

MEGA SEMINAR, SANDBJERG, 16-18 AUGUST, 2017

CALL FOR PAPERS

# THE END

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## DEADLINES AND DATES

15.01.17	Deadline for panel submissions
03.03.17	Call for papers
01.04.17	Deadline for submission of paper abstracts
02.04.17	Notification of acceptance
01.06.17	Registration Deadline
31.07.17	Final programme

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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Organized by  
The Department of Anthropology (AU)  
and the Department of Anthropology (KU)

# CALL FOR PAPERS

**DEADLINE: 1 April, 2017**

We received a range of exciting panel proposals for the MEGA seminar 2017, all taking up the challenge of thinking “the end” through the lens of anthropology and the ethnographic endeavor. In the present document you will find a description of all accepted panels. These will also be displayed on our website [conferences.au.dk/mega2017](http://conferences.au.dk/mega2017) which will be up and running very soon.

*We welcome papers from people at all stages of their academic careers. Submissions from Ph.D. students and young scholars are particularly encouraged.*

## **How to submit a paper abstract?**

Abstracts should be a maximum of 250 words and must clearly indicate the panel to which they are applying. As a rule of thumb (and unless the relevant panel description states otherwise), expect around 15-20 minutes of presentation time for each paper. The exact format of each panel will be decided by the convenors of each panel. We encourage panel convenors to contribute to “the end of ordinary conferences” by thinking about alternative and unconventional forms of presenting and reflecting on papers (boring paper readings must come to an end!).

Please note that paper abstracts **must be submitted by email to:** [mega2017@cas.au.dk](mailto:mega2017@cas.au.dk). The **deadline for paper abstract submission is 1 April**. After a quick review process, paper presenters will be notified if their paper was accepted. Notification will go out by 1 May at the latest.

## **What about registration and payment?**

Registration for MEGA 2017 is run as a separate process with its own deadline (1 June). The estimated cost of participation is 1500 kr, including accommodation and all meals. Further information on registration is forthcoming on the website.

**Please note that it is utterly crucial that you complete registration by 1 June**, as otherwise there will be no accommodation available at Sandbjerg during the event!

## Keynotes

Our three distinguished keynote speakers for the MEGA 2017 are professors Elizabeth Povinelli, (Columbia University), Douglas Holmes (Binghamton University – the State University of New York) and Diane Nelson (Duke University). More information on their work will be available on the MEGA 2017 website in due course.

## The Theme

Anthropology has for many years been occupied with themes and concepts addressing (first) **continuity** and (later) **change**. Early disciplinary paradigms of cultural and structural continuity, stability, equilibrium etc. gave way, over the decades, to analyses of social change, instability, disruptions, inventions and mobility. Change is still central in much recent thinking and theory – e.g. on ‘emergence’, ‘becoming’ and ‘potentiality’ – employed to understand the human condition as a dynamic, shifting and often precarious one.

**The MEGA seminar 2017** asks what happens if we bracket becomings, emergences and hopes for a while, to **focus instead on “the end”**. We wish to ponder and explore different kinds of endings, finitude, conclusion; the power of that which is set to be no more. This focus can be used not only to rethink the articulation between continuity and change, but also be fruitfully utilized to review a wide variety of empirical and theoretical concepts and phenomena. After all, everything has to end. Lives are finite; buildings collapse; communities are broken. Even statues, made to last, eventually tumble. Francis Fukuyama, famously, posited the end of history. Others foresaw the end of politics, of reason, or of the nation. Importantly, finitude is not invariably tragic but can also be productive, necessary, or striven for. Discussing whether the end of something is presented as a goal, as a doomsday scenario to be avoided, as realistic or illusory, as necessary or superfluous, as a cultural or natural process, may shed new light on a wide array of classical anthropological themes ranging from cultural classification to political struggle.

**What does it mean that something ends?** How is the end identified? Wherein lies its power? What ontological status do things, institutions, lives have when they end? How can we know, and how can we explore something that has ended? Is a beginning the opposite of an end? Or is an end just another word for a new beginning? And what comes next?

