MEGA SEMINAR
SANDBJERG, 24-26 AUGUST 2015

FINAL PROGRAMME

GENRES

MODES OF ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
Bjarke Oxlund, IA-KU, Heather Swanson, CAS-AU, Kristoffer Albris, IA-KU
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# MEGA 2015 Programme

## Monday - 24.08

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<tr>
<td>07.30</td>
<td>Departure with bus from Copenhagen</td>
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<tr>
<td>08.00</td>
<td>Departure with bus from Aarhus</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>Arrival and registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>Welcome by Mega Group (Stalden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.15</td>
<td>Panel 0: “Using Artistic Processes to Explore a Social Gathering of Anthropologists through Totemic Dialogue”, by Freyja Reynisdóttir and Arnar Órmasson. (Stalden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>Keynote: “How structuralism matters”, by Danilyn Rutherford (Stalden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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**Session 1**
- **Panel 3**: Business & Organisational Anthropology and the Blurring of Genres (Forpagter)
- **Panel 7**: The Anthropology of Moaning: Questioning the Triviality of Incessant Complaints (Brænderiet)
- **Panel 8**: Anthropology’s Enfant Terrible: Audio-Visuals, TransMedia and the Work of Knowledge (Enghuset)
- **Panel 10**: Social Media and Ethnography Genres and Subjects (1. Sal, Stalden)

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<tr>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>Pre-dinner drinks and mingling</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<td>21.00</td>
<td>Bonfire and happy times</td>
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## Tuesday - 25.08

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<tr>
<td>08.00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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**Session 2**
- **Panel 2**: Trans-Disciplinary Collaboration: Genre and Equivocation (Enghusets Mødelokale)
- **Panel 4**: Comparing Fieldnotes (Forpagter)
- **Panel 11**: The Ethnographic Genre of the Suffering Subject (Enghusets Mødelokale)
- **Panel 12**: Writing Intimacy, Sociography and Post-humanity: Inquiring Genres and Scales of the Anthropological Subject? (1. Sal, Stalden)
- **Panel 13**: Ethnography and Technology (Brænderiet)

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<tr>
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<td>13.00</td>
<td><strong>Session 2 (continued)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>15.00 Coffee and cake</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>18.00 <strong>Session 3</strong></td>
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<td>- <strong>Panel 1</strong>: Doing Anthropology within Medicine: Constraints and Opportunities (Forpagter)</td>
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<td>- <strong>Panel 5</strong>: Urban Ethnography – Still the Partial Story? (1. Sal, Stalden)</td>
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<td>- <strong>Panel 6</strong>: The Ignographic Turn – Steps Towards a Superficial Anthropology (Brænderiet)</td>
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<td>- <strong>Panel 9</strong>: Empathetic Oscillation and Non-linguistic Exploration (Enghuset)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>19.00 Pre-dinner drinks and mingling</td>
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<td>19.00</td>
<td>21.00 Dinner</td>
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<td>21.00</td>
<td>Dance and lounge</td>
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**WEDNESDAY - 26.08**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>09.00</td>
<td>10.00 Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>11.00 <strong>Keynote</strong>: “Genre-bending: drama in/as ethnography”, by Dorinne Kondo (Stalden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>12.30 <strong>Panel 0</strong>: “Using Artistic Processes to Explore a Social Gathering of Anthropologists through Totemic Dialogue”, by Freyja Reynisdóttir and Arnar Órmasson (Stalden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>13.00 Closing remarks</td>
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<td>13.00</td>
<td>13.30 Lunch</td>
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<td>13.30</td>
<td>Departure from Sandbjerg</td>
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By employing the concept of genres in its broadest sense, we allude both to modes of doing ethnography and ways of presenting ethnography. As we use it here, genre as a concept pertains to all the different stages of the anthropological enterprise: from the very conceptualization of an ethnographic endeavor, to the practices used to generate ethnographic material, to the representation and dissemination of anthropological insights in one or another form. Increasingly, these genres are being mixed and their boundaries are being crossed.

In many ways, this confirms – yet goes beyond – what anthropologist Clifford Geertz in 1980 prophetically dubbed “blurred genres.” In a short essay of the same title, he briefly projected some of the intellectual shifts that would pervade the humanities and social sciences over the course of the next decade, including the proliferation of disciplinary boundary crossings. Focusing on the analogies of game, drama, and text, he sought to devise new interpretive concepts for the study of culture and society, a move that brought the literary concept of genre into the realm of anthropological theory.

Not long after, the “Writing Culture” movement took off, prompting new experiments in ethnographic writing and textual innovation. Genre came to raise questions not only of “style,” but also of power and politics (i.e. the right to write culture). This historical and rhetorical critique of ethnography contributed to an important and self-critical period in the 1980s and early 1990s that changed our notions of ethnographic authority and ideas around ethnographic representation forever.

Although such debates and tensions have not wholly disappeared, the “crisis of representation” has arguably been replaced by efforts to produce ethnographies in novel ways that respond to some of the criticisms that were leveled against classic anthropological forms. Now more than ever, anthropologists carry out research at home, liaise and work jointly with scholars from outside the Anglo-Saxon urban centers, undertake collaborative research, engage in film and theater production, write fiction, and so forth. Moreover, the digital revolution has carried with it seemingly endless opportunities to enact ethnography in innovative ways, the full effects of which we are surely yet to see.

