SESSION ABSTRACT

Anthropologies of the Environment: Acknowledging complex interweavings and building integrative...
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The relationships between humans and their biophysical, social and built environments continue to be a central and theoretically contested domain in anthropology. While theoretical discussions of the past were informed by dualisms such as nature/culture or materialism/idealism, recent approaches seek to dissolve these dichotomies and move towards more integrated perspectives stressing the mutual constitution of humans and their various environments. With today's rapid social, environmental and technological changes, new questions and debates emerge that add new insights to "old" issues such as the role of the environment in social change, the perception of the environment, and environment and identity. How do humans change their environments and how do they in turn adapt to and mitigate the effects of these changes? How do infrastructures, social and cultural life interact? What is the relationship between environmental change and cultural change?

In this session, we invite emerging scholars to present and discuss empirical case studies related to environmental anthropology through a broad variety of topics such as resource extraction, indigeneity, infrastructure and technology, land-use practices, climate change, mobility and migration. The session is intended as a forum for presenting and discussing works in progress. The regional focus includes but is not limited to the Arctic and Sub-Arctic.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Friday, September 21, 2018 | Slot 8 | Room 1

Dennis Zuev: *Civilizing digital afterlife: the site and sight of recycling politics in China*

Eva-Maria Holzinger & Felix Herzer: *Infrastructure builds Infrastructure*

Greca Meloni: *The Human-Bee-Environment relation: the case of the Sardinian beekeepers*

Friday, September 21, 2018 | Slot 9 | Room 1

Tibor Böhm: *Social consequences of environmental conservation in post-apartheid South Africa: A case study from the iSimangaliso Wetland Park*

Karl Valent: *‚Natural' disasters? Anthropos in the spotlight*

SESSION PAPERS

Civilizing digital afterlife: the site and sight of recycling politics in China
Zuev, Dennis (CIES-ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon)

The article uses ethnographic and visual data collected during fieldwork in 2014-2016 in an e-waste recycling village Guiyu, Guangdong province in China in order to explore the invisible site and sight (backstage) of consumption process, specifically the end-of-life assemblages of discarded electronics. The material culture approach is used to demonstrate that waste, including that of electronics is an ambivalent cultural product as in a sociocultural context where waste is not regarded as final waste, until it is disassembled into elementary parts. The waste is recomposed into a different ecological and sociospatial (dis)assemblage, where discarded cultural products are dissected into elementary material particles to acquire new value for the next cycle of re-materialization. I use the notion of civilizing politics to suggest the normalization of e-waste recycling in Guiyu as an entrepreneurial activity in the context of the political discourse of ecological civilization and modernity in China and wider discourse of e-waste recycling as an important part of urban mining in the context of resource scarcity.

Infrastructure builds Infrastructure
Holzinger, Eva-Maria (University of Vienna, Wien, AUT); Herzer, Felix (University of Vienna, Wien, AUT)

The Baikal-Amur Mainline ("BAM") runs parallel to the Trans-Siberian Railway, all the way from Tayshet through diverse landscapes, high bridges and long tunnels up to the Pacific Ocean. Railroads are symbol of modernization, territorial expansion

and nation-building. In Russia it was a part of the Soviet-Nation-building "national brigades" from USSR and should bring social and interethnic solidarity. The BAM was defined as "the road into the 21st century" and was built primarily for military and economic reasons. It was the last communist industrial "project exploiting USSR´s natural resources for propagandistic and economic reasons" (Ward 2009). Workers from all parts of the Union as well as war- and Gulagprisoners were brought to construct it. "It drew labour migrants with diverse cultural backgrounds who have formed the majority of today´s population of the region" (Schweitzer et. al. 2017: 72). This form of migration not only influenced society but also affected the construction of the BAM. Infrastructure, such as the BAM, puts humans into relationship with resources, power, ideologies, material cultures and institutions (Dalakoglou, Harvey 2015:1).

