

International Conference

Ecologies of Gender. Contemporary Nature Relations and the Nonhuman Turn Freie Universität Berlin, Seminarzentrum, 1.–2.11.2018

Abstracts

Sven Bergmann

Entanglements between the Synthetic and the Natural: Speculative Ecologies of Plastics in the Environment

When biological life becomes entangled with the non-living, these emerging entities and arrangements should be studied thoroughly, also with regard to issues of care and responsibility. For example, synthetic materials such as plastic have become part of the environment. They participate in the reassembling of environments and ecosystems by forming novel aggregates, habitats, and interactions with other species. These new habitats (coined the “plastisphere”) and life forms between the spheres of the natural and the synthetic challenge scientific knowledge production and complicate forms of concern and care for these evolving materials and environments. They form “mutant ecologies” (Masco 2004) with specific temporalities and somewhat speculative and/or not yet well-understood effects, such as in the case of the microplastics that have become ubiquitous in the ocean, the atmosphere, and the soil. Thus, modern ideas of cleaning and purification become contested. However, the fascination with the erosion of categories and the alignment and orientation of hybrid objects should not make us blind to the social and political implications. Still, we have to live with the disasters engendered by modernity and capitalism. Caring for naturecultures means dealing with that problematic: in my theoretical and methodological framework, a more-than-human approach serves as a feminist and sensitizing concept that should warn us of so-called solutions whose epistemologies rely very much on the separation of nature and society.

Sven Bergmann is a cultural anthropologist currently working as a research associate at the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Research at the University of Bremen, Germany. His research interests range from feminist technoscience, kinship, reproduction, and the body to political ecology, marine and environmental anthropology, and economies of waste. His post-doc research deals with the problematization of plastics in the ocean and other environments.

Diana Coole

Proliferating Flesh: Sustainability and the Nonhuman Turn (KEYNOTE, THU evening)

The “nonhuman turn” summarizes recent ontological and normative approaches that reject anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. Can they throw new light on understanding and transforming our existentially threatened world? Given that the very existence of the nonhuman is imperiled (such as through biodiversity loss), environmental sustainability is an urgent normative and practical concern. But what does the nonhuman turn add to more conventional ways of addressing this issue? The idea of the Anthropocene—a new geological era in which humans indelibly alter the very fabric of the Earth—is valuable in emphasizing the imbrication of the human and nonhuman: of the bio- and the geo-; of animals, humans, and machines. Actor Network Theory (ANT) is helpful, here, for generating detailed studies that trace the intricate networks and relationships connecting micro-level practices and



macro-level systemic effects among myriad agencies. Yet the Anthropocene is also the Age of Man and the principal causes of our ecological crisis are anthropogenic. Must a critical theory not also therefore recognize specifically human responsibility for degrading the planet and its natural resources? Yet how does this fit with the nonhuman turn and with ecologies of gender? I consider this apparent paradox through the idea of “proliferating flesh”: a term that refers to both a nonhuman (phenomenological) ontology of generative immanence and, more prosaically, to population growth and the burgeoning of productive/fertile human flesh. As bodies become more numerous and literally heavier, demography and reproduction emerge as significant but often neglected elements of contemporary nature relations.

Diana Coole is Professor of Political and Social Theory at Birkbeck, University of London. Her publications include *Negativity and Politics. Dionysus and Dialectics from Kant to Poststructuralism* (2000), *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism* (2007), *Should We Control World Population?* (2018) and, co-edited with Samantha Frost, *The New Materialisms. Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (2010). Her research interests cover several areas of modern and contemporary critical theory, in particular Marxism and classical political economy, phenomenology and existentialism, gender and environmental studies. Her interest in materialist analysis has recently drawn her to studying demography and examining controversial claims about the impact of population change.

Kristina Dietz and Bettina Engels

Gendered Nature Relations through the Lens of Critical Space Theory

The aim of this presentation is twofold: to conceptualize the relationship between gender and nature as mutually constituted, and to outline the analytical potential of spatial categories for understanding contemporary transformations of gender and nature relations. We first argue for a dialectical understanding of gender–nature relations. On the one hand, society and subject positions are deeply interwoven by the way in which nature is and has been appropriated, managed, and represented. On the other hand, nature is socially constructed in two ways: it is materially produced by economic, technical, and everyday practices and is symbolically and discursively constructed through cultural interpretations, meanings, and ideas. Transferred to gendered-nature relations, this means that nature—in the way it is socially appropriated, produced, accessed, and culturally represented—is gendered from the very beginning. Conversely, gender and gendered subjectivities are constituted through material interaction with and symbolic understandings of nature and changes in the environment. Nature becomes social, that is “gendered nature.” But to take gendered nature as a point of departure does not mean that nature is social all the way down. We argue that nature is, at the same time, socially produced and productive, meaning that nature’s materiality can make a difference in relation to how social configurations (e.g. gender relations) unfold. But not in a deterministic way. Only in social practices does this materiality become socially meaningful and productive. Based on these assumptions, in the second part of our presentation we discuss the relevance of “space” and how spatial categories enable a comprehensive analysis of current (global) transformations of gendered nature relations. Referring to our own empirical research on conflicts over land and mining in Colombia and Burkina Faso, we sketch different spatial dynamics that we see as crucial for understanding changing gendered nature relations: *place and place making, scale and scaling, territory and territorialization, and global/transnational production networks.*

