

### **The Cold War in the US Southwest: *mesas*, cattle, and nukes //** By Lucie Genay, University of Limoges, France

Did you know that if the state of New Mexico—i.e. the cradle of the atomic age—decided to secede from the United States, it would be one of the leading nuclear powers in the world? Or that the same plains in the Texas Panhandle that produce most of the meat and wheat in the nation are also home to a nuclear weapons factory called Pantex? The secret Manhattan Project culminated in the creation of the world's first nuclear laboratory on an isolate *mesa*, at a place called Los Alamos, where physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and his colleagues gave birth to the first A-bomb before testing it in the *Jornada del Muerto* desert about two hundred miles to the south. The atomic venture also fathered the US nuclear weapons complex. This powerful machine developed exponentially during the Cold War era, which, according to some, started as early as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To assemble nuclear weapons, a bomb factory was necessary. The wartime ordinance plant known as Pan-Tex just outside of Amarillo on the other side of the New Mexico-Texas border reopened in 1951 to fulfill that mission. While cattle grazed on the pasture that separated the plant from the road and local farmers watered their fields, Cold Warriors on the other side of the fence were assembling nuclear components to produce weapons of mass destruction. By focusing on the impact of the Cold War on two areas—one that is home to the first witnesses, the first beneficiaries, and the first victims of the nuclear age and the other where the cohabitation of bombs, cows, and bibles eventually reached criticality in the late 1970s and 1980s—this presentation will address some of the fundamental concepts necessary to understand the modern United States, including patriotism, secrecy, federalism, and activism.

### **Civil Defence in the City: Aarhus as a Site of the Imaginary Nuclear War //** By Rosanna Farbøl

At 6.30 pm on the 4th of April 1962, a 10 KT nuclear bomb exploded over the city centre of Aarhus, Denmark. Civil defence personnel immediately reported for duty as the number of casualties kept rising. At the sites of damage, medical posts, and hospitals doctors, ambulance drivers, rescue workers, and police worked tirelessly to save as many lives as possible. The catastrophe everyone dreaded had happened. On paper. The carefully planned drill was designed to train urban civil defence. While a Soviet nuclear attack on Aarhus, or indeed on any Danish city, was purely imaginary, civil defence was certainly very real. An extensive system of civil defence including shelters, warning systems, educational materials, emergency hospitals and much more was planned in detailed. . Civil defence has in a sense always been an aspect of city building but this was more urgent in the nuclear age of total warfare; the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had demonstrated all too clearly what was in store for urban populations. This paper examines urban civil defence using the city of Aarhus as a case study. It asks how civil defence was organized and performed in the city, and how urban geography and materiality affected development of civil defence architecture and imaginaries. It argues that clear links were established between civil defence and urban development, and between urban spaces of welfare and warfare.

### **Nuclear Fallout as Risk: Denmark and the Thermonuclear Revolution //** By Casper Sylvest

The debate over radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing and use that unfolded from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s was a complicated and wide-ranging dispute over knowledge – it included questions about the properties of fallout, its long-term health effects and whether civil defence was possible after the thermonuclear revolution. In his paper I examine how this debate unfolded in Denmark. To a striking extent, scientific debate structurally mirrored US developments: it was dominated by two opposing scientific positions that drew much of their force from similarly opposing factions abroad. Disagreements among scientists caused bewilderment among civil defence officials and deep concern in the peace movement. Calls for public information were only met in the early 1960s, shortly before the debate came to an end. The analysis highlights the limitations and political pressures on knowledge production in a small, dependent state during the height of the Cold War. In conclusion, I reflect on the historical implications of the fallout debate: the recurrent contemplation of death, destruction and global risk gave contour to a series of emerging questions about technology, environment and the future that have since become prevalent.