In the course of engaging all of this, anthropologists around the globe are carving out new ways of doing and producing ethnography. As anthropological forms are in flux, genre experiments proliferate. The aim of the MEGA Seminar 2015 is therefore to take stock of some of these new developments – what are the emergent genres of ethnographic practice, theorizing, and representation? How do the ever-increasing ways of producing ethnography affect the field of anthropology itself? What new genres might we bring into being?
HOW STRUCTURALISM MATTERS

Danilyn Rutherford

The wonderful thing about genre is that you can’t theorize it without performing it. I have selected a topic that forces me to do both in direct and oblique ways. How does structuralism matter? How does it still matter at this centenary, well past its heyday in anthropology and the other so-called “sciences of man?” In this talk, I go out on a limb and offer a forceful and somewhat perverse response to this question. Certain premises associated with structuralism are at the heart of some of the most interesting new work in anthropology and related fields. One part memoir, one part self-interested map of the lay of the land, my talk ends with some autoethnographic reflections on how the study of disability can contribute to debates over the nature of sign use and sociality. “There is nothing outside of language.” Structuralism might want to tell itself this, but it can’t avoid admitting awkward intruders of the sort I consider. These awkward intruders can lead us to a way of thinking about reality – and the genres through which we live it – as both material and relational – material because relational through and through.

Brief bio:

Danilyn Rutherford is professor and chair of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of two books: Raiding the Land of the Foreigners: The Limits of the Nation on an Indonesian Frontier (Princeton, 2003) and Laughing at Leviathan: Sovereignty and Audience in West Papua (Chicago, 2012). She is currently finishing a book on affect and technology in colonial state-building and is taking small steps towards her next project, which will be an ethnographic memoir on disability, subjectivity, and sign use in the United States.

GENRE-BENDING: DRAMA IN/AS ETHNOGRAPHY

Dorinne Kondo

Drawing from the forthcoming Creative Difference(s): The Production of Race and the Politics of Aesthetics in American Theater, the essay theorizes anthropological interventions in genre experimentation through Kondo’s play Seamless, the final “chapter” in her academic text. This engagement with creative modes of writing is the boldest extension of a career-long argument for “theory as enactment.” Seamless presents contemporary Japanese American identities and history, refracted through gender, generation, work, family, and the afterlife of the historical trauma of internment. A play about the unreliability of history and memory, the (im)possibility of knowing the past, Seamless attempts to move audiences intellectually, politically and emotionally. It performs the book’s argument against the “postracial.” If history is
not even past, are we “over” race? The essay spotlights the theoretical implications of dramaturgical (auto)critique, the position of playwright as ethnographer, and the theatrical bending of genre.

Brief bio:

Dorinne Kondo is Professor of Anthropology and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. She is the author of Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace, 1990, and About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater. A playwright in addition to an academic, Kondo engages in genre-bending in her forthcoming book, Creative Difference(s): The Production of Race and the Politics of Aesthetics in American Theater, by combining critical analysis with one of her own theatrical scripts.

The book combines long-term, participatory research in the theater world (as dramaturg, playwright, “object” of representation, student in acting class, scholar, and racialized spectator) with a critical perspective on theater as a site for the production of race on stage and backstage. An anthropological ethnography of American theater, the book shifts the theoretical spotlight to creative process as cultural work, inextricable from structured inequalities and political economy. I foreground the work of artists of color Anna Deavere Smith and David Henry Hwang, who address urgent issues of race through cross-racial performances and aesthetic forms that bend genre. They disturb our assumptions about cultural production as the representation of the real as brute facticity. More radically, I argue that mainstream theater’s aesthetic forms—Aristotelian structure and the discourses of the human and of universality—are themselves imbued with racialized power relations. The book’s boldest innovation is to include my play Seamless, a comic drama that explores the afterlife of the historical trauma of Japanese American internment. The play stages the (im)possibility of knowing history and the (un)reliability of memory. Seamless uses the powers of the sensorium and the dramatic form to mount an argument against the post-racial that could potentially move people emotionally and politically.
**Panel 0: Using Artistic Processes to Explore a Social Gathering of Anthropologists through Totemic Dialogue**

**Organizers:**
Arnar Ómarsson (UAL) & Freyja Reynisdóttir (MyndAK)

**Abstract:**
The artists will set up an exploration panel called Panel 0 (is. Núll). It acts as a satellite, orbiting the conference and making experiments. The countryside conference center is an exotic environment for the artist but perhaps a natural habitat for the anthropologist. With that in mind, the artists will do fieldwork onsite the day before the event (23.08.2015) where they make use of the mobile station and explore the locality and retrieve a number of artefacts relating to the 13 topics of the seminar. Each participant of the MEGA SEMINAR will bring a personal totem, something that belongs to them that they are willing to part from, as they will not get it back. The object could be a pen, hat, family photo, book etc. Size and type is only limited to what they can fit into their suitcase or hand luggage. Each panel will therefore have a collection of things that in some regard represents the group. 13 different collections of things will be comprised by these objects. Arnar and Freyja will add to these collections the artefacts they gathered from the locality, making each collection a mix of personal totems relating to the individual and cultural and/or natural totems from the area. Each collection will go through an artistic process where it is turned into a single object by Arnar and Freyja, intuitively connecting and assembling them as if they were meant to act as one.