Kristina Dietz and Bettina Engels both hold PhDs in Political Science and are joint directors of the BMBF-funded Junior Research Group “Global Change – Local Conflicts? Conflicts over land in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa in times of global transformation.” In addition, Bettina Engels holds a position as Junior Professor of Empirical Conflict Research with Focus on sub-Saharan Africa at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science.

Angelica Fenner

Casting Sandra Hüller: Gender, Race, and the Corporeal

At age 40, German actress Sandra Hüller, originally from Suhl, Thuringia, can be seen to be fully hitting her professional stride. She gained visibility quickly following her very first feature-length lead role as Michaela Klingler in Hans-Christian Schmid’s acclaimed *Requiem* (2006), for which she received multiple German and European awards for Best Actress. Her ensuing casting in dramatic and comedic features over the past decade offers evidence that her first starring role has set a certain precedent. One could debate whether this should be attributed to a continuity in acting style and the performative imprint actors bring to their roles, or whether her characterizations are primarily shaped by the directives of script and director. This distinction—between an actor’s agency and the constraints imposed by film scenarios—dovetails with the impetus in most star studies to emphasize the discursive construction of the star as an amalgam of mutually informing public and private personae. Yet, for this presentation, I am interested in exploring the significance of a both phenomenologically-inflected and intersectional worldmaking that emerges, one in which whiteness, corporeality, and changing norms of (bourgeois) femininity in the contemporary era gain significance, not least in relation to postfeminism. Drawing on feminist (film) theory, phenomenology, and posthuman and performance studies, I will focus, in particular, on Hüller’s performances of the sexual maternal body as well as sexual non-reproductive (post)femininity, with an eye to how these respective emplotments implicate the affective in coordination with the corporeal, even creaturely. In turn, I assess how these emerging personae function to variously assimilate or resist projects of nationhood and/or racialized, patriarchal, and hegemonic politics.

Angelica Fenner is Associate Professor in the Cinema Studies Institute, and Associate Chair of Graduate Studies in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include German cinema, theories of autobiography, affect, critical race studies, and women’s authorship. She is author of the book *Race Under Reconstruction in German Cinema* (U Toronto Press 2011), coeditor of *The Autobiographical Turn in Germanophone Documentary and Experimental Film*, and essays on German and European cinema for various journals and edited collections. Most recently, she co-edited with Hester Baer a special issue of *Camera Obscura* titled “Women’s Film Authorship in Neoliberal Times: Revisiting Feminism and German Cinema, to appear in December 2018.

Gülay Caglar

“You are what you eat”. Feminist Political Ecology and Food

Food plays an important role in societies. Apart from fulfilling one’s biological needs, food – its production, consumption and preparation – is deeply ingrained in the economic and social fabric of communities. The commodification of food has altered communities’ relation to food and the environment; it has resulted in the distancing of people from the food they eat, its quality, and the way it is produced. In this context, food justice movements started to

emerge during the past decades, trying to advocate for alternative food systems respectful of the environment and the welfare of supply chain actors. This paper introduces the idea of alternative food networks and seeks to reflect their practices of food production, consumption and preparation from a Feminist Political Ecology perspective. Do gendered power relations change when practices of food production and consumption are modified?

Gülay Caglar is Professor for Gender and Diversity at the Otto-Suhr-Institute of Political Science at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests include Critical Food Studies, Feminist International Political Economy, Transnational Feminisms and International Governance. In her current research she investigates how shifts in gendered food practices (production, consumption, food preparation) and food activism affect policy priorities in international food governance. She co-edited the book *Feminist Strategies in International Governance* with Elisabeth Prügl and Susanne Zwingel (Routledge 2013).

