

Panels for the MEGA seminar

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1. Time to do something about the climate!

Convenors: Quentin Gausset (KU) & Steffen Dalsgaard (ITU)

The world faces a dramatic and urgent climatic crisis. If we fail to change behavior, reduce consumption and decarbonize our societies within the next 12 years, we will fail to keep global warming within 2 degrees as compared to pre-industrial times, and overheating will trigger chain reactions that no one wishes to see happen. We are running in a wall, but most people (anthropologists included) continue to live and consume as if it did not matter – as long as the music is going and there is beer in the fridge, why stop dancing?

Our panel calls for papers studying the conditions and barriers for sound environmental choices, and reflecting on the role that anthropologists have to play in the transition to sustainability, both as researchers and as engaged citizens. Papers with policy relevance or an applied dimension are therefore most welcome.

Each paper proposal must describe briefly how the paper will be presented. We encourage lively presentations and we will refuse those who just intend to read their paper in front of other participants (the world's future deserves better than this)

Send paper abstracts to: Quentin Gausset, quentin.gausset@anthro.ku.dk

2. Choosing the extra: the stuff that stories are made on

Convenors: Helle Bundgaard KU & Line Dalsgaard AU

In this panel we ask what ethnography can be if anthropologists choose to include the ethnographic material which most often does not find its way to our theses, books, or articles. We wish to explore the 'superfluous' or 'irrelevant', whether in the form of dreams, stories, or uncertainties about what 'really' took place.

Having completed a thesis, an article, or yet another edited volume, anthropologists leave behind stuff. It lives on in our minds - or drawers - and, occasionally we might use it as basis for stories exchanged in the bar. Imagine for a moment that we treat this stuff as ethnographic material that matters and thus deserves the attention we normally grant only to so-called ethnographic data, which lends itself to the production of arguments. How might this affect our experiences as writers

and readers of ethnography – and not least ethnography as genre? We wish to explore this together through our individual preparations for the seminar and our collective sharing of presentations.

We ask contributors to choose material and/or a style of writing, which is likely to be ignored or rejected in traditional academic social science prose, and thus welcome attempts to convey experiences of other worlds to readers by way of literary description. We ask for experiments and good stories, for efforts to convey experiences, which are part of our fieldworks but nevertheless often marginalized in a context, where the common categorization of anthropology as a ‘social science’ still causes expectations of empiricism and resistance to more literary modes of writing. In other words, we challenge the ‘academic socialisation’ that pushes anthropologists to write ‘passionless prose’ full of third-person reference and scholarly jargon (Stoller 2015: 123).

Guidelines for contributions:

A submission should not exceed 10 pages (typed 1,5 spaced). You may include images or other material, but the focus is on text.

Please give an engaging presentation of your 'stuff', perhaps in the form of a story, a montage, a poem or whichever format may suit your material best.

Please also include a short reflection upon the question: ‘How is this piece anthropologically valuable?’ You may also experiment with the form of this reflection.

Send paper abstracts to: Line Dalsgaard, ald@cas.au.dk

3. Etnografiske fiktioner: salon med oplæsning af litterære eksperimenter (DANSK)

Convenors: Line Dalsgaard, AU, Mikkel Rytter, AU & Hans Lucht, DIIS

Traditionelt var en salon, et sted hvor en kreds af kunstnerisk, litterært eller politisk interesserede mødtes til oplæsning, musikalsk underholdning, diskussion og socialt samvær. Dette MEGA-panel bygger videre på denne smukke tradition og inviterer deltagere til at læse op af tekststykker, digte, noveller eller essays som enten er skrevet til lejligheden eller måske i årevis har ligget hengemt i en skuffe eller på en gammel harddisk. Uanset hvad så foreslår vi at kalde denne hybrid mellem etnografi og litteratur for ‘etnografiske fiktioner’.

Vi opstiller følgende benspænd:

- Teksten skal tage afsæt i etnografiske data
- Det er den gode fortælling, der skal drive teksten frem.
- Antropologen skal selv være tilstede i teksten.
- Teksten skal have litterære kvaliteter.
- Der må ikke anvendes referencer.

Salonen åbner med en kortere (og mere teoretisk) introduktion til ideen om 'etnografiske fiktioner' og dernæst begynder vi oplæsningerne. Såfremt der kommer tilstrækkeligt med kvalificerede 'etnografiske fiktioner' vil vi arbejde frem mod en fælles publikation ved Hans Reitzels Forlag, der allerede har efterspurgt denne type antologi.

