



MANIFESTING THE MANIFESTO:

Manifesting the 21st Century Manifesto in Nordic Public Spheres

Thurs 20th – Friday 21st April 2023

Aarhus Institute for Advanced Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark

Hosted by the Centre for Rhetoric

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IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

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Welcome to the first conference and workshop for MANIFEST!

MANIFEST is an upcoming research network dedicated to exploring the manifesto as an artefact, concept, and genre in contemporary, 21st century life. From the US Declaration of Independence to far-right terrorist manifestos, Silicon Valley start-up mission statements to the social movement manifestos of 20th century modernity, these declarative documents for a creating, maintaining, or thwarting a new world order exist both as a textual expression and as a response to historical and contemporary political landscapes. And yet, despite this rich text's resurgence in the 21st century, the manifesto remains critically unexamined.

In today's tense political and social climate, we at MANIFEST argue that such a gap leaves a significant hole in understanding how social action is taking place in the 21st century mediatised West. Moreover, there remains a critical need to explore the manifesto beyond Anglo-American neoliberal capitalist democracies, and to examine how it functions specifically in both national and regional Nordic public spheres. Here, we not only argue for understanding the manifesto as a historical document capturing an ideological shift in thinking, but critically, we argue that they are able to incite true social change not only at the top-down but at the bottom-up level. It is therefore these gaps that this conference and workshop aims to fill.

Such questions go far beyond any single discipline. Although this idea began within the Rhetorical Ideas research group at the Centre for Rhetoric at Aarhus University, the study of the manifesto is equally at home within the history of ideas, political sciences, media and communication studies, history, and sociology. The idea of the MANIFEST network is therefore to bring together participants from the humanities and the social sciences

This two-day event is thus as follows. On the first day, Thursday 20th April, we are sharing our ideas in the first MANIFEST conference through the presentation and discussion of individual papers. Only one paper per session allows everyone to be heard equally and to therefore play an equal role in the following day's workshop. On the next day, Friday 21st April, we will expand on these ideas from the previous day specifically in relation to the specificities of national and regional Nordic public spheres. We will put into practice the social action promises of the manifesto by creating our own manifesto for the MANIFEST network. Moreover, these activities will then culminate in a brainstorming session regarding how we develop the MANIFEST research network further through additional funding, an official website, future activities, and a special issue publication of the papers from this conference. In order to prepare for the workshop, we have some recommended readings and some questions to think about beforehand.

Once again, welcome to Aarhus, and we look forward to a productive and engaging 2 days!

From the MANIFEST team at the Centre for Rhetoric, Aarhus University, Denmark

Programme

Location:

Aarhus Institute for Advanced Studies (AIAS)
1630, Høegh-Guldbergs Gade 6B, 8000 Aarhus

[Google drive](#) folder for MANIFEST

Thursday 20th April

Day One: Conference **EXACT TIMES & PRESENTATION ORDER SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

- 10 Breakfast and Registration in **AIAS Hall**
- 10:15 Welcome and introductions in **AIAS Auditorium**
- From 10:30, 30 minute presentations slots begin. Each presentation should be 15 mins, followed by Q&A.

10:30		Mikkel Thorup, <i>Radical Right Terrorist Manifestos – a New Manifesto Subgenre in the Making?</i>
11:00		Davide Orsitto, <i>Political Manifestos in Contemporary Media-Democracies: A Content-Analysis of Democratic deficits</i>
11:30		Marie Lund, <i>Wild Prose - The First Feminist Manifesto in Danish</i>
12		Lunch
13		Lisa Källström, <i>The Companion Species Manifesto</i>
13:30		Marcia Clare Allison, <i>Causing an Anthro-po-scene: Environmental Manifestos in the Time of the Climate Crisis</i>
14		Coffee and Cake
14:30		Kira Skovbo, <i>Teaching teens manifesto writing: An activist approach to sexual bildung and change creation at Danish folk high schools</i>
15:00		Sonia J. Shaikh, <i>OpenAI and the New Manifestos on Intelligent Technology</i>
15:30		Breakout Discussion

- **17:00 Online Keynote: G. Thomas Goodnight, Professor of Communication, University of Southern California**
- 18:30 Walk to restaurant

19: Dinner for participants at [Madklubben](#) Food Club.