Wendy Harcourt

Body Politics and the Nonhuman Turn: Learning from Past, Present, Future

This paper looks at how Western feminist theory on body politics can learn from indigenous resistance in the search to reimagine and remake the world through pluriversal understandings of life-in-common strategies. Inspired by indigenous scholars such as Irene Watson (2009), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013), and Leanne Simpson (2011) the paper explores how feminist understandings of body politics can “build on the indigenous where negotiation, compromise, and balance are mobilized alongside challenging, deconstructing, and disrupting normative sexual politics” (Mithlo, 2009: 8–10). For example, caring for country, in indigenous Australia, is the equivalent to caring for one’s own body. It is an act of self-preservation and self-protection, and it engages a deep knowledge of interdependency of body and land. In this vision, body politics is about past, present, and future so that the embodied self is part of the history of country, both spiritually and physically. The nonhuman is powerfully evoked in understandings of aboriginal body politics of the present bound by the need to uncover the colonial violence that is layered on the broken vertebrae of the past. Taking examples from feminist engagement with indigenous Australian knowledge, the paper explores meanings of nonhuman and human that speak of possibilities for regeneration and resurgence despite a deeply violent and painful past and present.

Mithlo, M. 2009. “A Real Feminine Journey: Locating Indigenous Feminisms in the Arts.” *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 9(2): 1–30.

Simpson, L. 2011. *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back*. Winnepeg: ARP Publishing.

Tuhiwai Smith, L. 2013. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2nd edition). London: Zed Books.

Watson, I. 2009. “Sovereign Spaces, Caring for Country, and the Homeless Position of Aboriginal Peoples.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108 (1): 27–51.

Prof. Dr. Wendy Harcourt is Professor of Gender, Diversity, and Sustainable Development and Westerdijk Professor at the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University in The Hague, The Netherlands. At ISS/EUR she is Coordinator of the EU H2020-MSCA-ITN-2017 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN) WEGO (Well-being, Ecology, Gender, and Community) and Chair of the ISS Institute Council. Professor Harcourt joined the ISS in November 2011 after 23 years at the Society for International Development, Rome as Editor of the journal *Development* and Director of Programs. Her

book *Body Politics in Development* won the FSWA prize in 2010. She has written and edited 12 books and is series editor of the Palgrave series Gender, Development, and Social Change and the ISS-Routledge Series on Gender, Development, and Sexuality.

Sanna Karhu

Politics of Gender in Feminist Philosophies of Life

Over the past few decades, feminist philosophers have increasingly turned to metaphysical questions about life and matter. These posthumanist feminists, including Deleuzian feminists such as Rosi Braidotti and Elisabeth Grosz, develop their theories in a critical opposition to poststructuralist feminist thinkers, like Judith Butler, who have focused on language, epistemology, and the discursive and historical constitution of the subject. As they see it, the over-emphasis on discourse and language has erased the questions of real matter, nature, and the nonhuman. What often goes unnoticed, however, is that Butler, too, has increasingly discussed the problem of life in her later work. In this paper I argue that Butler's account of life offers us a nascent but more promising feminist critique of anthropocentrism compared to Deleuzian feminism. Although Deleuzian feminists provide fascinating insights into non-anthropocentric feminist thought, they problematically postulate sexual difference as an essential aspect or even a prerequisite of life and thus depoliticize feminist thought. I will demonstrate that Butler's theorization of life, in contrast, politicizes not only gender but also our relations to the nonhuman world, enabling new understandings of feminist politics in times of environmental crisis.

Dr. Sanna Karhu is a postdoctoral scholar in Gender Studies, University of Helsinki. Her doctoral dissertation *From Violence to Resistance: Judith Butler's Critique of Norms* (2017) discusses Butler's theorization of the relationship between norms and violence in light of the concepts of critique, resistance, and livability. Karhu's postdoctoral project "Animal Trouble: A New Ecofeminist Critique of Speciesism" (2018-) seeks to problematize speciesism by bringing Butler's critique of norms together with ecofeminist theory. Her research interests include feminist theory, queer theory, ecofeminist political theory, and critical animal studies. Her work has appeared, for example, in *Hypatia*.

Natalie Lettenewitsch (Chair)

Natalie Lettenewitsch has studied film and television studies, theater studies, general linguistics, and journalism in Munich and Bochum. From 2002 to 2012 she worked for various film institutes and film festivals, working on programs and in an editorial capacity. From 2012 to 2018 she was a research assistant at the Institute for Media Studies at the University of Paderborn. Her dissertation project was on the history and politics of documentary and popular science underwater films. Her most recent publications include: "Fundstücke aus der Tiefe. Filmische Tauchgänge zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Geschichte," in: González de Reufels, Rasmus Greiner, Stefano Odorico, Winfried Pauleit (eds.): *Film als Forschungsmethode. Produktion – Geschichte – Perspektiven*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer 2018, pp. 79–90; "Prekäre Flanerie. Filmische Streif- und Beutezüge durch Berlin," in: Georgiana Banita, Judith Ellenbürger, Jörn Glasenapp (eds.): *Die Lust zu gehen. Weibliche Flanerie in Literatur und Film*. Paderborn: Fink 2017, pp. 16–193; "At land, at sea. Die Strände des Kinos," in: Christian Hüls, Natalie Lettenewitsch, Anke Zechner (eds.): *Die Körper des Kinos. Für eine fröhliche Filmwissenschaft*. Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld 2015, pp. 227–240.