The outcome will be 13 objects, or sculptures that have no definition. The next step is to introduce each object to it’s corresponding panel, where the participants will engage the object and give it value and meaning.* The outcome of day 2 will be a title and a text, around one paragraph in length, for every object. What is it? On the last day, Arnar and Freyja will have prepared the objects to be presented in an art exhibition setting, giving each object space to be viewed and discussed. Each panel will select a representative to give a short 2-3 min presentation about his/hers panels’ object; basically reading out the description.
PANELS
Panel 1: Doing Anthropology within Medicine: Constraints and Opportunities

Organizers:
Birgitte Bruun (IA-KU), Helle Johannesen (SDU), Sara Seerup Laursen (SDU), Nina Nissen (SDU)

Papers:

a) Sara Seerup Laursen (SDU) - “Employed by the field – doing anthropology inside the glass house”
b) Birgitte Bruun (IA-KU) – “Ways of knowing pain and validity in a cross-disciplinary research project on the side effects of statin use”
c) Bodil Just Christensen (Science-KU) – “Disentanglement of complexities: Knowledge translation and integration in an interdisciplinary study of obesity surgery”
d) Nina Nissen (SDU) and Ann Ostenfeld-Rosenthal (SDU) – “Benefits and pitfalls? Exploring the production and dissemination of knowledge in a cross-disciplinary study in medicine”

Abstract
Anthropologists are increasingly employed in medical faculties and the medical sector. Here anthropologists have found a stable platform from where to practice their métier and to have an impact on ‘the real world’. Correspondingly, health care practitioners show a growing interest in, and acceptance and use of, anthropological knowledge and research tools. But how do anthropologists deal with the challenges of doing anthropology in a field that is dominated by a medical framework and knowledge traditions? This panel focuses on the production and representation of anthropological knowledge in local medical contexts. We welcome papers on the following issues:

The practice of anthropology in health. What happens to anthropological practice and how do we conceptualize the anthropological field when it is located in a clinical setting? How do ethnographic problems, methods and forms influence, contribute to, or disturb other disciplines’ modes of knowledge production in health? In what ways are anthropological knowledge transformed?

Forms of ethnographic writing. Anthropologists working in the medical field and/or with a cross-disciplinary group of researchers are often encouraged to present their insights in formats new to anthropologists, e.g. from writing articles in a biomedical format to a more visual/artistic manner. What are the implications of this for the production and dissemination of anthropological knowledge? How might other knowledge traditions ‘rub off’ on the modes of producing and presenting issues that ethnographers take up? Do we challenge our collaborators and readers or do we curtail ourselves?

Positioning ethnography and the researcher self. How do we position ourselves as researcher-writer in the field and in texts, especially if we have medical issues ourselves? Does our research recreate the established divide between ‘us’ (the researcher, the practitioners, the healthy, the sane) and ‘them’ (the informants, the sick, the dying, the disabled), or does it contribute to breaking down this dichotomy? Do our analyses lead to an increased understanding of the experience of suffering, or do they strengthen the objectification of those we study?
Panel 2: Trans-Disciplinary Collaboration: Genre and Equivocation

Organizers:
Heather Swanson (CA-AU), Nils Bubandt (CAS-AU)

Papers:

a) Heather Swanson (CAS-AU) – “After STS: Developing new modes of collaboration with natural scientists"

b) Agata Agnieszka Konczal (Poland) – “Collaboration, Interdisciplinarity and its local shades. Anthropological works with (on) the forestry in Poland"

c) Bjarke Oxlund – “Deep Play: Notes on Trans-Disciplinarity at the University of Copenhagen”

d) Thiago Mota Cardoso (UFSC, Brasil and AURA project) - Enacted landscapes: practices, ontologies and misunderstandings in ethnocartographic encounters

e) Trine Mygind Korsby (IA-KU) – ”Collective Bodies and Experiments in Concept Work: Reflections on the Rabinowian ‘Labinar’”

f) Colin Hoag (USC-US/ Bioscience AU) – ”Anthropology as Witches’ Brew: Wayward Tales from the Lesotho Highlands”

g) Kirsten Hastrup (IA-KU) – ”Collective Moments: Interdisciplinary Experimentation in the Field”

Abstract

Anthropologists have long been trans-disciplinary collaborators. But the character and format of their collaborations have clearly changed over time.

In the 1980s and 1990s, anthropologists frequently turned to philosophy, linguistics, and literary studies. More recently, however, we have seen a renewed interest in transdisciplinary engagements between anthropology and the technical and natural sciences. This panel aims to focus on these latter projects, asking what kinds of new genres of academic practice such transdisciplinary collaborations are bringing into being.