Send paper abstracts til: Mikkel Rytter, mikkel.rytter@cas.au.dk

4. Material Layers of Choice

Convenors: Stine Ilum, KU, Esther Fritsch, ITU, Maia Ebsen, KU & Karen Broberg, KU

Choices and decisions are never made in a free-floating vacuum. They literally shape our world and are embedded in a sedimentary landscape built from material traces of the past and aspirations for the future. Take a look at your local city square. Which paving covers the ground, which trees provide the shade, what signs divert the traffic, and which cameras survey the people? Take a look at your laptop. Were the microchips produced in China or Lithuania, how did they travel to the laptop construction site, what metals are part of them, and how were these extracted? The world is built up by a combination of choice and materiality.

By gathering different trajectories of choice, the goal of this panel is to create a space for reflections on how decisions take material form, and how new decisions deal with the material imprints of the past. To give a better understanding of both the material world but also of the ways in which decisions are made. Can we follow decisionmaking processes like empirical objects? What do decisions look like empirically and materially? How are traces of already materially manifest decisions activated and relayed as new choices take shape? What material possibilities and challenges are encountered

as new decisions are made? In short, what is the relation between decisionmaking, material form, past, present, and future?

Some say, the *time to choose* is now, but looking into the material landscape around us it is evident that it was also the time to choose yesterday, and it will be again tomorrow. However, knowing that the material resources of this world are not infinite and knowing that the materiality we surround ourselves with has an impact on the lives we live – now is the time to unfold how choice and materiality is intertwined as this will hopefully call for better decision-making and use of material resources in the future. The panel will be a conceptual space for scholars moving within and across a range of fields such as material, political, urban, and design anthropology - and for everyone else with a resonating interest in the above. The only actual requirement to participate; be prepared to materialize your paper and to make on-the-spot decisions.

Send paper abstracts to: Stine Ilum, stine.ilum@anthro.ku.dk

5. Decision-making in a Technologized World

Convenors: Lone Stub Petersen AAU, Tom Børsen AAU & Joakim Juhl AAU

Technology, the fabric of modernity, permeates societies and is part and parcel of contemporary social life, everyday decisions, conditional power structures and widely held collective imaginations. By virtue of its material- and cultural- dimensions, technology is inseparable from decision-making and largely defines perceptions of both the challenges and their appropriate solutions. This panel invites contributions that reflect upon the relationship between decisions and their technological settings.

Through systematic attention to the intersections of humans and technologies, Anthropology of Technology or ‘Techno-Anthropology’ offers approaches to study and intervene with technological processes. From participatory co-design practices to ethical and environmental assessments, the panel’s objective is to collect and discuss the methodological and self-reflexive implications of bringing technology into anthropology and of treating technology as a cultural object. By nature, decision-making processes are culturally conditioned and embedded within particular local settings, which makes them unique and therefore difficult to generalize. As a consequence, ethnographic studies tend to naturalize decisions upon local circumstances and as a result neglect influences from

larger overarching structures and institutions. However, making particular technologies the center of the analytic scope enables cross-cultural comparisons. The suggested panel calls for presentations that display approaches to understand and engage with technologically mediated decision-making. The ambition with the panel is to collect a range of different and complementary presentations in order to convene cross-panel comparisons and discussions on the topic of decision practices in relation to technology.

Send paper abstracts to: Joakim Juhl, jjuh@plan.aau.dk

6. Digitalisation of elder care and infrastructures of choice

Convenors: Line Hillersdal KU, Kristina Grünenberg KU & Nete Schwennesen KU

Digital devices, information technologies and mediated systems of communication increasingly shape the everyday life of people in mid to later life and how they are cared for. As a response to an increasingly elderly population, governments and health care sectors around the world, increasingly invest in the design and implementation of digital technologies, anticipating that elder care can be both better and more efficient, when mediated by data and technology. In Denmark, public-private partnerships are constituted with the aim of transforming know-how on care services into the design of innovative welfare technologies. These strategic and political acts may be seen as elements in a broader socio-technical imaginary (Jasanoff & Kim 2015) of a future in which high tech solutions are positioned as guarantors of the welfare-states sustainability.

This development has constituted the emergence of a new ‘geography of responsibility’ (Akrich 1999), where elderly citizens and health professionals are expected to participate and engage in the production and interpretation of digital technologies and data. In practice, living or working with new technologies have created new expectations, roles and tasks for health professionals and elderly citizens alike, and reconfigured the relationship between health care professionals and elderly in novel ways. Scholars have argued that the circulation and distribution of data potentially comprise a new arrangement of surveillance or metric power (Beer 2016), while others have pointed towards the need to understand the effect and meaning of new data generating technologies as co-evolving through the specific arrangement of care, of which it becomes a part (Schwennesen 2017).