Susanne Lettow

Conjunctures of the Human: Towards a Historical-Political Epistemology of Anthropological Difference

As we now know, Foucault was wrong when he predicted that the figure of the human that emerged in the late eighteenth century would disappear by the end of the twentieth. Within the context of the nonhuman turn, this figure has re-surfaced so that we have to deal, time and again, with the political and epistemological problems of this figure, in particular the problem of “false universalism.” In my talk I begin with Donna Haraway’s claim that “urgent work still remains to be done in reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of women and human, properly pluralized, reformulated and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences.” In order to pluralize the human and to unpack the problematics that are condensed in this figure I suggest developing a historical-political epistemology of anthropological difference. I will give a first outline of this project by drawing on examples from German *Naturphilosophie* around 1800, from approaches of philosophical anthropology in the first decades of the twentieth century, and from recent post-humanism. In particular, I will discuss the question of how far anthropological difference intersects with sexual difference. I argue that a critical reconstruction of the historical conjunctures of the human in the Anthropocene, or its philosophical, scientific, and political articulations in the epoch of capitalist industrialization, is important in order to develop a better understanding of how conceptualizations of the human are part of historically specific configurations of societal nature relations.

Susanne Lettow is a senior researcher at the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies and *Privatdozentin* at the Institute for Philosophy of Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests focus on feminist philosophy and theory, philosophy of nature, critical theory of technology, and history and philosophy of biopolitics and the life sciences. Her publications include: *Biophilosophien. Wissenschaft, Technologie und Geschlecht im philosophischen Diskurs der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt/Main und New York: Campus 2011; the edited volume *Reproduction, race and gender in philosophy and the early life sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press 2014; and recently “Turning the Turn: New Materialism, Historical Materialism and Critical Theory,” in: *Thesis Eleven. Critical Theory and Historical Sociology*, 140 (1) 2017, pp. 106–121.

Natania Meeker

Becoming Plant Nonetheless I

This talk will focus on moments of “becoming plant” as a utopian possibility in feminist writing—from twentieth-century feminist fiction (Anne Richter, Ursula K. Le Guin, Han Kang) to new materialist anthropology and environmentalist critique (Natasha Meyers, Stacy Alaimo). While the idea of “becoming plant” has an obvious resonance with the work of Deleuze and Guattari, the writers and theorists named above invoke Deleuzo-Guattarian notions of “becoming” and “flow” to imagine concrete scenarios in which the enactment of new feminist and queer subjectivities is made possible in and through plant matter. (In this sense, “becoming plant” suggests a radical botanical origin for the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome itself.) This paper argues for the necessity of a materialist articulation of political subjectivities under late late capitalism, in a time of accelerating climate change. Plant becoming functions to push contemporary new materialism, particularly in its queer and feminist dimensions, into a transfigurative, posthuman, and ultimately speculative direction. In a sense, “becoming plant” represents an impossible project for any human subject, since



plants exist not as an alternate subjectivity for humans but at the very limit of subjectivity as such. Ultimately, this talk will explore the ways in which the attempt to “act out” this impossible vegetal becoming is something other than a form of impersonation or projection of human modes of identity onto other beings. Becoming plant involves a recognition of vegetality as challenging our assumptions about who we are and what we know, in ways that enable a feminist and queer critique of the here and now.

Natania Meeker is Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. She is currently working on a study of feminine materialisms in and around the French Enlightenment. With Antónia Szabari, she recently completed a manuscript entitled *Radical Botany: Plants and Speculative Fiction from Early to Late Modernity*, forthcoming in 2019 from Fordham University Press.

Ramona Mosse

Unthinkable Environments: Performing Across Space and Time in Ella Hickson’s *Oil*

In this paper, I will explore the concept of the “unthinkable” that dominates environmental discourses on climate change and the Anthropocene and which, in both the public discourse and the media, tends to be tied closely to the threat of an apocalyptic future in the face of global warming. However, I would like to analyze a set of more ambiguous formulations of “the unthinkable” as a radical opening to rethink and restructure how we think, narrate, and perform. In this context, it is particularly the experience of scale, both in terms of space and time, which allows for a turn towards the non-human in cultural production and for a re-examination of how space and time operate. In particular, I would like to focus on Ella Hickson’s recent play *Oil* (2016), which combines the topics of energy and gender exploitation in a theater piece that follows the story of two unlikely protagonists: oil itself as the energy source that has fundamentally shaped the workings and materials of our culture and the female protagonist May, whose pursuit of oil across space and time allows her to become detached from her own historical moment and to move from 1850s Cornwall to a post-oil future of 2051. Hickson’s play becomes an example of a more complex and varied engagement with climate change and highlights the fact that much of the current theater work on environmental issues has been created by female playwrights and theater makers.