Collaborations with the natural, medical, and technical sciences bring many unique challenges. Anthropologists often find themselves forced to negotiate knowledge hierarchies in which the natural sciences are often seen to produce “hard facts,” while the social/human sciences is seen to produce less-valued anecdotal knowledge. Yet, at the same time, anthropologists must also struggle with their own discipline’s wariness of positivism and scientism.

Anthropologists are developing new forms of practice and presentation as they respond to these and other demands of transdisciplinary collaboration. The recent explosion of exhibitions, art installations, design work, and other “interventions” clearly indicates that something is afoot.

But while transdisciplinary projects are undoubtedly producing novel and exciting scholarly forms, they are also politically troubling. Transdisciplinary projects often align with neoliberal university and funding politics that emphasize economic utility and “innovation.” Are anthropologists’ transdisciplinary projects collaborating with such discomforting political structures?

The goal of this panel is to create a space for reflection about both the new practices and genres of transdisciplinary scholarship, as well as the politics that they engender.
Panel 3: Business & Organisational Anthropology and the Blurring of Genres

Organizers:
Jakob Krause-Jensen (AAU), Steffen Jöncke (IA-KU), Karen Lisa Salamon (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Nanna Vaaben (UCC) – “Anthropology and the political – ideologies of knowledge genres”
b) Simon Lex (IA-KU) – “The un-branding of ethnography”
c) Jakob-Krause-Jensen (AAU) and Karen Lisa Salamon (IA-KU) – “Profits and Prophets. Theory U and the spiritual service to the corporate world.”

Abstract

Geertz announced the blurring of 'genres' in the early 1980's, writing at a moment of post-colonialism when the object of anthropology, 'once tribal and traditional' was becoming 'modernizing and emergent'. This blurring, crossing and struggling with boundaries is perhaps expressed no more clearly than within the subfield of 'business & organisational anthropology' - anthropology carried out in the heartlands of modernity and pragmatism. The connection between anthropology and organisations was consecrated through the notion of 'corporate/organisation culture', which gained impetus during the very same period when Geertz was writing his prophetic essay.

From the perspective of business and organisations, anthropology offered charismatic concepts (e.g., 'culture') and appealing methods. But the liaison was never an easy one: Organisations are socio-topes working to achieve particular objectives via efficiency and instrumental rationality. Organisational anthropologists are thus often asked to produce certainties, conflicting with disciplinary self-understandings of ethnography as cultural critique upsetting common sense and refocusing public attention. As Geertz put it— 'It has been the office of others to reassure: ours to unsettle.' Business anthropology furthermore intersects with the enormous and heterogeneous field of organisation studies, dominated by stylistic conventions entailing acronyms and models as well as as a range of specific tropes and analogies, such as 'best practice', 'market innovation' and ever new conceptual trends.

How do these disciplinary intersections affect our research questions, projects and our interaction with research subjects? How are our own disciplinary forms of thinking and teaching affected? The panel invites ethnographic presentations to throw light on the challenges and potentialities involved in considering organisational/business anthropology as a matter of genre - or a field where genre matters.
Panel 4: Comparing Fieldnotes

Organizers:
Mikkel Rytter (CAS-AU), Anne Line Dalsgård (CAS-AU), Mette Lind Kusk (CAS-AU), Maria Nielsen (CAS-AU), Astrid O Andersen (IA-KU), Cecilie Rubow (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Regnar Kristensen (TORS-KU) – “Dogme ethnographies: Cutting and pasting transcriptions”
b) Mette Lind Kusk (CAS-AU) – “Drawings as a field note genre”
c) Mille Kjærgaard Thorsen (CAS-AU) – “Making my fieldnotes taste like sugar!”
d) Marianne Holm Pedersen (KB) and Lars Christian Kofoed Rømer (IA-KU) – “Fieldnotes from a Field of Notes: Anthropology and Archives”
e) Morten Schütt (CAS-AU) – “The representer represented representing”
g) Astrid O. Andersen (IA-KU) – “Note-taking and note-sharing in collaborative research - a prismatic view on three cases of field-noting”
h) Cecilie Rubow (IA-KU) – “Ecological notes: the making of reusable empirical material”

Abstract

Most fieldnotes stay in the hidden as the given foundation of our finished publications. We rely on our notes as reference points that bridge fieldwork, analysis and anthropological knowledge. This panel explores different genres of fieldnotes in their ‘raw’ form and the potential they offer for knowledge production in individual and collective research practices. Or vice versa: the potential that research practices offer for “fieldnotes” to materialize.

But what are fieldnotes? Which shapes do they take? How are they generated? What is the relation between note-taking and taking note? Do we need notes? In the classical fieldwork, the fieldworker writes notes to her/himself, typically in many formats. In collaborative projects new formats have to be invented to transcend the “I” of the individual researcher subject. But can notes be shared and if so how?

These questions relate to larger discussion on what anthropological knowledge is. Which standards of “proper” research and conventions should we adhere to? Which temporal and material distortions will necessarily interfere? Do smells, sounds, pictures count as notes? And what about the role of imagination, magic and the disturbing effect of excess material? We invite papers that explore individual and shared-notes complexities through concrete examples. Papers may reflect upon notes in different stages of the anthropological project, such as:

- Project design, interview guides, reflexive notes, ref. to literature etc.
- Jot notes, photos, drawings, audio recordings, video clips, memories etc.
- Note books, log books you write to yourself or (partly) to other project members, digitalized transcribed notes, database entries
- Minutes from project meetings
- Papers presented to project members and beyond
- Published text (where notes are included, enveloped and developed).

