

Call for Articles

Berliner Blätter | Ethnographische und ethnologische Beiträge

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Interdisciplinary perspectives from the ontological turn

In August 2019, the Amazon forest is on fire; in Indonesia, burnt forest areas are creating space for oil palms; in Siberia, fires are melting the ice of the Arctic. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world protest on streets in September 2019 and demand that the climate targets agreed in Paris be met. Newspapers report mountains of rubbish in New Delhi that will soon be as big as the Taj Mahal and the EU is debating a ban on plastic bags. Weather events are increasing in strength, as is the flow of people fleeing from their homes. The situation is worsening, the relationship between people and the environment seems to be transforming.

At the same time, science is debating the ontological change in various disciplines and from different perspectives – also, with regard to nature-culture relations and human-environment relations. While social and cultural anthropology reveals the plurality and diversity of existing and associated worlds, European ethnology/cultural anthropology and science and technology studies focus on the multiple facets of being and its conditions. The former asks the question of "what" is, the latter asks the question of "how is when". The objects of research vary; they include questions of cultural (Kohn 2007) and everyday practice (Mol 2003) as well as types and politics of knowledge production (Latour/Woolgar 1981, Kuhn 1997 [1962]) - always in the nexus of technology, knowledge, society, and environment. Contemporary debates focus on vibrant and active matter in the sense of a New Materialism (e.g. in Barad 2007) as well as on types of the enacted (Mol/Law 2004) and the hegemonies that act on them (Blaser 2013, De la Cadena 2010). Eventually, the multiplicity (Mol 2003) and diversity (Pickering 2017) of being and the world are shown. Dichotomies between society and technology (Haraway 2016) and nature and culture (Viveiros de Castro 1996, Descola 2005) are broken up and now conceptualized for example as naturescultures (Gesing et al. 2018).

What the disciplines have in common is that they break with previously seemingly fundamental ontological certainties in order to generate new and different insights into traditional and current subject areas and have effects on how we want to understand and see nature, culture, environment, matter and ultimately the world in the future. What they also have in common is their methodological approach to research, which marks what was already the subject of ethnological disciplines before the ontological shift: the recognition of different versions, concepts, and perspectives of being (Charbonnier et al. 2017). Nevertheless, there is still criticism of the ontological turn as such (Graeber 2015), as well as of posthuman perspectives that want to have an anthro-decentralist effect, but at the same time further cement the globally hegemonic production of knowledge (Braidotti 2019, Tuhiwai 2012).

In this issue of the 'Berliner Blätter', we would like to give space to studies that analyze and interpret ethnographic observations from this theoretical perspective. These can be critical analyses of scientific processes such as climate change modeling, of climate protection measures such as REDD+ or of political agendas on environmental protection. Studies on everyday practices around and with water, land, forest or garbage can be done as well as on the concept of the Anthropocene or on local knowledge systems. Movements such as Fridays4Future or alliances against hydropower or coal mining can also be addressed.

The following questions should be at the center: Which ways of being can (how) be recognized in empiricism? How do phenomena and practices present themselves from the point of view of theoretical approaches to ontological change? What benefits can we derive from this and what does this mean for the empirical phenomena? Also, questions about power relations, transformation processes or discourses and norms can be discussed. We are also interested in the matter of possible connections between the various disciplines: Where do breaks and conceptual differences lie between social and cultural anthropology, European ethnology/cultural anthropology and the research field of science and technology studies? Where can theories and approaches also be profitably integrated and how can such a theoretical connection look like?

Organization

Please send your abstracts by **31 October 2019** to the following address: eitel@em.uni-frankfurt.de

You will then receive feedback as soon as possible. The proposed contributions (German or English) should not exceed 4,000 characters (including spaces) and, in addition to a short summary, should provide information on the central issue, empirical basis and the status of your own research. We request the finished articles by **31 March 2020**. This volume will be published online and in Open Access.

We look forward to your contributions!

The editors,

Michaela Meurer and Kathrin Eitel

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