## Contact information

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Webpage: [conferences.au.dk/mega2017](http://conferences.au.dk/mega2017)

# Panels, MEGA-seminar 2017

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## **Panel 01: *Rebounding and Returning: After the End the Same Again?***

**Convenors: Steffen Dalsgaard (IT-University) and Anders Emil Rasmussen (Moesgaard Museum)**

Sometimes the turn of events seems decisive, only to turn out to be otherwise. Sometimes people return successfully after what was thought to be the end. Sometimes they manage to move on. Whether it is the careers of individuals that survive a collapse or a bankruptcy, or certain defeats that become victories, the return of those thought to be lost forever has in numerous cultures served as inspiration for myth, stories, poetry, art and human agency in general. Conversely, returns may be embedded in structure as cyclical never-endings, as argued by numerous scholars from Mircea Eliade to Marshall Sahlins.

The topic may equally refer to the phenomenon of outdated technologies that obtain a renaissance, the rewilding of territories, the bodily experiences of returning to good health, or relapsing into sickness. It may also refer to the status of continuity in an era where innovation and newness is celebrated. In anthropology we might intuitively think of our object of study as being in a state of flux, but how do we explain things that appear to be – and are described as being – the same, a reoccurrence of the exact same event or object again? What is history repeating if not farce, nor tragedy? What is the nature of sameness across time? With this panel, we aim to explore the experiences and understandings, the politics and the businesses, and the agencies and structures of rebounding or returning 'after the end'.

## **Panel 02: *The End of Anthropology as We Know It?***

**Convenors: Maja Hojer Bruun (AAU), Cathrine Hasse (AU), Dorthe Brogaard Kristensen (SDU) and Marie Stender (AAU)**

Cultural and social anthropology has lost its definitional power over what anthropology is, as more and more disciplines and fields not only adopt ethnographic methods but also capture and produce theories about the anthropos, such as philosophical anthropology, theological anthropology or Bruno Latour's anthropology of The Moderns. Also academic disciplines, practitioners and others who do not necessarily formulate their own anthropology work with particular assumptions about what humans are or should be. Moreover, new automated technologies such as robots, biological enhancers, biosensors, etc. challenge our taken-for-granted understanding of humans and may change the object of anthropology: the humans.

A related trend is that anthropologists more and more often work in interdisciplinary teams or conduct interdisciplinary research. This is, of course, not a new development, but reminds us of the time before the institutionalization of anthropology as an independent academic discipline. While some interdisciplinary fields have already developed into full-fledged (sub)disciplines with their own methodologies and theoretical debates, these days see new fields such as Design Anthropology, Architectural Anthropology, Techno-Anthropology, Business Anthropology and Market and Management Anthropology. In these contexts, anthropologists are collaborating not only with the state and public agencies but increasingly also with the private sector that not only serves public but also commercial interests. Our new collaborators have different genres and media of communication, they are explicitly oriented towards changing the world, fixing pre-defined problems or offering services and products, and often they actively promote the development of normative standards or universal aesthetic values.

Interdisciplinary work not only raises questions about what anthropology is but also how it is practiced and learned: Can anthropological research be conducted by people who are not trained as 'anthropologists'? How and to what extent? What kind of anthropology comes out of cross-disciplinary transformations? Long-term, place-based fieldwork is endangered but often also complemented or substituted by methods such as netnography, visualizations, design methods, co-creation and other interventional methods. Interdisciplinary encounters, including with disciplines that rely on positivist epistemologies or normative-aesthetic values, nurture new epistemological debates. Do we need new genres to explicate anthropologists' tacit or embodied practices that we have been reluctant to spell out? What becomes of social and cultural anthropology in these new encounters? Is it turned into an essence or a token?

The panel invites ethnographic presentations, critical reflections and programmatic statements that illustrate, describe or perform the end of anthropology as we know it or what comes next.

### **Panel 03: Escalations: A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Accelerating Change**

**Convenors: Lars Højer (KU), Stine Puri (KU), Anja Kublitz (AAU) and Andreas Bandak (KU)**

In this panel we wish to explore how messianic understandings – utopian, dystopian, millenarian etc. – may incite momentous present actions that, while possibly serving to produce the future anticipated, may also divert people's orientation to other imagined ends (or simply generate distraction). In other words, we want to invite ethnographic presentations that explore the relation between strong teleological understandings and “distraction”. More specifically, we would welcome a discussion of whether such messianic understandings and their (unpredictable) effects have gained increased prominence, or simply a different kind of importance, in a world characterized by the different rhythms (where ends often seems to end in no time) and increased speed of new forms of communication.