Dr. Ramona Mosse is a Lecturer in Theater Studies at the Goethe Universität Frankfurt/Main and an Associate Fellow at the International Research Center for Interweaving Performance Cultures, Freie Universität Berlin. She also teaches as a Visiting Lecturer at Bard College Berlin. She is the co-editor of Erika Fischer-Lichte’s *Routledge Introduction to Theater and Performance Studies* (Routledge 2014) and her work on philosophy and theater, metatheater and performativity, theories of tragedy, and the politics of contemporary drama and performance has been published in international journals such as *Anglia*, *Theatre Journal*, and the *Performance Philosophy Journal*. Ramona’s current research focuses on theatrical responses to climate change and questions of ecology in performance. She holds a PhD in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University.

Renata Motta (Chair)

Renata Motta is Assistant Professor in Sociology at the Institute for Latin American Studies. Previously, she was Associate Professor at the School of Culture and Society at Aarhus University. She received her PhD in Sociology from the Freie Universität Berlin in 2015. Her teaching and research interests include political sociology and social movements, social

inequalities, gender and environment, and food studies. She has authored articles in these areas for *The Journal of Agrarian Change*, *Social Movement Studies*, *Sociology Compass*, *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, and for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). She has authored the book *Social Mobilization, Global Capitalism and Struggles over Food: A Comparative Study of Social Movements* (Routledge, 2016) and co-edited *Global Entangled Inequalities: Conceptual Debates and Evidence from Latin America* (Routledge, 2017). Her current project, funded by the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies (FU Berlin), is entitled “Bridging Environments: United by Food,” on political-ecological coalitions around food.

Sabine Nessel

Gender | Nature | Nonhuman Animal: Vervielfältigung von Differenz im Kino

The environment and nature are conceptualized in current discourses (such as New Materialism, Human or Cultural Animal Studies, Environmental Humanities, the Anthropocene) as complex entities at the intersection of actors, global relationships, and cultures. The terms “gender,” “nature,” or “nonhuman animal” are part of this discourse, and what links them is the historical reference to difference that is specific to each. In film, the natural conditions are aesthetically modulated and realized in a variety of ways: in the form of plants, animals, cyborgs and their environments, as exotically coded landscapes, fixed in scientific experiments, in nature documentaries, ecodramas or (climate-)catastrophe films, as well as in avant-garde and amateur films. Taking the concept of figuration (Haraway) as a point of departure, the lecture will introduce and discuss positions that attest to a proliferation of difference. Within this proliferation of difference, the historicity of the idea of individual difference can be recognized.

Umwelt und Natur werden in aktuellen Diskursen (z.B. New Materialism, Human bzw. Cultural Animal Studies, Environmental Humanities, Anthropozän) als komplexe Gebilde im Schnittfeld von Akteur*innen, globalen Weltverhältnissen und Kulturen gedacht. Die Begriffe „Gender“, „Nature“ oder „Nonhuman Animal“ sind Teil dieser Diskurse und was sie verbindet ist eine je spezifische historische Bezugnahme auf Differenz. Im Film werden Naturverhältnisse in vielfältiger Weise ästhetisch moduliert und vergegenwärtigt: in Gestalt von Pflanzen, Tieren, Cyborgs und deren Umgebungen, als exotisch codierte Landschaften, eingespannt in naturwissenschaftliche Versuchsanordnungen, in Naturdokumentationen, Ökodramen oder (Klima-)Katastrophenfilmen ebenso wie in Avantgarde- und Amateurfilmen. Ausgehend von der Frage nach Figurationen (Haraway) werden im Vortrag Positionen vorgestellt und diskutiert, die von einer Vervielfältigung von Differenz künden. In der Vervielfältigung von Differenz gibt sich die Historizität der Idee der Einzeldifferenz zu erkennen.

Sabine Nessel is Professor of Film Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin and has been a member of the scientific advisory board of the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies since 2017. Her current research focuses on the areas of film and cinema theory, media cultural animal studies, difference theories, and gender studies. Publications on these themes include *Der Film und das Tier. Klassifizierungen, Cinephilien, Philosophien* (Ger./Engl., ed. with Winfried Pauleit et al., 2012) and “Tiere und Film” in: R. Borgards (ed.), *Tiere – Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, 2015. A monograph on the subject “Zoo und Kino als Schauanordnungen der Moderne” will be published soon.