Friday 21st April

Day Two: Manifesting the (Nordic) Manifesto workshop

- 8:30 Arrival and breakfast
- 9 Plenary discussion of previous day
- 9:50 Coffee break
- 10-12 Breakout and group work on creating our own Western and Nordic manifestos. Adapted from [Crowdsourcing a collective intelligence manifesto | Nesta](#)
- 12-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-14 Breakout sessions on Nordic cultural and political logic in comparison to the rest of the West
- 14:15-15:30 Publication workshop
- 15:45-16:30 Future funding options
- 16:30 Future plans and closing remarks
- 17-18 Wine reception

We hope that this workshop provides a valuable opportunity for participants to engage in thoughtful discussions and collaborate on building a research network dedicated to the manifesto in 21st century life. We look forward to continuing the conversation and working together!

Abstracts for Conference

Professor Mikkel Thorup, *Radical Right Terrorist Manifestos – a New Manifesto Subgenre in the Making?*

- **Professor in History of Ideas, Aarhus University, Denmark**

This paper will analyze what may be the emergence of a distinct subgenre of manifestos by radical right terrorists; more precisely it will look at four manifestos from Norway, New Zealand and the US to track the internal references in form, the repetitions between manifestos, to explore both the manifesto genre clues retooled to contemporary radical right violent purposes and more broadly to ask if these manifestos are to be understood as radicalized versions of the manifest's modern history-political dimensions or if they subscribe to new forms of history and politics outside the modern template of the manifest

Dr. Davide Orsitto, *Political Manifestos in Contemporary Media-Democracies: A Content-Analysis of Democratic Deficits*

- **Independent Scholar**

If the manifesto was born as one of the chief instruments of mass communication, divulgence and revelation of political, ideological and religious long-term views, in nowadays' representative Media-democracies, it has become a more pragmatic and concise statement of a political party's policy proposals and promises, often in digital format rather than in paperback. As a communicative policy-tool, it is essential for voters to orient their political preferences toward the selected party. However, nowadays' manifestos can be more misleading than in the past for their policyoriented approach. They can in fact show discrepancies between what parties promise and what they actually deliver once in office. Parties may in fact not live up to unrealistic promises and inflated expectation, and may also change their position over time, especially if they have to adjust to the bureaucratic inertia once they are elected in the governing cabinet. Seen in economic terms, this phenomenon can be

analyzed in terms of supply and demand: the ideological supply is what parties promise in their manifesto, the ideological demand is what ideological bundle is voted in various percentages, the policy supply is what the chosen elected party actually delivers in government. This paper quantitatively analyzes the democratic deficit between the ideological and policy supply by resorting to the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and manipulating its dataset in the most important policy areas of economic approach to markets, welfare, climate change and technological innovation in the Nordic countries, Italy, France, Germany and the UK. The ensuing democratic deficit will prove a useful measure to assess how healthy a democracy is and will be compared to standard Freedom House indexes.

Dr. Marie Lund, Wild Prose - The First Feminist Manifesto in Danish

- **Associate Professor of Rhetoric, Aarhus University, Denmark**

Although Mathilde Fibiger's epistolary novel *Clara Raphael: Tolv breve* (1851) is today recognized as the first manifesto of the Danish women's movement, a systematic reading of its rhetorical qualities is still in want. In this presentation, I re-read *Clara Raphael: Tolv breve* as a feminist manifesto that sparks the formation of a social movement. In discussion with rhetorical genre criticism and theories of social movements, the analysis focuses on the intersection of the literary and rhetorical qualities of the book.