The panel is organized in the framework of “Escalations: A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Escalating Change”, a collaborative research program funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research.

## **Panel 04: Apocalyptic Anthropology – Aiming For the End**

**Convenors: Malthe Lehmann (AU), Thomas Fibiger (AU), Henrik Vigh (KU) and Henrik Hvenegaard (KU)**

The last 20 years of anthropology have been occupied with producing a canon of joy, a canon that celebrates world making and concept building, through a vast collection of assemblages and rhizomatic connections. The effect of this joyous bias in anthropology is a sense of wonder and belief in the world, accompanied by the enjoyment of creating concepts that express how things really are and in what ways the world truly exists.

This panel wishes to make up for this over-focus on joy and seek the dark underside of cosmology: the end of the world. Instead of simply appreciating the forces that produce the world, we invite people to think along the line of how the world will end. A kind of intervention that has once been called the death of God or the death of Man (Nietzsche, Foucault). With this panel we aim to discuss anthropological approaches to apocalyptic thinking and practices. How do people practice apocalyptic cosmologies, how do they work towards the(ir) apocalypse or how do they escape this? And how do they envision life after the end? We are particularly interested in exploring how people informed by various social and cultural imaginaries practice the apocalypse by working for and towards an apocalyptic end to this world.

The panel furthermore asks how far a sense of end-time and radical political and cosmological shifts – of a world apparently doomed to end – shifts and changes ethnography and anthropology. Might this be conceived as an occasion for anthropology to end itself and reemerge in a different form? What are the consequences and possibilities for anthropology as the apocalypse moves ethnographically closer?

This panel's counter-canon to much current anthropology takes its beginning with the end of the world as it is depicted in religion, by radical reformists and revolutionaries, seeking the end of this world in order create a new from the ashes.

We invite people to share their apocalyptic ethnography, to kill our idols, so that we might reveal new beginnings both inside and outside anthropology.

## **Panel 05: Ruins and Rhythms of Life and Development after Progress**

**Convenors: Stine Krøijer (KU) and Marie Kolling (SDU)**

Since the rise of capitalist modernity, people have been entangled in the tale of development and progress. Dreams of progress and modernization did not only form colonialism and post-WWII development assistance, but have been with us everywhere: in ideas of personal and economic growth, in human relations to nature and in collective hopes for progressive change. The aspirational experience of progress – the sense of continuous improvement and movement towards something better – seems to be disappearing. In all quarters of the world, the belief that industrial modernization would generate prosperity and material affluence has been challenged by the disintegration of European socialism, by recurrent global economic crisis, by lurking climate catastrophe or simply by the failure of planned development. Anthropology has increasingly turned towards the study of precarious living (Allison 2013, Tsing 2015, Pedersen 2012, Povinelli 2011), the ruins and debris of progress, landscapes of destruction and the after-life of industrialism and extensive modernization projects (Gordillo 2011, 2014, High and Lewis 2007, Stoler 2008, Tsing 2015).

We welcome papers that explore ethnographically and theoretically the temporalities and uneven rhythms of life and development 'after progress'. What happens to our ethnographies if we give up on unilineal ideas of progress and abandon the hope that the normal state of affairs is characterized by continuous improvement and progress? What are the rhythms and temporalities of human life-making projects across the globe that comes into view if we accept that progress is in fact an exception? How are the ruins of progress engaged with and re-imagined in everyday life? What processes of ruination unfold when the speed of modernization comes to a standstill, or does the aspiration for the return of progress never quite come to an end?

## **Panel 06: The Uses of Dystopia**

**Convenors: Stine Krøijer (KU) and Matthew Carey (KU)**

Utopias have long been a privileged object for the social sciences. This is primarily because of what these radical dreams of possible futures can tell us about the societies we live in today. But it is also because utopias were such a significant element of the wider political landscape. At the heart of each of the great political projects that marked the long twentieth century (including Communism, Fascism, and North Atlantic Capitalism) there lay a utopia. They were one of the fundamental political technologies of the last one hundred and fifty years.