Johanna Oksala

Feminist Ecopolitics at the End of Nature

We are currently living through a period in which our millennial-old metaphysics and its firm boundary between the natural and the human worlds has become unstable due to the extreme capitalist appropriation of what we are used to understanding as nature. Many “post-humanist” environmental theorists are therefore claiming that we have now reached “the end of nature.” The paper presents a feminist response to such claims by teasing out the problematic political consequences that the theoretical erasure of the nature/human distinction has for feminist environmental theory. My contention is that while we need to problematize the nature/human distinction and recognize its instability, this cannot mean collapsing the distinction. In order to advocate for radically new, non-anthropocentric forms of politics, we must be able to identify the forms of exclusion upon which our current conception of politics is built. This requires politicizing our understanding of nature as that which is excluded from the political sphere, as well as recognizing that the way in which we draw the boundary between nature and politics is itself a political act. In the final section, I will discuss what such politicization might mean in practice. My argument here is that the politicization of the boundary between the natural and the human worlds must inevitably not only lead us to questions about the naturalization and animalization of women and racialized people, but also extend to our actual treatment of non-human animals.

Johanna Oksala is Associate Professor of Environmental Philosophy at Pratt Institute in New York. She specializes in political philosophy, feminist philosophy, environmental philosophy, Foucault, and phenomenology. She has published five monographs and over fifty refereed journal articles and book chapters in her areas of expertise. Her books include: *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge UP, 2005), *How to Read Foucault* (Granta, 2007), *Foucault, Politics, and Violence* (Northwestern UP, 2012), *Political Philosophy: All That Matters* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2013), *Feminist Experiences* (Northwestern UP, 2016). Her current research focuses on feminist environmental theory. She is writing a monograph that explores new ways of connecting feminist and ecological critiques of capitalism. For more information on her publications, please go to: <https://johannaoksala.wordpress.com/>.

Kathrin Peters

Politische Drogen: Materialität in *Testo Junkie*

In the context of the conference, I would like to consider Paul Preciado’s thesis, that the present is characterized by a pharmacopornographic regime, and to discuss this thesis in the context of New Materialism. According to Preciado, the pharmacopornographic subjectivity consists of a constant “chain of excitation-frustration,” that triggers arousal and strives for performance—in the sense of achievement, duration, and overpowering—which is regularly followed by a collapse (cf. *Testo Junkie*, 2013). This chain reaction of arousal and frustration has been established since the 1950s and is sustained by pharmaceuticals that permeate our bodies one way or another, whether or not we wish it: synthetic hormones, contraceptives, as well as antidepressants or ADHD medications. To describe the processes of affixation and subjectivization, Preciado refers to concepts of performativity—the production of gender now being more deeply embedded in the body. As exciting as I find Preciado’s reconstruction of the body as a technological, biological, medial, libidinous, and discursive composite, it seems to me that an understanding of performance as a voluntary act resonates here. I would thus like to consider whether it would be possible, using the approaches of materiality theory, to more accurately grasp how the intake, introduction, and



application of substances onto and under the skin is subjectified. This raises the question of the critique of gender and body norms. Where does this critique take place? In micro-political self-experimentation with testosterone medications? In a writing process between self-documentation and post-porno? In the “parliament of the body”? Or do the substances themselves transform these norms into fictions? A report of some of my lectures and visits from the past year complete the lecture.

Ich möchte mich im Rahmen der Konferenz mit Paul Preciados These beschäftigen, dass die Gegenwart durch ein pharmakopornografisches Regime charakterisiert sei, und diese These im Zusammenhang des New Materialism diskutieren. Die pharmakopornografische Subjektivität besteht, so Preciado, aus einer ständigen „chain of excitation-frustration“, die Erregung triggert und auf Performance – im Sinne von Leistung, Dauer und Überwältigung – aus ist, worauf regelmäßig ein Zusammenbruch folgt (vgl. *Testo Junkie*, 2013). Diese Kettenreaktion von Erregung und Frustration habe sich seit den 1950er etabliert und wird von Pharmazeutika in Gang gehalten, die unsere Körper auf die ein oder andere Weise, ob wir wollen oder nicht, durchdringen: synthetische Hormone, Kontrazeptiva, aber auch Antidepressiva oder ADHS-Medikamente. Um die Prozesse der Affizierung und Subjektivierung zu beschreiben, bezieht sich Preciado auf Konzepte der Performativität – die Produktion von Gender sei nun tiefer in den Körper verlegt. So aufregend ich Preciados Rekonstruktion des Körpers als technologisches, biologisches, mediales, libidinöses und diskursives Kompositum finde, scheint mir hier ein Verständnis von Performanz als voluntaristischem Akt mitzuschwingen. Daher möchte ich überlegen, ob mit materialitätstheoretischen Ansätzen genauer zu begreifen sein könnte, wie das Einnehmen, Einführen und Applizieren von Substanzen auf und unter der Haut subjektiviert. Damit ist auch die Frage von Kritik an Gender- und Körnernormen aufgeworfen. Wo findet diese Kritik statt? Im mikropolitischen Selbstexperiment der Testosteron-Medikation? In einer Schreibpraxis zwischen Selbstdokumentation und Postporno? Im „Parlament der Körper“? Oder transformieren die Substanzen selbst diese Normen zu Fiktionen? Der Vortrag wird schließlich nicht auskommen ohne den Bericht einiger meiner Lektüren und Besichtigungen des letzten Jahres.

