

Sensus Communis: Exploring the Ontologies of Coexistence

International Conference, June 12-14 2019, Aarhus University

Existence is Coexistence

Human existence necessarily takes place with others. Whether these others are humans, gods or animals, spirits or specters, plants, rocks or artifacts does not change the fact that existence is coexistence. Gathering scholars from the anthropology of ethics, ontological anthropology and critical, philosophical phenomenology, the task of this conference is to consider - in a comparative and interdisciplinary spirit - the ontological questions to which our experiences of coexistence give rise.

Confirmed speakers

Lisa Guenther (Queen's University)
Jarrett Zigon (University of Virginia)
Cheryl Mattingly (University of Southern California)
Andrew Mitchell (Emory University)
Claudia Baracchi (University of Milan)
Bernhard Leistle (Carleton University)
Nils Ole Bubandt (Aarhus University)
Thomas Schwarz Wentzer (Aarhus University)
Maria E. Louw (Aarhus University)
Nicolai Krejberg Knudsen (Aarhus University)
Rasmus Dyring (Aarhus University)

Call for Papers

For information on the open Call for Papers (DEADLINE March 31, 2019) and how to participate in the PhD-course, see:

events.au.dk/sensuscommunis2019

Maria Speyer, 'Chaos Arching' See mariaspeyer.com

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Human existence necessarily takes place with others. It is originally coexistence. This premise is reflected in the basic concepts of the philosophical, sociological and anthropological traditions, such as Aristotle's *zoon politikon*, Tylor's *Culture*, Durkheim's *Social*, Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*, Heidegger's *Mitsein*, Levinas' *Other*, Nancy's *being-in-common*, etc. But also for otherwise individualistic thinkers like Hobbes, the others are there from the beginning as an always-present potential for violence and death. The premise is affirmed in ordinary life, when we find ourselves facing irrevocable demands from the others, whether they are ordered in kinship systems or arise in the extraordinary encounter with the radical *Other*. The premise is a fundamental tenet in mytho-religious concepts of consubstantiality such as *Gaia* and in practices of transubstantiation such as the *Holy Communion* or "cannibalistic" funeral rites. While animistic ethno-theories and shamanistic technologies, since the dawn of humankind, have testified to an all-encompassing interconnectedness belonging to organic life as such, an increasing technological augmentation of our surroundings and bodies has recently extended our "social" relationships also to entities whose life springs from silicon and code. Social media remind us – around the clock – that we are enmeshed in webs of (post)human relationships. The questions of climate change and the anthropocene, finally, reiterate the ever so pressing task of rethinking responsibility and relationality – human and beyond.

While two of the most prominent trends in anthropology; "the anthropology of ethics" and "the ontological turn", each in its own way, tacitly imply notions of ethical community, a range of decisive aspects pertaining to coexistence remains unexplored. In its eagerness to distance itself from Durkheimian collectivism, the anthropology of ethics leaves ethical community in a blind spot to focus instead on subject formation. Ontological anthropology focuses on a fundamental (animistic, panpsychistic, rhizomatic, semiotic) connectedness of all life, but in the almost holy name of a "flat ontology" it often leaves the specifically ethical dimensions of human action in a blind spot. The philosophical phenomenological tradition exhibits a range of attempts at exploring coexistence (e.g. Husserl's transcendental inter-subjectivity, Heidegger's *Mitsein*), but it has often been criticized for its subjectivist and totalizing tendencies, which leave alterity and plurality in blind spots. By bringing together the three approaches to coexistence, the conference will shed new light on these blind spots and show how the three different approaches complement each other in exactly these areas. In other words: the blind spots will appear to be cross-fields for interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

The aim of this conference is to consider a wide range of phenomena of coexistence and to pose, in a comparative and interdisciplinary spirit, the question of how coexistence is given in experience. The methodological claim, hence, is that the senses of coexistence are to be clarified through analyses of the ways in which we sense the predicament of coexistence.

Call for Papers:

We invite papers from all disciplines that fit within the theoretical framework outlined in the conference description.

If you would like to present a paper, please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words + a cover letter with your name, affiliation and email-address by March 31, 2019 to this email-address: sensuscommunis2019@cas.au.dk

To facilitate cross-disciplinary debate, all presentations – both invited papers and volunteered papers – will be organized into sessions that conclude with a joint discussion. Papers should be 35 minutes exclusive of Q&A.

If you are a PhD-student, please confer our website for information about the PhD-course. As part of the course, there will be a poster-session during the conference.

www.events.au.dk/sensuscommunis2019

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Organizers:

Rasmus Dyring, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Maria E. Louw, Associate Professor of Anthropology.