Instead of reading *Clara Raphael 12 breve* as (poor) literature, I argue that it should be read as a political manifesto: a text which presents the principles and opinions that serves as the foundation of an ideology, or an artistic movement. Drawing on Martin Puchner's historical study of the manifesto as a genre, *Poetry of the Revolution* (2006), I search for a genre "insecure and therefore more aggressive in its attempts to turn words into actions and demands into reality" (Puchner, 22). In a rhetorical critique focusing on style and genre, I intend to show that it is exactly the pulse of the revolutionary manifesto that beats in the epistolary novel written by a 20-year old governess who for the first time speaks in political voice, demanding "Emancipation for the Ladies" and sparking a political feud involving more female debaters: "What Blanchot call the Manifesto's "impatience" is first of all

an impatience with itself, with the fact that it cannot be more than a call, a cry, a demand, an impatience with the fact that no matter how impassioned and effective, the manifesto will always remain a split second removed from the actual revolution itself. Throughout its subsequent history, the manifesto will be defined by this impatience, by the attempt to undo the distinction between speech and action, between words and the revolution.” (Ibid.)

Dr. Lisa Källström, *The Companion Species Manifesto*

- **Lektor of Rhetoric, Lund University, Sweden**

“Whom do I touch when I touch my dog” (2008, 3) Donna Haraway ask in *The Companion Species Manifesto*. Foregrounding her dogs individuality she proposes a model of interaction that does not reinforce traditionally accepted boundaries between human and nonhumans. The feminist pleads for overcoming species boundaries in the same way as gender boundaries. With our pets, we have long lived in a mixed world, also one of mutual dependence, similar to the technologies we use to compensate for physical deficits. Haraway asks: How, can we through the emergence of dog-human relationships learn ethics and politics that allow significant otherness to thrive? She ask how every encounter between humans and animals is a crossing of borders because it initiates an exchange. Living together becomes growing together. Critical posthumanisms, and new materialisms that propose an alternative understandings of the relationship between humans and their nonhuman environment (Alaimo 2010, Barad 2007, Bennett 2010, Braidotti 2013, Haraway 2016, etc) undeniably presents the rhetorician with a series of questions and problems. Based on her arguments and research in rhetoric that has taken a posthumanist turn, I discuss what such reasoning does to our understanding of rhetoric (Källström 2022, cf Bjørkdahl & Druglitrø, 2018; Bjørkdahl & Parrish, 2018; Barnett & Boyle, 2016; Cooper, 2011; Hawhee 2017; Kennedy, 1992; Källström 2022 etc).

Dr. Marcia Clare Allison, *Environmental Manifestos for Social Change*

- **Assistant Professor of Rhetoric**
- **AIAS 2021-2024 Associate Fellow, Aarhus University, Denmark**

Coming soon!

Kira Skovbo Moser, *Teaching teens manifesto writing: An activist approach to sexual bildung and change creation at Danish folk high schools*

- **Independent Scholar**

There is a tradition within feminist and queer activism of using the manifesto to create cultural change. Because of this tradition we can recognize, decode and understand what I call ‘the feminist gender manifesto’, and thus try to utilise it for change creation. Change requires action, and the feminist gender manifesto has the potential to facilitate and initiate this action by virtue of its properties as a polemical text. Thus, the manifesto can act as an agency engine for sexual bildung. Through my thesis *Gender Utopia! (2022)* I developed teaching material for a folk high school course, fusing gender discussions with manifesto readings and -writing, with the aim of presenting the students with tools to re-think their understanding of and relation to gender. The teaching material inscribes itself in the purpose of the folk high school movement- bildung and life enlightenment -while at the same time taking a new approach to facilitating the much debated questions of sexual bildung by using feminist activist methods and writing exercises from the realm of the manifesto. I have taught the course in different formats, ranging from 3 times a week over a seven week period, to one day events at different folk high schools in Denmark. Through this presentation I would like to share my experiences, learnings and reflections from both creating and teaching the course, with the hope to spark common reflections amongst the conference attendees on how we can use the gender manifesto for cultural change creation in Danish and Nordic public spheres.