The question is how useful utopias are for understanding the practice of politics, in its widest possible sense, in the twenty-first century. Francis Fukuyama has been much derided for his naivety since the publication of the *End of History and the Last Man* in 1992, as waves of scholars and global events have combined to pour cold water on his idea of a steady convergence towards liberal democracy. In one sense, though, he was quite right. Shared visions of radical alternative futures have largely disappeared from mainstream politics and even society at large. Everywhere utopias are in disarray (cf. Buck-Mors 2000).

Positive visions of the future have largely been replaced by evocations of the horrors that await us if the other side gets their way: social democrats will drive the country to ruin; unbridled capitalism will ravage both society and the environment; new communication technologies will lead to a total surveillance society and the collapse of social relations; immigration will usher in a European caliphate. In short, we live in an era whose primary political technology is the dystopia. For these are what dystopias are: not 'the end' or the pure chaos of the apocalypse, but visions of the world as others would have it.

This radical social and political shift has not received the attention it deserves. The importance of dystopias has been amply discussed within the humanities (e.g. Booker 1994), but their wider place in society has not received similar attention from the social sciences. What little work there has been (e.g. Gordin et al 2010) has retained the literary focus on the imagination. This workshop proposes instead to explore the uses of dystopia and invites papers that address one or more of the questions: how are different kinds of dystopian visions (political, technological, social, religious and environmental) deployed and instrumentalized across different societies and social groups? What are the effects of dystopias as a new political technology? How can a shift in focus from utopia to the uses of dystopia shed light on popular, scholarly and political discourses surrounding such pressing concerns as environmental change, mass movements of refugees, and neo-authoritarianism?

The panel theme is linked to a forthcoming issue of *Tidsskriftet Antropologi*, but people not wishing to write an article for TA are also welcome to present a paper.

## **Panel 07: *Movements to an End***

**Convenors: Astrid Lovelady (St. Andrews), Anja Simonsen (KU), and Tina Gudrun Jensen (KU)**

The idea of an end is traditionally built into the notion of migration as a one-way journey from A to B, putting an end to life in A and undertaking a new life in B. However, over the last two decades migration has increasingly been viewed in terms of different forms of mobility, movements attributed with particular meaning in the form of, for example, social mobility, personal development or livelihood opportunities. While movement is associated with change of physical location, it may therefore implicate continuity in the pursuit of particular ends.

In this panel we wish to explore different forms of mobility and the complexity of ends they may involve. Mobility may entail both endless processes of movement with varyingly perceived consequences, successions of more or less definitive end points, and continuously renegotiated social ends. Consider for example the discursive argument of migration as the end of Western civilization; the politically designed and in principle absolute end-points constituted by a Schengen border; or, at the level of interpersonal relationships, the separation of family members putting an end to former relations.

We call for contributions that explore the notion of the end as generated by movement. The contributions should:

- A) reflect on the nature of that end – is it for example a point in time, a goal, a threat, endlessness or an ending – a process that contains its own narrative structure ?;
- B) discuss how the particular nature of the end conditions the ways in which we study it ethnographically and the kinds of anthropological knowledge we thus produce.

The panel will be organized in a workshop format. As a basis for the discussion, the presenters will be asked to pre-circulate a rough 2-3 page outline of their main themes, arguments or questions. The panel format will be further developed after reception of the abstracts.

## Panel 08: *The End of Nature?*

**Convenors: Kirsten Hastrup (KU) and Heather Swanson (AU)**

Nature's end has been proclaimed often enough over several generations since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Yet, nature somehow refuses to learn the lesson; it continues to intrigue and fascinate, and not least to insist on being part of the lived world of humans on its own terms.

Discussions around the "Anthropocene" have reignited debates about nature's fragility and demise. Author Bill McKibben, for example, raised concerns about human planetary domination in his book, *The End of Nature*:

"If the waves crash up against the beach, eroding dunes and destroying homes, it is not the awesome power of Mother Nature. It is the awesome power of Mother Nature as altered by the awesome power of man, who has overpowered in a century the processes that have been slowly evolving and changing of their own accord since the earth was born." (McKibben 1989: 51).