Participants will be asked to prepare a physical sample of field notes, to be displayed in an experimental way.
Panel 5: Urban Ethnography – Still the Partial Story?

Organizers:
Marianne Bach Mosebo (IA-KU), Nanna Schneidermann (CAS-AU)

Papers:

a) Marianne Bach Mosebo (IA-KU) – “The problematic constellation of urban and ethnography”
b) Nanna Schneidermann (CAS-AU) – “The first URO-Lab: Urban fragments, partial stories and holistic projects in Gellerup”
c) Stine Ilum (IA-AU) – “Participating in the Evanesence of the City: Reflections on the Ethnographic Study of Urban Public Space”
d) Stina Møldrup Wolff (CAS-AU) – “The new African city vs. the lay of the land – conducting ethnographic fieldwork between urban dreams and nightmares”
e) Jonas Strandholt Bach (CAS-AU) – “Staying or moving out. Resourceful inhabitants and tipping points in Gellerup”
f) Maja Hojer Bruun (AAU) – “Contested urban space and the neoliberal city”

Abstract

Contemporary anthropological studies in and of cities tend to reproduce the tension between part and whole as it appeared in the founding schools of urban ethnography, namely the problem of identifying the “unit of analysis”: The Chicago school sought to overcome this by studying neighborhoods and urban villages, while the Manchester school studied fleeting social situations and changing networks. The tension in urban ethnography is portrayed as a methodological one, related to choices of fieldwork techniques. In this panel, however, we would like to re-problematize urban ethnography as a genre; as a mode of doing ethnography and writing it. Whether we are writing “slices of the city” or mapping out networks of people on the move in town, we are faced with the partiality and fragmented nature of our fields. Even decades after the reflexive turn, this seems to haunt urban ethnography as a genre. How to contextualize our interviews and hanging out in the city? How to draw the boundaries of our field? Does it make a difference whether we are writing about the worlds of urbanites or about the city as a world? Is ethnography only “urban” if the city itself is the object of study? How is it that these urban fields seem to produce particular ways of writing ethnography?

This panel invites critical reflections on the relation between the field and the genre of urban ethnography, discussing the relationship between partial fieldworks and partial writings as well as empirical explorations of how the people we work with themselves experience the partiality of urban life.
**Panel 6: The Ignographic Turn – Steps Towards a Superficial Anthropology**

**Organizers:**
Michael Alexander Ulfstjerne (TORS-IA), Martin Demant Frederiksen (TORS-KU)

**Papers:**

- d) Martin Demant Frederiksen (TORS-KU) - “Vato digs a hole and then he fills it up again. Or, meaninglessness as radical alterity”
- e) My Madsen (IA-KU) “Kostumerne!? De er da bare fucking grineren!”
- f) Anders Sybrandt Hansen (CAS-AU) – “Words are vapours – Face work, Great Unity and stupid catharsis in Chinese ritual interaction”
- g) Michael Alexander Ulfstjerne (TORS-KU) – “Iron Bubbles and Shallow Ethnography”
- h) Mikkel Bille (RUC) – “The technorant: emotions, atmospheres and ignorance in an era of energy saving lighting technologies”

**Abstract**

Following the crisis of representation a series of virtues have come to mark the practice of anthropology: Empathic, engaged, interpretative, holistic, thick, and deep forms of representation and comprehension. It is against the grain of such virtues that this panel opts to positively engage obstacles that are otherwise readily understood to compromise the good governance of ethnographic endeavors: superficiality, thin description, shallowness, and ignorance. Although Geertz noted in *Blurred Genres* that social scientists have become free to shape their work in relation to what they ought or ought not be doing, we propose that there is also a degree of restraint in contemporary searches for depth.

Comprehensiveness and emphatic descriptions of interlocutors have become hallmarks of anthropology, whether due to virtues of representation or to a ‘Stockholm syndrome of anthropology’ in which interlocutors draw in an ethnographer who ultimately comes to find sympathy for them and their viewpoints. In either case, if the ethnographer does not successfully convey ‘understandable’, structural or somewhat sympathetic reasons for any kind of bad, immoral, stupid or shallow behaviour found among interlocutors, this will reflect a shortcoming of the ethnographer in that ethnographic practice is widely premised on understanding, translating and rendering otherness comprehensible and social life meaningful.

