

# A place for the heathlands? Human-heath relations in deep-time and contemporary perspectives

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A DIGITAL PUBLICATION

More than 5,000 years ago, Neolithic communities of Northern Europe initiated the first expansion of an open heather-based ecosystem known as heathlands. Wielding fires and grazing livestock, humans cleared the post-glacial forest and expanded the niche for *Calluna vulgaris* (heather) and other heathland plants. Heather, an evergreen shrub, served as a vital resource for winter grazing, fuel, tools, thatch, byre-bedding, and fertilizer. With its multiple affordances, *Calluna* heathlands became deeply embedded in domestic and funerary architecture and widely spanned trade, mobility, and networks. Palaeoecological, archaeological, and historical evidence suggests a complex dynamic of heathland persistence over these five millennia with humans at times favoring and promoting heathlands, at others exhausting and abandoning them. Despite this remarkable persistence, heathlands are now on the precipice of extinction, ravaged by a century and a half of agricultural modernization and land use change.

With this digital publication, we will explore shifting human-heathland relationships from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. We hope to unfold a multitude of cultural traditions, economic practices, and forms of more-than-human sociality that have organized anthropogenic heathlands in the past and present. By drawing together scholars, practitioners, and artists from different backgrounds, we hope to spark a broad-spectrum conversation about the future form of heath landscapes as it relates to its deep, colorful past.

Potential themes of contributions include:

- Prehistoric ways of life, including Neolithic hunting and gathering, Bronze Age/Iron Age pastoralism and agriculture
- Reflections on the value of a deep-time, archaeological perspective
- Site-specific studies of heathland landscapes
- Interspecies relationships and successional dynamics
- Histories of heathland improvement and fragmentation
- Atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Heathland as “Nature” and conservation objects
- New ways of revitalizing and inventing practices (e.g. shepherding & heath farming)
- Arguments for/against heathland preservation

We intend to publish the volume as an open-access digital format that will allow contributors to explore alternative or experimental formats in addition to traditional academic essays e.g., interviews, field notes, fiction, poetry, art, and video/photo essays, etc. The publication will be accompanied by a conference in autumn 2023 with presentations by the contributors and potentially a small exhibition and heathland outing.

Please submit a short 2-300-word abstract to Mia Korsbæk (korsbaek@cas.au.dk) in which you also specify the intended length and format of your contribution. Deadline: July 15<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

On behalf of the ANTHEA project team:

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ANTHEA



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