Yet even as McKibben's waves are human altered, they continue to exceed the human. How, as anthropologists, do we engage the wonders and terrors of these more than human forces that continue to shape our worlds?

Currently, anthropologists are taking up the challenge of reclaiming a place for nature and are broadening the scope of analysis to domains on the borders of the conventional field of vision where nature keeps showing, not as a substratum of human life but as inherently part of it and vice versa. In this panel, we want to look forward and to discuss to where this may lead anthropology in the 21st century.

While the title of this panel poses a major conceptual and philosophical question, we mainly solicit papers that offer concrete examples of nature's insistence on being part and parcel of the human world, even where humanity is at its most destructive.

We want to show what anthropological analysis may offer in reconnecting people with ancient and future landscapes. The following themes serve as preliminary indicators of the field we want to explore. They are by no means exclusive, and we invite bold takes on already established concepts through actual case studies.

*Ruined landscapes (nuclear landscapes, toxic dumps, contaminated oceans)*  
*Eating habits (artificial foods, beleaguered pig-farms, natural tastes)*  
*Companion species (microbes, mammals, other 'others', biodiversity, holobionts)*  
*Natural disasters (anthropogenic forces, post-sustainability, politics)*  
*Depleted resources (mining, natural fertilizers, species-loss)*  
*Ecological nostalgias (rewilding, ecotourism, genres of art/nature writing)*

## **Panel 09: Post-Diagnosis Life: The End of Diseases and the Rise of Chronicity**

**Convenors: Alexandra Ryborg Jønsson (Yale/KU), Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (Statens Institut for Folkesundhed), Helle Ploug Hansen (SDU), Susanne Reventlow (KU) and Michael Andersen (Independent researcher)**

The steady rise of cures and treatments throughout the last decades has transformed many formerly lethal diseases into chronic conditions. These conditions might not be curable but can be treated and lived with. More than one third of the population in the West are diagnosed with such chronic conditions. Anthropology has contributed with insights revealing how some people do not acknowledge themselves as being 'ill' or simply reject the categorization of being a 'patient' when symptoms are not present. Thus, upon being given a diagnosis, a period of treatment and sometimes posttreatment, but after that, life goes on for many with or without symptoms, hence not feeling either ill nor as patients having a disease. Based on various empirical materials, this panel focuses on the notion of chronicity by discussing the ways people cope, navigate and live post-diagnosis. From people with cancer trying to regain an everyday life after being declared symptom-free to the growing number of elderly people living with several chronic conditions, we try to contribute to a new body of medical anthropology by exploring how a term like chronicity can contribute to the understanding of people's life worlds after diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation (cf. Mattingly, Grøn & Meinert 2011).<sup>1</sup>

One question anthropologists could raise is: When more than one third of the population is diagnosed with a chronic condition what then happens with the understanding of disease and healthcare? Another is: Should anthropologists put a new focus on post-diagnosis life and for example explore the meaning of chronicity?

The panel seeks rich ethnographic descriptions, films, photo essays for display and texts addressing aspects of chronicity or post-diagnostic life. The aim is to bring anthropological sensibility to this new era of treatments, cures and rehabilitation that somewhat changes our perception of what it means to have a disease – or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Mattingly, C., Grøn, L. & Meinert, L. "Chronic homework in emerging borderlands of healthcare" In: *Cult Med Psychiatry* (2011) 35: 347. doi:10.1007/s11013-011-9225-z

## **Panel 10: *At the End of the Line – Life On the Margins***

**Convenors: Eva Gulløv (DPU), Laust Lund Elbek (AU) and Jonas Strandholdt Bach (AU)**

At the end of cities, at the end of countries, at the end of continents, lie places that are often marginalized, sometimes even forgotten, where the State might not hold absolute authority or struggles to enforce it. These places are sometimes out of the public eye, but are also sometimes suddenly catapulted to the fore, perhaps when something causing outrage happens, like in Tønder or Brønderslev, or when they become epicentres of streams of refugees, like the Mediterranean islands Lesbos and Lampedusa, or become arenas for political debates on ghettoization, radicalization and integration, like Gellerup, Tingbjerg and Vollsmose. This might spark interest from central administrations and national media and politicians that is somewhat unwanted by the locals.

