

What time is it to you?

One-day workshop at Moesgaard Museum 7, April 2016

In this workshop we will explore the roles and work of time, chronology or temporalities in our research. In an exhibition at Moesgaard Museum, opening in early February, we engage different ruined landscapes where questions about remnants, degradation, resource exploitation, growth, regeneration, and future livability are at play. In the workshop as in the exhibition we want to address how to understand traces of previous activity in landscapes and in our analyses? If humanistic and social science approaches work with thoroughly open-ended and dynamic categories and objects of study, then what does it mean to date them? One might ask, perhaps slightly polemically, whether fossils exist at all?

In a conversation between perspectives from archaeology, ethnology, anthropology and history we thus basically want to explore what time is to us.

If we accept that our objects of inquiry and concern are never settled, in what ways, if at all, is it then fruitful to talk about before, now and in the future? Are we satisfied by the argument that the past is always mediated by the present, or is the here and now the only point in time from where things emerge? How can we work with sediments, stratifications, layers, archives, dates, and historic events, if everything is generated in an analytical now? And/or does such a radical presentist orientation instrumentalize the past to meet contingent interests, conceived in specific and/or random moments? What politics are possible and impossible by thinking through temporalities?

Through different cases presented in the workshop, we want to address the implications of looking for, thinking with, excavating or discovering something we might carelessly refer to as 'past'. How and why are certain previous events or objects seen to have a bearing in contemporary analyses? And in what ways are they then 'previous'? Is this a matter of freezing or of actualizing? On what grounds do we establish links between different eras or moments?

The workshop is explorative, and the format will be that participants each present a case (15 minutes) that in one way or another discusses these and related questions.

A detailed program will be sent out as soon as we know who will participate.

In hopes that you would like to think about this with us and with best wishes,

Felix, Frida and Nathalia