Yet what do we do when we encounter purposeful stupidity, meaningless, or a drive towards shallowness in the field? When interlocutors display a lack of sympathy? When they do bad, superficial or stupid things? How do we approach a lack of ‘rapport’ between ethnographer and informant that are often left out of accounts? This panel welcomes papers that explore the roles and consequences of ignorance and superficiality in anthropological research as empirical facts, methodological challenges and analytical perspectives.
Panel 7: The Anthropology of Moaning: Questioning the Triviality of Incessant Complaints

Organizers:
Nina Holm Vohnsen (CAS-AU), Morten Nielsen (CAS-AU)

Papers:

a) Kirsten Marie Raahauge (RAFA) – “Haunting, Haunting, Haunting”

b) Nina Holm Vohnsen (CAS-AU) – “A catalogue of bureaucratic moaning”

c) Inger Sjørslev (IA-KU) – “What’s in a genre? Scales of moaning and reflections on meaning from ritual speech to anthropological analysis”

d) Henrik Hvenegaard Mikkelsen (IA-KU) – “Subversive Solitude: Moaning as an act of Separation in Southern Sealand”

e) Jeannette Lykkegård (CAS-AU) – “Living Life or Dead? A window of complaints into the lives of Chukchi”

Abstract

Certain facets of social life seem too trivial - or boring - to merit proper ethnographic examination. Moaning, understood here as incessant complaints or grumblings, is often considered as being among the least interesting aspects of social life that does nothing but delay access to key ethnographic insights. As the quintessence of triviality, it evokes the numerable insignificant and often irrelevant problems that must eventually be surpassed.

With this panel, we wish to question the triviality of moaning. While acknowledging the annoying and, indeed, often claustrophobic effects that moaning generates, we argue that incessant complaints and grumblings might contain hitherto unexplored analytical potentials. Could it be, for instance, that moaning is not merely a trivial and often ironic commentary to the status of the contemporary but rather, an alternative revolutionary realm that is intensively true? If so, moaning might be taken to constitute a strategic misreading of the contemporary that is activated in order to wedge into social life awkward and parallel realities that are, by their nature, annoying.
Panel 8: Anthropology’s Enfant Terrible: Audio-Visuals, TransMedia and the Work of Knowledge

Organizers:
Anne Mette Jørgensen (Danish National Museum), Christian Suhr (CAS-AU), Perle Møhl (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Arine Kirstein Høgel (CAS-AU) – “Sensory Ethnography and Mechanical Perceptions of the Human Condition”
b) Christian Suhr (CAS-AU) – “Interview with a camera: Beyond participation, collaboration, and dialogue”
c) Perle Møhl (IA-KU) – “Film, transmedia and the work of analysis”
d) Kasper Jelsbech Knudsen (CAS-AU) – “Between Art and Ethnography: Experimenting with Anthropological knowledge-making”

Abstract

Audio-Visual media have been part and parcel of anthropology since its inception, albeit with varying levels of integration and a sometimes awkward relation to the indexicality of the photographic image. In this panel, we wish to go beyond the discussion of visual representation, with its always unfruitful quarrels about the authority and veracity of photographic representations, and see sensory, audio-visual media as forms of knowledge in their own right.

The panel therefore invites presentations in any medium that explore how anthropological knowledge is imagined, created, negotiated and conveyed, engaging with people through sensory, audio-visual and integrative transmedial forms. We wish to explore the possibilities of a genuinely different kind of anthropology – call it a genre or a field of action – that does not take textual forms as its model, but seeks out what lies beyond the linguistic, engaging directly with the immediacy of experience, practice and daily life.
Panel 9: Empathetic Oscillation and Non-linguistic Exploration

Organizers:
Aja Smith (SDU), Sandra Lori Petersen (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Sandra Lori Petersen (IA-KU) – “Empathetic oscillation and self-relations”
b) Ida Sofie Matzen (IA-KU) “The training of the Sufi is to feel another human”: Langar and love in Pakistan”
c) Katy Overstreet - (CAS-AU) – “Dairy Farming and Difference: forms of empathy in the dairy worlds of Wisconsin”
d) Aja Smith (SDU) - “Empathy in motion. When the human is a horse”
e) Fie Lund Lindegaard Christensen (CAS-AU) – “Unmovement in autism and empathy”
f) Kamilla Nørttoft (SAXO-KU) & Helle Merete Nordentoft (IEP-AU) – “Ethnographic video narratives inviting various personal and professional interpretations in the area of care for older people”

Abstract

This panel zooms in on the empathetic movement between self and other. While empathy for an other might often be evoked by or expressed through words, we hold that there is much more to empathy than words and narratives, and we invite papers that explore the non-linguistic aspects of empathy. Reflecting this focus and pushing what we take to be the genre of the conference presentation, we furthermore wish to encourage participants to be present their exploration of empathy in more than words. The concept of empathy implies a basic ability to imagine how others experience the world. An ability which recent neuroscientific studies have placed in the brain, thereby making empathy a question not of culture but of genetics and biology (see Woermann 2012 for an overview), and this tendency has lately been reflected in anthropology (Bubandt and Willerslev forthcoming). Whether empathy has a biological, genetic base, is a culturally learned ability or even a spiritual faculty, these recent studies have separated empathy from linguistic capabilities and its previous humancentric base, and instead focus on the role empathy plays in social interaction; as facilitating an oscillation of the self between this self and that of an other.