In this panel we want to explore further the socio-technical imaginaries that drive the current ‘push’ towards the digitalization of elder care and the processes through which digitalization may reconfigure notions of ageing, elder care and infrastructures of choice.

In order to explore these issues, we invite papers that address some of the following questions;

- What are the normativities embedded in elder care technologies and how do they reconfigure notions of ageing and ageing citizenship?
- How do elderly, health care professionals and relatives engage with and respond to technologies and data?
- What new forms of care emerge, when care is increasingly mediated by algorithms, data and technologies?
- How do the digitalization of care rearticulate infrastructures of choice and self-determination? How do the choices that are already algorithmically encoded into these technologies pre-format such choices?
- How does knowledge and data about elderly citizens travel and circulate in society and between sectors?
- How does such data emerge as valuable and what kind of moral economy is it entangled with?
- How is technology rearticulating boundaries between the private and public?

Send paper abstracts to: Nete Schwennesen, ns@anthro.ku.dk

7. Choosing the Extreme case

Convenors: Henrik Hvenegaard Mikkelsen KU and Mette My Madsen

Extreme cases have often had a bad reputation within the broader field of social sciences. For isn't it so that our choice of cases should be “representative” of the general social landscape that we explore? Yet, when writing ethnography we often make use of the more extreme cases—the outliers—that crystallize a specific analytical problem or work as exemplary examples of sub-social cultural traits that we attempt to uncover. We suggest that the extreme case is not only where the extraordinary story is (though this may indeed be the case). Rather, we dive into this issue by asking

how the amplified, exaggerated or distorted version of reality may allow new analytical potentials to come into being.

The panel encourages papers that discuss the use of extreme cases within anthropological writings and, more broadly, in relation to the way people in various ethnographic contexts make sense of the world through such cases. The panel both asks the question what type of anthropology emerges when we explicitly choose to put the extreme case at the center of our work while also exploring the way extreme cases operate more generally across social fields.

The contributions to this panel will be submitted to Journal of Extreme Anthropology for publication as a special issue in early 2020.

Send paper abstracts to: Henrik Hvenegaard Mikkelsen, hvenegaard@anthro.ku.dk

8. Utopian Urbanism

Conveners: Morten Nielsen NATMUS, Vibe Nielsen KU, Nina Holm Vohnsen AU

This panel explores the implications of engaging with urban life through strategies and decisions, which are inherently utopian. If the utopic can be understood as a drive towards an idealised state of existence, we wish to consider what the ramifications might be when its object is the city. Across the world, cities function as laboratories for imagining and implementing idealised versions of social life. Whether as all-encompassing transformations of the cities' physical and social infrastructure or as small-scale community experiments in civic participation, such endeavours require a deep desire to move in new and hitherto unexplored directions. With this panel, then, we wish to consider what it takes for urbanites, who are in one way or another involved in utopic projects, to act and think differently. What are the decisions, both individual and collective, which lead up to such radical changes, and what are the implications for social life in the cities? In this regard, it is relevant to ponder how, through such utopic processes, certain social practices become associated (morally, politically, socially) with certain urban spaces and how the utopic drive feeds into the lives and material configurations of cities throughout the world. Through discussions of different forms of utopian urbanism, we wish to examine the decisions, visions and ramifications that are and become enveloped in the utopian drive for the city. With an overall focus on utopian urbanism and on how the built environment articulates utopian ideas, papers could focus on (but are

not limited to) themes such as: The virtualization of spaces, the circulation of ideas, spaces and things, decoration and aesthetics, ideological manifestos and political strategies, architecture and the built environment, city planning and urban governance.

Send paper abstracts to: Vibe Nielsen, vn@anthro.ku.dk

9. Negotiating Gender (and other Identities): Reactions from the field

Convenors: Sara Lei Sparre AU, Mona Chettri AU and Theresa Ammann, AU

Field-based research often entails being cognizant of and negotiating around different cultural and class-based identities of our respondents. Simultaneously, the gender of the researcher (amidst other, multiple identities) usually determines the bodily experiences of fieldwork – what spaces are made accessible or inaccessible, the people we can talk to, the issues that can be talked about etc. – as well as the response of the respondents to the researcher. These interactions shape our choice of research strategies, research sites and eventually, our findings.

The panel focuses on the response/reaction of the respondents to the gender of the researcher to illustrate how choices about and while in the field are often a product of the constant, reflexive negotiation of the gender of respondents with that of the researcher. This calls for a deeper analytical engagement with norms and practices around gender, space and social interactions, which influence the choice of research methodology as well as the dissemination of findings.