But these places, where the known parts of the city, or the country, or the continent, ends, might also serve as starting points to others, or simply, home. To immigrants and refugees arriving in Europe, Lampedusa might be the first landfall, before they move on to the margins of countries and cities, and there is also money to be made for entrepreneurs, be they landlords in the slums of major cities, supranational agencies enforcing immigration policies, or through criminal enterprises like smuggling. But being at the end of somewhere, might also provide easier accessible career ladders in business and local administration because it can be hard for places on the fringes to attract highly qualified or specialized labor. It might also mean a larger sense of freedom from State control, access to cheaper housing and perhaps access to wild nature.

We invite papers that delve on the upsides and downsides of being at the end or the margins of somewhere else, at the opportunities present, and the blind alleys some might find themselves in, on the strategies of local administrations, businesses and entrepreneurs, and on state policies that intervene in local life – or leaves it to itself.

## **Panel 11: (T)Reason – The End of Loyalty?**

**Convenors: Perle Møhl (KUA), Kristina Grünenberg, and Ayo Wahlberg and the Technology and Political Economy Researcher Group at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen**

The Academy, in the 21st century, has been significantly marked by a collaborative turn. Calls for interdisciplinarity, new public-private partnerships, innovation hubs and indeed impact 'beyond the Academy' have pushed even the most stalwart 'ivory tower' academics into new forms of working collectives. Much has been written and made of this collaborative turn (see Frickel et al. 2017 for an overview) as scholars have critically explored the challenges, obstacles, strengths and limitations of bringing together not only academics who have been schooled and formed within different ecologies of knowledge, but also university academics and 'real world' practitioners (whether from business, public services or civil society). A relatively common quip within this burgeoning literature on collaboration is to contrast a 'positive' definition of collaboration ("to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor") with its more sinister dictionary entry: "to cooperate with or willingly assist an enemy of one's country and especially an occupying force". Despite such witticisms, hardly any scholarly work on collaboration has taken this latter definition seriously. In this panel, we take our point of departure in betrayal as a means of investigating what might be thought of as positioning techniques amongst collaborators. Notwithstanding its obvious potentials, collaboration practices often generate self-doubts about 'selling out', suspicions about the Other's motives and worries about losing integrity. In the last two decades especially (albeit with antecedents that go back much further), anthropologists have begun collaborating with the 'enemy' – profit-driven businesses, quantitative economists, reductionist biomedical practitioners, 'quick and dirty' consultants, formidable military combatants, authoritative border guards, to name a few. How do anthropologists position themselves in these new collaborative assemblages? What forms of betrayal are at stake? How are such betrayals mobilized by those who collaborate? What is it that is 'lost' in collaboration? Is criticality still relevant in an era of collaboration and impact?

## **Panel 12: *All's well that ends well? Observational Cinema and Ethnographic Film***

**Convenors: Anne-Mette Jørgensen (Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen) and Peter I. Crawford (AU)**

Prominent visual anthropologists have claimed that observational cinema lends itself particularly well to film-based anthropological enquiry. Marcus Banks (Oxford) thus once wrote that observational cinema was the 'jewel in the crown' of ethnographic film, whilst Paul Henley (Granada Centre, Manchester) emphasized its ability to represent ethnographic fieldwork. Colin Young, the former director of the National Film and Television School in the UK, who first wrote about 'observational cinema' in the context of anthropology, in the seminal volume edited by Paul Hockings in 1975, *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, has undoubtedly influenced a whole generation of ethnographic and documentary film-makers, those we nowadays tend to describe as the 'pioneers'. In recent years, however, observational cinema has been heavily criticized as being 'boring', 'old-fashioned', full of long takes and so-called passive third voices, reduced to 'fly-on-the-wall' approaches, by for example Jay Ruby, calling for more experimental forms, and Rane Willerslev. This panel invites papers and presentations that may contribute to an understanding of observational cinema in the past and present of anthropological enquiry and may either promote the idea that the observational approach, as do, for example, Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (2009) is still alive and kicking, and developing, or claim that we have seen the end of observational cinema. If the latter is the case, does that imply the end of ethnographic film, and radical changes in the wider field of visual anthropology? We are particularly interested in presentations based on or at least using audio-visual elements, such as film clips.