This is for example seen when an anthropologist strives to mirror the ways of life of his or her interlocutors in order to understand them by dressing, speaking and behaving in ways she or he interprets to be socially appropriate, or when a therapist through body, voice, choice of place and space works to create rapport in a session. It is also what takes place when e.g. a manager tries to mimic a non-human other – a horse – during coaching sessions in order to in turn become a more authentic leader (Smith, forthcoming). While all of these examples illustrate how empathy is a movement of the self towards the other in the pursuit of an understanding of this other, exploring this motion more closely a simultaneous move of the self back to the self emerges; the movement towards the other relies on an interpretation, an experience, a reckoning of the self of the experience of the other. In other words, the movement towards the self happens through a continuous consulting of the self with experience, knowledge, emotions; happens in a continuous movement of the self between this self and that of the other. With the tentative term empathetic oscillation, we wish to underline our interest in empathy not only as something happening in the space between subjects but as itself a motion.

The world of academia is a wordy one and while much attention in the past few decades has been given to the sensuous aspects of the lives of the anthropologists’ interlocutors not much of this non-linguistic experience is mirrored in the form panel presentations traditionally take. If we consider panel presentations to be a genre in itself, we would like to challenge how this genre typically conveys research, aiming through form as well as content to explore the more than-wordy phenomena we as anthropologists study. In this panel we thus invite panel participants to play with the wordless in their presentations in ways that augment their explorations of empathy, examining the suggested term empathetic oscillation.
Panel 10: Social Media and Ethnography Genres and Subjects

Organizers:
Elizabeth Williams Ørberg (independent researcher), Nanna Schneidermann (CAS-AU)

Papers:

a) Andreas Roepstorff (CAS-AU) – “Just tweet it!”
b) Elizabeth Williams Ørberg (affiliation?) - “To Blog or not to Blog?”
c) Karen Waltorp (CAS-AU) – “The trouble with anthropology in new media”
d) Kristoffer Albris (IA-KU) – “Tools, Objects and Mechanisms: Social Media as a Three-fold Challenge to Ethnographic Research”
e) Djuke Veldhuis (AIAS-AU) – “Social media – a guide for researchers – what, why, how, when and where”

Abstract

How do you use social media to communicate and communicate about research? Do you find the latest publications and exciting new research on Twitter, Academia.edu, blogs or Facebook? We hereby invite you to a hands-on workshop in which both anthropologists, who are already well versed in utilizing social media as a dissemination tool, as well as those who have not yet engaged with social media in their work but contemplate doing so, can convene and discuss in an open format. While digital platforms for sharing research such as open access publications and the Digital Humanities projects have become integrated at various universities, the use of social media such as Twitter and blogs are relatively new ground for communicating one’s research. We might think of social media as a novel “genre” of Writing Culture (as we presume that form and content, media and message interact) to both a more general audience, as well as in many cases a more specialized and research-related audience. How do these formats challenge anthropologists in thinking about their research in a different manner? For instance, Twitter requires communicating in short comments to draw attention to longer articles, while Facebook posts appear in newsfeeds in the same format as friends’ status updates and family photos, etc. Blogs may post and re-post texts, as well as re-publish excerpts from books and journal articles. These forums challenge traditional academic styles, which are not as accessible to a general audience both due to restrictive access as well as to its specialized style. In this way, social media seems to be a call for anthropologists to situate their research in a wider perspective, which general audiences, research interlocutors and fellow scholars may relate to. This workshop invites anthropologists to present their experiences, experiments and trepidations in using social media in practice. We wish to reflect on social media as a “genre,” to bring forth ideas on how these forums can be used as platforms for communicating research, and quite possibly for early career anthropologists, as a springboard for alternative careers through reaching a wider audience.
Panel 11: The Ethnographic Genre of the Suffering Subject

Organizers:
Thomas Hughes (IA-KU), Karina Dalgas (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Karina Dalgas (IA-KU) – “Migrants’ recovery interventions after the Bohol earthquake: Suffering and agency embedded”
b) Thomas Hughes (IA-KU) – “Do only the “helpless” get help? A case study in the negotiation of suffering and victimhood”
c) Line Richter (IA-KU) – “The energy of despair” – Malian clandestine migration and suffering”
d) Cecil MS Pallesen (CAS-AU) – “So Whom To Feel Sorry For? An Ethnographic Exploration of Experiences and Instrumental Uses of Suffering Among Strong, Rich Indian Communities in Tanzania”
e) Janne Flora (IA-KU) – “The suicidal Inuit”
f) Oscar Salemink (IA-KU) – “Good News! An anthropology of an end to suffering.”
g) Spencer Orey (Duke) – “Suffering towards a dream: Hollywood and the psychic economy of dreams in Los Angeles”
h) Annika Pohl Harrisson (CAS-AU) – “Suffering in silence / striving for a state: The desire for ethnic recognition by the stateless Thais from Burma”
i) Anja Simonsen (IA-KU) - “Rumors” - Between suffering and the strive to create good among Somali migrants in transit

Abstract

Joel Robbins (2013) argues there has been an increased tendency in much anthropological work to focus on “suffering subjects” in place of “exotic others” and that suffering has had the connotation of legitimate or “true” ethnographic material. Without necessarily endorsing Robbins argument, this panel calls for a critical discussion of the place of suffering in ethnography, the ways in which suffering may shape anthropological analysis, and whether there is a particular genre of the “suffering subject” in anthropology.

