

## **Rubber Boots Methods for the Anthropocene Curiosity, Collaboration, and Critical Description in the Study of Co-species Worlds**

### **A Node Conference**

**Moesgaard Museum (Aarhus University) - in conversation with other nodes**

**26-27 November 2018**

This conference presents experience-based reflections on the methods needed to study – empirically and critically – the environmental and climactic crisis sometimes referred to as the Anthropocene. Instead of inviting discussions of the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept or accepting it as the marker for a geological epoch, this conference begins from the premise that the term Anthropocene is a heuristic term for a particular kind of messiness: a patchy and globally heterogeneous landscape of disrupted co-species relations, which may be studied empirically and on the ground. “Rubber boots methods” name the diverse set of methods that researchers associated with AURA have employed to study this patchy landscape of disrupted co-species relations. Rubber boots methods are driven by an empirical curiosity about the social relationships that all beings, whether human or nonhuman, establish with each other. Rubber boots methods are transdisciplinary and collaborative because this empirical curiosity is shared by biologists, anthropologists and other fieldwork-based disciplines. And rubber boots methods are critical, insisting on empirical descriptions that are historically founded and challenge the limits of the real. Starting with methods rather than ontology or epistemology, this conference suggests, allows for empirical studies of the messiness of contemporary life that ask some of the big questions of our time. How, for instance, can the shared tradition of empirical fieldwork be retooled to study these co-species socialities in a grounded way when the ground on which we stand, the landscapes we inhabit and the air that we breathe are themselves changing in dramatic ways? Can our methods for the Anthropocene be designed to capture both the ontological specificity of each patchy case AND the global scale of our current mess? What does it take to make our methods transdisciplinary and collaborative as well as self-reflexive and critical? Might we study co-species relations in all of their ecological, historical, and political complexity while also challenging the secular logic that informs most Western accounts of this complexity? How might we design methods for the Anthropocene that can deal with the more-than-human in terms that are also more-than-Western? This conference addresses these questions through accounts of practical methodological experimentation.

Responding to the carbon costs of conventional conferences held in one physical location, *Rubber Boots Methods for the Anthropocene* is organized as a “node conference” that invites groups of researchers on diverse continents to video-conference with the AURA node in Aarhus. For information about the conference and its nodes, contact [bubandt@cas.au.dk](mailto:bubandt@cas.au.dk) or [korsbaek@cas.au.dk](mailto:korsbaek@cas.au.dk).