

*Highlights of the year 2013**AURA - Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene*

AURA began September 1, 2013. The project, led by Niels Bohr professor and anthropologist Anna Tsing, aims to open up a novel and transdisciplinary field of research into the geologic epoch called the Anthropocene -- the time period when humans have become "a force of nature." Applying insights and methods from anthropology, biology and philosophy, the project will focus on the 'co-species landscapes' that humans and other species come to co-inhabit.

Opening Conference at Aarhus University, November 6.

The project's opening conference at Aarhus University was attended by a number of internationally renowned scientists in both the human and natural sciences. Niels Bohr professor Anna Tsing (anthropology, AU) gave the opening speech. Kirsten Hastrup (anthropology, University of Copenhagen), Jens-Christian Svenning (bioscience, AU) and Marianne Lien (anthropology, Oslo) each gave presentations on their research on the Anthropocene. The conference was extremely well-attended and was an ideal launch of the AURA project. The entire event was filmed and posted on AURA's website: www.anthropocene.au.dk



Niels Bohr professor Anna Tsing gives AURA's opening speech at AU.

Slow Seminars, Methods Workshops and Guest lectures

AURA has a strong focus on transdisciplinary knowledge exchange and the supervision of junior researchers. The creation of transdisciplinary fora is therefore a priority for the project. In September 2013, the project launched its series of seminars, called "Slow Seminars," where graduate and PhD students from across the humanities and natural sciences meet with established researchers and dive into a variety of subjects on a monthly basis. The "slow" part of the

"Slow Seminar" signals the group's commitment to gradually build a strong foundation for transdisciplinary research. The seminars are open to all and will continue in 2014 via videoconference with Anna Tsing and other researchers in California. A series of transdisciplinary Methods Workshops were also introduced by the project in November 2013. These workshops give the AURA team and other interested parties the opportunity to exchange methods and insights from within different academic backgrounds. In the autumn of 2013, the project organized three Methods Workshops, which were attended by scientists from a variety of professional backgrounds. Professor Andrew Mathews of the University of California, Santa Cruz, was a guest lecturer at one of the events, where he gave a lecture on "the use of natural history in anthropological fieldwork."

Establishment of a Brown Coal Field Station in Brande

In autumn 2013, the project established a research field station at a former brown coal mining area in Brande. The site was the center of brown coal mining until the 1970's and is characterized by a unique geological landscape. Today the former mining landscape varies from deep excavated nutrient-poor lakes, sandy hills, and planted plains, making it an ideal place to study the flora and fauna that have emerged after the brown coal mining has stopped. The project is using this site as a key place for both research into interspecies relations on anthropogenic landscapes and for methodological training. The transdisciplinary group of researchers and students made 7 visits to the field station in 2013, and more collaborative excursions are planned for 2014.



There are over 700 lakes in the Brown coal area from which the water was pumped away when the mining was still taking place. (photo: Elaine Gan).