Firstly, the panel opens for discussions on the limitations and opportunities that an ethnographic focus on suffering produces. What does a focus on suffering do to our choice of field, to the selection and presentation of ethnographic data, and to anthropological theorizing? Moreover, is a focus on suffering less legitimate or appropriate in some studies and almost obligatory in others?

Secondly, there seems to be a strong temptation to consider the field in a binary of ethnographic foci – or genre conventions if you will– in which studies come to be concerned with either people’s hardships and structural constraints or with their agency and, to use the words of Robbins (2013), how they “strive to create the good in their lives”. How might ethnographies strike a balance of these two seemingly contradictory, yet complementary features?

The panel welcomes papers that are engaged with the notion of “the suffering subject”. They include studies of people who are typically cast in the light of the hardships they endure, papers that reflect on how to create a “balanced account” of the “good life” and suffering, or papers that experiment with explorations of looking at suffering among subjects in fields where such a focus might seem at first glance counter-intuitive.
Panel 12: Writing Intimacy, Sociography and Post-humanity: Inquiring Genres and Scales of the Anthropological Subject?

Organizers:
Helene Risør (IA-KU), Lotte Buch Segal (IA-KU), Anne Line Dalsgård (CAS-AU), Anja Kublitz (DCGS-AAU), Henrik Rønsbo (Dignity), Stine Krøijer (IA-KU), Henrik Vigh (IA-KU)

Papers:

a) Stine Krøijer (IA-KU) – “Clearcutting my tree spirits: on intimacy and political change among multiple species in Ecuador”
b) Henrik Rønsbo (Dignity) - “Dolls, documentaries and death: Meeting the onto and discovering the self”
c) Anja Kublitz (DCGS-AAU) – “To be called upon: rethinking the intimacy of the mass among Danish foreign fighters”
d) Helene Risør (IA-KU) – “Alteño Youth: The Subject of Politics and the Process of Change”
e) Anne Line Dalsgaard (CAS-AU) – “Vast and yet so close. Breathing, between biology and the social”
f) Lotte Buch Segal (IA-KU) – “The Subject inside out. On the Exhaustion of Endurance and Interiority in Contemporary Palestine”
g) Atreyee Sen (IA-KU) – “Sin, sex and sodomy: Sexual violence and intimacy in the context of mass rape in Asia and Africa”.

Discussant: Steffen Jensen (DIGNITY)

Abstract

The panel sets out to explore the apparently contradictory relationships between the notions of intimacy and sociography; post-humanity and intersubjectivity in contemporary anthropological inquiry and writing. These theoretical genres are often cast in the light of incommensurability not least in terms of the anthropological subject that appears in these writings respectively.

This panel however wishes to dwell on the fertile analytics that may appear in what seems awkward theoretical encounters. We ask what is intimacy in sociography and what differs or resonates between the idea of post humanity and intersubjectivity? Does ethnography of intimacy necessarily entail the individual subject as its scale and vice versa, or can we think of for example an intimacy of the mass and in post-human relations or even interspecies sociability?

We welcome papers that engage with these contradictory relationships, scales and genres in contemporary anthropological writing.
Panel 13: Ethnography and Technology

Organizers:
Cathrine Hasse (IEDP-AU), Morten Axel Pedersen (IA-KU), Margit Saltofte Nielsen (AAU), Maja Hojer Bruun (AAU)

Papers:


b) Steffen Dalsgård (ITU) – “White boxes and black boxes: reading relations on a screen”

c) Margit Saltofte Nielsen (AAU) – “Students’ technological mediated field note reflections”

d) Morten Axel Pedersen (IA-KU), Snorre Ralund (Soc-KU), My Madsen (IA-KU) – “Ethnography in/of Social Data Worlds: A Quali-quantitative Experiment”

e) Cathrine Hasse (IEDP-AU) – “We have never been human: understanding participant observation”

f) Torbjørn Friberg (IA-KU) – “Social fragmentation and technological collaboration – technological fragmentation and social collaboration”

Abstract

In this panel we will discuss fieldwork, ethnographic description and anthropological theory in relation to the renewed focus on technologies in anthropology. What genres of ethnographic description and theoretical conceptualization lend themselves to anthropological accounts of technological realities? If technology is itself a certain register or indeed ‘genre’ of reality, then what kind of genre might that be?

In the interdisciplinary field of STS, including ANT and post-ANT, which has been a driving force in the study of science and technology in the social sciences and humanities for some years, there is an ongoing debate about ‘multiple ontologies’ and the enactment of technological worlds. In this panel we will phrase this debate as a question about ethnographic genres, fieldwork methodology and the specific processes of studying technological practices and producing technological realities through ethnography. What questions, connections and similarities present themselves to the fieldworker studying technology and how can we grasp and depict technological practices and technological worlds in this process? Is the renewed interest in technology producing new genres of anthropological representations of worlds and world making? Do encounters with technology and its users and producers, including colleagues from other disciplines engaged in the study of technology, give rise to new genres of ethnographic description?

The panel invites papers that present and discuss ethnographic studies of technology, science and technology, technological practices and the use of technology in different settings.