural productions, the lingering effects of historical events, or the slow unfolding of everyday life—shape practices of co-existence? Papers might explore how co-existence operates in contexts where time is not linear or goal-oriented, but cyclical, fragmented, or suspended.

We are very interested in teaming up with co-organisers from other universities! Email the conveners if you're interested.

Conveners:

Steffen Köhn (steffenkoehn@cas.au.dk)

Derek Pardue (dpardue@cas.au.dk)



I felt seen, listened to, or attended to with a sense of love: Towards an anthropology of and from the heart

In this workshop we wish to share and explore experiences of being seen, listened to, or attended to with love or kindness. We would like to learn about the circumstances and situations in which such moments emerge, how such experiences unfold, and the significance that such experiences could have for people. We are also interested in reflecting on the importance of such moments for the practice of anthropology and for anthropology as a discipline.

You are invited to present moments that were shared with you by the people you work with or moments in which you were present or that you experienced yourself. You can also share moments which you have heard or read about and that you find are characterized by qualities of love or kindness.

Furthermore, we welcome explorations on how it is to see, listen or attend to someone with a sense of love and kindness. We are interested in understanding how the modalities with which we perceive each other impact our perception and what might emerge through different modalities of perception. We invite oral, performative, written, filmic, photographic or any other mode of presentation that helps pass on the qualities and significance of the experiences you wish to share. We plan a format that can include presentations of different kinds and duration, and where short three-five minute presentations sharing a single moment are just as welcome as more conventional papers of longer duration. Please indicate your preferred format of presentation in your submission.

In the workshop we hope to be able to get a taste of such experiences of being seen and attended to with love or kindness, and explore what it does to us to focus on such experiences, investigate, and share them. We wish to approach the idea of comparative anthropology not merely as an intellectual and individual exercise but as a shared endeavor that involves whole bodies, our senses, and emotions. In other words, we wish to experiment with ways in which we can describe social worlds and express ourselves analytically from the heart.

Note on the structure of the workshop: The workshop will be divided into two parts:

Firstly, we see and listen to the descriptions of moments in which people express an experience of being seen, listened to, or attended to with love or kindness. We suggest that presentations focus mainly on describing what actually happened: how did people convey their experiences, what was felt, what significance did this moment have for this person (and/or for the anthropologist). Each presentation is followed by a moment of reflection to take in the description.

Secondly, when all presentations have been given, we take a round where participants can express how they resonate with the experiences that were shared. Based on this we proceed to a general discussion, reflecting upon what we learned through this process.

Conveners:

Bjørn Thomassen (RUC), Tine Gammeltoft (KU), Martijn van Beek (AU), Christian Suhr (AU)
(suhr@cas.au.dk)

(Un)holy alliances?

Format: Paper presentations (casual)

Since the birth of the discipline, ideas of 'alliances' – unions based on mutual interests and objectives – have been central to anthropological understandings of kinship and lineage structures. Alliances, however, are of course not limited to the realm of kinship, but occur across all kinds of political and social scales, and between all kinds of human (and non-human) actors. By emphasising shared strategic objectives, alliances often hold the potential to bridge gaps that otherwise appear insurmountable (between crypto bros and conservative Christians, or the humanities and 'hard' sciences, for example). What might peculiar, uneasy, or outright unholy alliances tell us about the fabric of the social world – or the practice of ethnography? Is there more to such alliances than 'strategy' and goal-orientation? At a time when the formation of unusual and unexpected alliances seems to be in fashion, this panel invites papers that reflect on the notion of 'alliances' as a specific mode of human co-existence.

Conveners:

Mikel Venhovens - Aarhus University (mjh.venhovens@cas.au.dk)

Jonas Strandholdt Bach - Aarhus University

Laust Lund Elbek - University of Southern Denmark

Felipe Roa Pilar – University of Copenhagen

What are you prepared to do about it?

An integrated part of our professional training and ethos as anthropologists is a firm belief in the possibility of making a positive difference or at least, of doing no additional harm to the people and places where we conduct our research.

However, we are often absorbed in conditions and contexts of global political tensions, warfare, climate change, extraction of natural resources, mass extinction, forced displacement, pandemics, injustice, racism, techno-fascism or crises of family, care or welfare... In this respect, ethnographic fieldwork not only raises questions around existence or co-existence, but also more fundamentally about the omnipresent risk of non-existence.

Anthropology has a strong legacy of involvement, engagement, and attempts at generating positive social change, or contributing to, if not save, then better the conditions for threatened life-worlds. Whether we call it “Applied-”, “Action-”, “Engaged-”, “Militant-”, “Mission driven- ” or “Activist anthropology”, we have always been inclined, encouraged and expected to be working towards changing the world in a better direction, but how do you do that, when there is no agreement about what a better direction is? What is the relationship between expected and actual outcomes? What intended and unintended consequences may research have for you or for the families, institutions, companies or communities you work with? And what do we, collectively and individually do about threats against research, here and abroad?

In this panel we invite papers that discuss how to handle the ethical, epistemological and existential paradoxes of “doing no harm” while attempting “to do good” in an accelerating and overheating world, that in many respects seems to have gone astray. If no positions are neutral, there are no places to hide, so “What are you prepared to do about it?”

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