Kathrin Peter is Professor of History and Theory of Visual Culture at the Universität der Künste Berlin, co-speaker of the DFG-Graduiertenkollegs “Knowledge in the Arts” and editor-in-chief of *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*. Her research and teaching focuses on gender and the media, genealogies of design, and media aesthetics. She recently co-edited the volume *Wessen Wissen. Materialität und Situiertheit in den Künsten* mitherausgegeben (Fink Verlag 2018).

Stefan Schütte

Dynamics of Mobile Societies: Resource Environments and Material Spatial Practices of Nomadic Pastoralists in Northern Afghanistan

Afghan pastoral practices are dynamic and flexible, with changing strategies reflecting shifting political environments, power structures, insecurities, and economic opportunities. Pastoralism is shaped by distinct territorial strategies and land relations, as well as social and economic intergroup relations and processes of identity formation related to spatial practices. Based on empirical fieldwork among Achakzai pastoralists in Northern Afghanistan, the presentation aims to view some guiding aspects of this conference through the lens of pastoral mobility and its material spatial practices and resource environments. It

assesses the constitution and structuration of pastoral/nomadic spaces and the seasonal and historical dimensions of pastoral practices in their relation to resource access and control, and to the materials and material practices that facilitate mobile pastoralism. Gender crosscuts all these analytical aspects in terms of the division of labor and responsibilities in different pastoral spaces, in the performance of material cultures, and in relation to animal care. The case study of Achakzai pastoralist practices provides an example of contemporary human-environment relations in Afghanistan that improves an understanding of the social, spatial, and material practices of nomadic pastoralism by emphasizing the flexibility of pastoral livelihood systems and the challenges faced by pastoralists confronted with multiple insecurities.

Stefan Schütte has been Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Development Studies at the Institute of Geographical Sciences at Freie Universität Berlin since 2008. He has a PhD in Geography from the University of Heidelberg and an MA in Geography and Economy from the University of Oldenburg, Germany. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in rural and urban India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and the Afghan Hindu Kush for a total of more than seven years, in numerous visits beginning in 1997, and is proficient in Dari, Hindi, and Urdu. His research focuses on urban and rural development, mountain development, the management of natural resources, and human security. Publications: Schütte S. (2014) "Living with patriarchy and poverty: women's agency and the spatialities of gender relations in Afghanistan." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21(9): 1176–1192; Schütte S. (2014) "Pastoral Mobility in Northern Afghanistan." *Internationales Asienforum* 45(1–2): 69–84; Schütte S. (2015) "Peacebuilding and pasture relations in Afghanistan." *Peacebuilding* 3(3): 238–260.

Andrea Seier

Ecologies of Love: Woman and Wolf

My contribution discusses the ecologies of gender through the film "Wild" by Nicolette Krebitz (D 2016), which concerns a love affair between a woman and a wolf. Thematically, the film revolves around issues of social discipline and impositions, not least the question of the possibilities of emancipation and disruption. In this, the "animal-becoming" of the protagonist plays a decisive role. My lecture concentrates on the question of how the film aesthetically articulates the human-animal relationship, which nature/culture relations it evokes, and how it interweaves "animal-becoming" and "subjectivization."

Mein Beitrag diskutiert die Ökologien des Geschlechts anhand des Films „Wild“ von Nicolette Krebitz (D 2016), der sich mit einer Liebesbeziehung zwischen einer Frau und einem Wolf beschäftigt. Der Film kreist thematisch um Fragen gesellschaftlicher Disziplinierung und Zumutungen und stelle nicht zuletzt die Frage nach den Möglichkeiten der Emanzipation und der Unterbrechung. Dabei spielt die ‚Tierwerdung‘ der Protagonistin eine entscheidende Rolle. Mein Vortrag konzentriert sich auf die Frage, wie der Film die Mensch-Tier-Beziehung ästhetisch artikuliert, welche Natur/Kultur-Relationen er aufruft und auf welche Weise er ‚Tierwerdung‘ und ‚Subjektivierung‘ miteinander verschränkt.

Andrea Seier is Professor of Media Studies at the Universität Wien, previously Associate Professor of Media Studies at the Universität Konstanz. She completed her Habilitation in 2013 on the topic "Mikropolitik der Medien" (in press). Her research focuses include: governmentality and the media, micropolitics, and gender and the media. Publications include: ed. with Kathrin Peters: *Gender & Medien-Reader*, Zürich, Berlin (diaphanes) 2016;

ed. with Thomas Waitz: *Klassenproduktion. Fernsehen als Agentur des Sozialen*, Münster, Hamburg (LIT) 2014.