The panel uses gender as both a subject and a tool of analysis to gain insights into the choices embedded in field-based research. As a way of understanding and explaining the social context and settings of these gendered interactions, the panel will focus on auto-ethnographic reflections, which foreground subjectivity, feelings and emotions of researchers working within culturally ‘familiar’ and ‘unfamiliar’ settings. This will illustrate how localized norms, perceptions and practices around gender intersect and affect researchers and their choices (practical, political, ethical) in the field. However, gendered identities might (and often) intersect with other identity markers (class, ethnicity, race).

Thus, to auto-ethnographically explore how the researcher's identities intersect and thereby co-construct research, the panel draws on intersectional theory which directs attention to oppression within and between categories of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etc. These multiple categories intersect to affect our social relations, individual experiences, and subject formations and although such intersectional experiences and social divisions are often naturalized (i.e., argued to be due to biological differences), they vary greatly across cultures.

This panel therefore cuts across different geographical regions, cultural settings and issues to illustrate (i) the researcher's intersectional experiences through an auto-ethnographic approach and (ii) how these experiences and choices in the field are influenced by cultural norms and worldview of the respondents.

Send paper abstracts to: Sara Lei Sparre, saraleisparre@cas.au.dk

10. Distributing choice: when care explodes the liberal chooser

Convenors: Andreas Birkebæk AAU, Katy Overstreet AU & Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen AAU

According to Annemarie Mol and colleagues (Mol 2008; Mol, Moser & Pols 2010), the liberal 'logic of choice' that pervades contemporary Euro-American societies can be contrasted with a 'logic of care' that rests on the situated tinkering of care work. Care does not fit in a world of 'free' consumer choice, because care is characterized by distributed agency and a loss of control. In the case of health care, for example, care tends to rely on a fragile coordination of care workers, patients, technologies, words, and embodied knowledge where outcomes are unpredictable and negotiated.

In this panel, we ask what happens to choice and decision-making when examined in relation to a logic of care. In Euro-American contexts, the notion of care draws attention to the fragility and artificiality of moments of choice that imagine individual actors in politics (Latour 2003), in healthcare (Mol 2002, 2008), in agriculture (Mol, Moser and Pols 2010), and in other areas of life. Care makes visible the situated nature of agency and the ability to choose in light of the ways that technologies and other nonhumans shape encounters. Finally, the notion of care raises the question of how to act morally in a world where there are no universal principles available to support

decision-making. Each situation is different and moral action is relative, according to the logic of care. Assigning value to something becomes intimately connected to the practical activities of valuing (Heuts and Mol 2013): knowing something has value is tied to the ‘doing’ of it as valuable, of caring for it. Care, then, roots choice in a situated and relational frame where value emerges through networks of co-production (Jasanoff 2004).

When actions are not driven by liberal choice, how do agency and decision-making need to be re-evaluated? Where and how are choice and care in tension or alignment? What happens to responsibility once the logic of care has distributed agencies and drawn our attention to the situated and vulnerable nature of choosing? How do modes of care impact anthropological practice and moral action? How do carers manage the fragilities of care work? And what other ‘care-like’ notions exist that question powerful discourses of choice? We invite papers that address these and related questions theoretically and empirically across diverse fields including but not limited to healthcare, agriculture and environments, media technologies, and infrastructure.

Send paper abstracts to: Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, aoa@learning.aau.dk

11. Voting as the exemplary ethical act: sovereignty, subjecthood and the alienation of choice

Convenors: Matthew Carey KU & Frauke Mennes KU

Representative democracy, as an ideal and political system, is predicated upon the periodic concentration of sovereignty and subjecthood into the act of voting. The voter distils her ethics, beliefs, ideology, taste, dispositions and pragmatic bent into a singular act of subject-making at the ballot-box and then alienates this ethical subject for the duration of the mandate. As such, voting becomes an exemplary ethical act, both in itself and for what it says about the voting subject: I am this or that kind of a person... And this sits very well with Euro-American ideas of subjecthood as emerging out of key moments of more or less unalloyed choice that fashion the chooser as a particular kind of person.

This at least is the idea. In practice, people sell their votes, vote *en bloc*, alienate their choice to a patron, vote the same way as their mum did, or choose the candidate with the nicest eyes. On one level, this can be seen as a simple abdication of choice, and in a non-negligible sense, it is. But it is

also, in many cases, a prioritising of a different kind of non-electoral choice, a privileging of kinship, neighbourliness, economic ties or simple subsistence.

This panel explores the local moralities and discourses surrounding these alternative choices. How do people perceive their choices, how do they justify them, and how do others perceive them? How do people make sense of this in relation to the perception and interpretation of the democratic ideal-type? And what does it tell us about their ideas of personhood and subjectivity? We encourage submissions from everybody working more or less everywhere.

Send paper abstracts to: Matthew Carey, matthew.carey@anthro.ku.dk