## **Panel 13: *Death, Desire and Digressions***

**Convenors: Marianna Päivikki Keisalo (AU) and Morten Nielsen (AU)**

In a series of writings from around the time of World War I, Freud introduced the idea of a death drive. The ultimate objective with life, Freud posited, was to return to a state of inorganic quiescence, that is, death. Still, death should only be reached in the right way: The human organism has to ward off any way of ending life that is not immanent to itself. In desiring the end, then, there is also an impulse of pleasure that asserts itself by delaying death until its full realization is possible. With this panel, we wish to explore the relationship between the desire for death and the pleasure that emerges from its retardation. And we suggest to capture the dynamics of this unstable relationship through the concept of 'digression'.

From literature studies we know that all narratives have a desire for the end – the story has to go somewhere – and a drive for retarding the conclusion – without digression there would be no story. In this regard, digression constitutes a trajectory of a certain order that is followed through non-linear associations and narrative leaps. It is, we may argue, more than a literary figure or rhetorical device; it is a way of envisioning the world in its manifold interconnectedness through a form of narrative excess emerging from the interplay of a drive towards death and a pleasure principle that force digressions to multiply themselves.

We therefore ask: How might digression be a means to an end? Much like Scheherazade telling the stories of a thousand and one nights, how is death avoided through ongoing digressions? Can digression be a way to change an ending or is it only a way to defer the inevitable? If the end is near, can digression bring new perspectives to redefine the terms of our predicament, or is it merely a distraction while we await the End with equal pleasure and trepidation?

## **Panel 14: Public Anthropology and the End of Journalism?**

**Convenors: Christian Suhr (AU), Peter Hervik (AAU) and Carolina Sanchez Boe (AAU)**

News journalism has undergone tremendous structural changes in the past 15 years. Recent developments include the emergence of social media, direct publishing, news streaming, but arguably also an increase of political spin, "alternative facts", planted news, and the popularization of anti-intellectualist elites.

Traditionally, the free and independent press has been credited as the "Fourth Estate" and as the "Guardian of Democracy" that shielded the public from abuses of power, political propaganda, commercialism, and false information. However, a number of recent "media events" show how sensational news stories have come to play a key role in legislation and policy-making that actively delimit basic democratic rights such as the freedom of speech, the freedom of movement, or the freedom of religion. In a Danish context, the news stories and political debates that followed "The Mosques behind the Veil", "De-segregation of Swim Classes", "The Muhammad Cartoons", or "The Meatball War" are but the latest examples of this trend. Sensationalist news coverage increasingly appear to support and even promote populist ideas and agendas. Does the rise of sensationalized, fake and planted news signal the end of journalism?

Current developments in journalism also produce challenges for academics, who must reestablish themselves in an era characterized by a "decline of scholarly authority" and a degeneration of the public sphere "through processes of commoditization, monopolization, and competition among private interests over state-directed resource allocation" (Gullestad in Cody 2011, 39). For this reason, we invite papers that analyse the rise of sensationalist news coverage and the deteriorating role of traditional journalism. We particularly welcome papers that take their outset in the analysis of cases in which news stories have contributed to moral panics which have in turn resulted in policy making; papers contemplating the role of news media in contemporary societies at a more general level; and finally contributions on how public anthropology might counteract some of the harmful effects of the current dynamics of news media, and initiate new forms of public education.

We aspire for a session where we can engage in exchanges on the ways in which anthropologists (and scholars more generally) can address, inform, and positively apply their knowledge in highly politicized and polarized media debates.

## **Panel 15: *Alternative Endings?***

### **Open panel**

If you have an idea for a paper possibly, but not necessarily, in a different format (a poem, a film or something else?), which addresses the conference's theme – The End – but does not fit into any of the proposed panels, please submit to the 'Alternative endings?' panel.