Dr. Sonia Jawaid Shaikh, *OpenAI and the New Manifestos on Intelligent Technology*

- Assistant Professor, Amsterdam School of Communication Research,
University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Technology companies enjoy an unprecedented reach in societies across the globe. It is not an exaggeration to say that the technologies produced, deployed, and disseminated by these organizations shape the mundane and complex modern life and will continue to do so in the future. However, despite these developments, critical research on manifestos often lacks serious examination of agendas and materials that technology companies produce and claim to use as guiding frameworks . In this work, I fill some of this gap by focusing on OpenAI which has emerged as a key company involved in the business of creating intelligent or AI technology in the past few years. One of its products which is commonly known as ChatGPT has raised immense interest, hype, and speculation across the world for its incredible ability to perform various tasks for human users. OpenAI knows that technologies like the ChatGPT would have a long-lasting and transformative impact on the world and on the developments within the field of AI. Intriguingly, the company has a “Charter” and “Plan for AGI” which lays out its ambitions, goals, and perspectives for AI and AGI (Artificial General Intelligence). I examine these writings and plans as new manifestos on intelligent technology and focus on their needs and assumptions about people, technology, and future. I also argue that these manifestos shape the debate around intelligent technology with implications for development of critical ideas and policies. Essentially, this work emphasizes the importance of understanding corporate manifestos and the role they play in the creation of modern technological lives.

Keynote: Professor G. Thomas Goodnight



Professor in Communication, Annenberg School for
Communication and Journalism, University of Southern
California, USA

G. Thomas Goodnight is one of the world's foremost rhetoric, communication, and argumentation studies. A professor at Northwestern University for 20 years before moving to the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in which his leadership made it the world's number one Communication and doctoral department, Goodnight has been accorded career awards in Rhetoric and Communication Theory by the NCA and been named among the five top scholars in argumentation of the last 50 years by the AFA. Additionally, Professor Goodnight has taught Organizational Communication at the Master's level, and his undergraduate courses include seminars in the Rhetoric of War, Science Advocacy, Risk Communication, and an introduction to the field. A regular contributor to the Quarterly Journal of Speech, former editor of Argumentation and Advocacy, director of the 12th Alta Conference on Argumentation, Goodnight is a co-founder of the NU-University of Amsterdam graduate exchange. His current research interests include deliberation and postwar society, science communication, argument and aesthetics, public discourse studies, and communicative reason in controversy.

Homework for Workshop

[Here](#) is a google drive link to a shared folder for MANIFEST where you can access all the readings and many of the manifestos below. This will be our initial site for sharing information, readings, documents, etc, and everyone with access has equal contribution rights: what is in the folder is just to get us started. Please add any additional readings or even topics yourself. We will be using this folder during the workshop.

Recommended readings before the conference (direct link to them [here](#)):

- Wildstory blog.
- Hanna & Ashby (2022), Reflections on Manifesto Writing, *Journal of Multimodality & Society*, 2(1), pp. 23-30, DOI: 10.1177/26349795211072444.
- Kevles, D. J. (2016). What's Manifest in the History of SciTech: Reflections on *The History Manifesto*, *Isis*, Vol. 107, No. 2 pp. 315-323, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26455597>
- Nana Ariel (2021): Language games with 'Manifesto', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, DOI: 10.1080/14735784.2021.1984970

Websites to check out:

- <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>
- <https://www.nesta.org.uk/toolkit/crowdsourcing-collective-intelligence-manifesto/#download-the-toolkit>

Questions for consideration pre-conference and workshop

1. What are the rhetorical capabilities of the manifesto as a genre?
2. Are manifestos solely a written text? What role do visuals, graphics, and other multimodal devices play in the persuasive capabilities of these texts?
3. How can manifestos generate social action in the networked public sphere?
4. What role does history and/or cultural memory play in the manifesto?
5. How is identity constituted through this type of text?
6. What are the intersections between manifestos and digital platforms?
7. What makes a manifesto a manifesto?
8. How can we read the new forms of solo manifestos?
9. Are there inherent differences amongst the Nordic countries that can be seen through their manifestos?
10. Does a twitter thread count as a manifesto?
11. What role does social media play in the spread of ideas that culminate in an official text?
12. How does the manifesto intersect with different political ideologies in the West?
13. How is it possible to measure or test what manifests do?
14. Does the manifesto, as both a genre and a text, look and interact differently in both individual and collective Nordic publics?