Nicole Seymour

Glitter is Forever?: The Queer Futures of the Plastisphere

This talk will focus on glitter as a Western cultural substance that demonstrates the intersection of gender, sexuality, environment, and temporality. To begin with, glitter has served as an LGBTQ activist tool, as with the spate of “glitter-bombings” of U.S. homophobic politicians in the early 2010s, and as a metaphor for queerness, as with the widely-circulated statement attributed to Lady Gaga: “being gay is like glitter; it never goes away.” But this substance has also recently suffered an environmentalist backlash in the U.S. and Europe, having been identified as a source of microplastics. Indeed, environmentalists have taken the aforementioned Gaga-ism literally, arguing that the long lifespans of microplastics such as glitter—and the grim futures they portend for the biotic zones they saturate—justify their banning. The environmentalist demonization of this LGBTQ-associated substance arguably plays into the narrative described by scholars such as Robert Azzarello, in which conceptions of environmental crisis mirror conceptions of sexual minorities—“unnatural, diseased, pathological, risky, contaminated” (125). But here comes the plot twist: in recent years, several companies have developed biodegradable glitter products, and some have been marketing them specifically to LGBTQ communities—thus connecting, rather than opposing, queerness and environmental health. For example, the U.S.-based brand BioGlitz features androgynous models on their website and promises to both “blur gender lines through shine” and “tak[e] the litter out of glitter.” While being gay might never go away, it seems that glitter, sometimes, can. This presentation thus proposes glitter as a unique site at which to consider the shifting intersections of environmental and LGBTQ politics, and to confront the very queer future that scholars such as Heather Davis have dubbed the “Plastisphere.”

Nicole Seymour is Associate Professor of English at California State University, Fullerton, where she teaches courses in contemporary literature and culture. Her first book, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination*, won the 2015 book award from the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. Her latest book, *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*, has just been released by the University of Minnesota Press.

Antónia Szabari

Becoming Plant Nonetheless II

This second paper will return to the themes of the first in order to interrogate modes of speculation in literature, cinema, and “new” digital media, such as VR and video games, that work along botanical lines (including art by Jessica Rath, Jeff VanderMeer’s novel *Southern Reach Trilogy*, Micha Cárdenas’s poetry and performance, Milica Zec and Winslow Porter’s virtual reality film *Tree*, and video games such as *botanica*.) These projects all represent speculative attempts to become plant in a time structured by late late capitalism and marked by climate change. In their efforts to imagine becoming plant, they enable a kind of oscillation between diverse modes of thinking about the posthuman subject today, including speculative realism (with its universalizing tendencies) and new materialist feminism (with its emphasis on the affective and physical interconnectedness of beings). Through these examples, the paper interrogates the “matter” of speculation as neither reproducing and augmenting human affect nor transcending our place, our time, and our bodies. In other

words, becoming plant, as communicated through these diverse media, allows not so much for a mode of “passionate coexistence” binding humans to plants as for an exploration of the vicissitudes, contingencies, and risks that must accompany transfiguration. Thus the paper aims to define speculation as that which attaches us to (rather than detaching us from) global phenomena such as climate change, thereby enriching our understanding of the contexts in which these phenomena are lived by subjects who are themselves undergoing continual transformation.

Antónia Szabari is Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. With Natania Meeker, she recently completed a manuscript entitled *Radical Botany: Plants and Speculative Fiction from Early to Late Modernity*, forthcoming in 2019 from Fordham University Press. She is currently working on political utopias at the limits of Europe before French Absolutism.

Linda Waack (Chair)

Linda Waack is a research associate at the Seminar for Film Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. She holds a B.A. in German, a master’s degree in Contemporary History, and a PhD in Media Theory. Her current work explores how small-scale archival findings help to provide access to film history, leading to what she terms “visual microhistory.” She is currently working on a book on amateur film and is co-editor of the volume “Wörterbuch kinematografischer Objekte” (Berlin, 2014). She was Junior Fellow at the International Research Institute for Cultural Technologies and Media Philosophy (IKKM) in Weimar and now holds a position at the Film Studies Department of Freie Universität Berlin. Other research pursuits include cinematographic objects, feminism, and film semiotics. Recent publications include “Dekor und Reduktion. Wie der Film über seine Ausstattung kommuniziert,” in: *film bulletin*, Nr. 2, 2018, pp. 56–63 and “Schwierige Freiheit. Zu Mia Hansen-Loves L’avenir,” in: *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*, Nr. 16, April 2017, pp. 126–133.