

# A PLACE FOR THE HEATHLANDS?

Human-heath relations in deep-time and contemporary perspectives

**February 5th-7th 2025, Moesgaard Campus, Aarhus, Denmark**

## Unearthing Heathlands: Exploring 5,000 Years of Human-Nature Coexistence from the Holocene to the Anthropocene

Over 5,000 years ago, Neolithic communities in Northern Europe began expanding heathlands, a heather-based ecosystem, through fire and livestock grazing. As an anthropogenic landscape, heathland served various purposes, functioning as winter pasture and a source of fuel, fertilizer and building material for domestic structures and ancestral monuments. Archaeological, historical and palaeoecological evidence suggests a complex history of human-heathland coexistence, with humans alternately promoting and abandoning them. Today, after 150 years of agriculture-driven landscape change, heathlands face extinction.

With this conference, we finalise the first phase of the ANTHEA project, funded by the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement 853356), which investigates the development of heathland landscapes through four focus areas: ecology, spatiality, biosocial aspects, and temporal dynamics, across seven study areas in Northwestern Europe. The conference is followed by the launch of our digital book, *A Place for the Heathland?*, with more than 35 contributors, as well as selected artistic contributions.

The conference will explore the evolving relationship between humans and heathlands from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. We seek to uncover cultural traditions, economic practices, and forms of ecological coexistence that have shaped anthropogenic heathlands. By bringing together scholars, practitioners, and artists from a variety of different backgrounds, we also aim to initiate a comprehensive discussion about the future of heath landscapes in relation to their vibrant past. You can register for the conference and read more about it here: [A place for the heathlands? Human-heath relations in deep-time and contemporary perspectives.](#)

Themes of contributions include:

1. Prehistoric ways of life, including Neolithic hunting and gathering, Bronze Age/Iron Age pastoralism and agriculture
2. Reflections on the value of a deep-time, archaeological perspective
3. Site-specific studies of heathland landscapes
4. Interspecies relationships and successional dynamics
5. Histories of heathland reclamation and fragmentation
6. Threats posed by atmospheric nitrogen deposition
7. Heathland as "Nature" and conservation objects
8. New ways of revitalizing and inventing practices (e.g. shepherding & heath farming)

We invite you to submit an abstract of no more than 200 words. Paper talks will be c. 20 minutes. Moreover, do get in contact with us if you wish to contribute an artistic installation (e.g. photo collage, visual art, ceramics work, earthworks, weaving etc.).

All abstract submissions and enquiries can be sent to: [placeforheathlands@cas.au.dk](mailto:placeforheathlands@cas.au.dk)

Deadline for submissions is October 31st 2024.

*Mette Løvschal & The ANTHEA project team,  
Aarhus University & Moesgaard Museum*

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