On one hand, the BAM provides a transportation network for people, goods and resources. On the other hand, the construction of the BAM, which passes through the Buriat Autonmonois Republic and Amurskaia oblast – the traditional land of the Evenk, had significant impacts on the hunting, trapping and herding activities of some parts of the groups (Anderson 1990: 12). "The major shift was of Evenki moving from traditional´agriculture´ occupations to crop and livestock agriculture as well as other urban occupations" (Anderson 1990: 12). These enormous Soviet industrialization projects have reached mixed accomplishments. The BAM was officially completed in 1984 but work still continues today. Since 2014 it has been undergoing a renovation (Schweitzer et. al. 2017: 73) with plans of a second track. According to Larkin, infrastructure builds networks which "facilitate the flow of goods, people, ideas and allow for their exchange over space" (Larkin 2013: 328). The Soviet Union constructed a massive physical infrastructure to supply even the most distant settlements of Russia with transportation (Humphery 2003: 93).

In recent years the expansion of the Baikal-Amur Mainline connected with resource extraction activities affect other infrastructures like communication infrastructures (mobile phone networks & internet connection). Formerly rather disconnected remote settlements and workplaces become more connected due to "new" infrastructures. It is observable that through these developments people's perception of remoteness change, for example, considering the situation of shift working people in Russian extractive industries. Shifts workers often travel several days and thousands of kilometres from their homes to their workplaces. Many shift workers see their shifts as a challenging and burdensome time. Especially due to hard working conditions, the isolated location of their working environment and the feeling being far away and cut off to their friends and family members. However, shift workers report that in recent years they feel less isolated working in remote mining areas due to the introduction of mobile phone network and internet access at their workplace. Nevertheless the physical distance between them and their loved ones are big, modern telecommunication possibilities let these far apart spaces merge. Texting, calling or even video-calling family or friends creates the feeling of participating in their lives, even being physical separated.

Context

On the one hand the aim of the paper and presentation is to show the interconnectedness of infrastructures like transportation and communication infrastructure. On the other hand it shall demonstrate the various impacts and interrelations between people and infrastructures.

The Human-Bee-Environment relation: the case of the Sardinian beekeepers
Meloni, Greca (Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Wien, AUT)

Beekeeping is a cultural practice located at the intersection of environmental, agricultural, political, cultural, and economic issues, including the human-animal and human-environment relations, which constitute the current eco-political discourse on honeybees (Lorenz 2006; Moore and Kosut, 2013).

In this paper, I discuss the ways in which beekeepers build their relationship with the environment and the honeybees, analyzing the data collected during the ethnographic research currently underway on beekeeping in Sardinia. For the Sardinian beekeepers, working with bees means to become part of a territory and to link the history of the individual with the history of the place. Thus, the human-bee-environment relation is strictly connected with the perception that the environment is a space built through the toil of the humans that have inhabited the territory, and in which are visible the traces of the ancestors. To this effect, a strong sense of belonging, a constant observation of the natural phenomena, and an intimate knowledge of the environment often combined with a handed down knowledge of nature seems to be at the basis of the everyday practices of beekeeping and to form part of the expertise of the Sardinian beekeepers. Thus, with this paper I aim to show how the human-bee-environment relationship enables the Sardinian beekeeper to develop a more dynamic perception of Sardinia and its landscape that contrasts with the hegemonic image of 'Sardinia' as 'wild Island', or 'endless island' promoted by the Regional agencies and supported by great part of the formal delegates, some intellectuals, journalists, scientists, politicians, and other social actors (Heatherington, 2010).

Furthermore, focusing on the processes of identity construction, the paper lingers to analyze how the interpretation of the concepts of autochthony, biodiversity, and indigeneity lead the social actors to develop different perception of 'Sardinia' and the 'Sardinianess' (Angioni et al, 2007; Bachis, 2015; Geschiere, 2010).

Finally, in this paper, I analyze the role taken on by these different understanding of 'Sardinia' in the context of the politics of heritigization of the landscape in the island (see Welz, 2017).

 Literature:

Angioni, G., Bachis, F., Caltagirone, B., & Cossu, T. Sardegna: seminario sull'identità, 2006.
Bachis Francesco, "Diversi da chi. Note su appartenenza e politiche dell'identità" *La Sardegna contemporanea. Idee, luoghi,*

processi culturali. Marrocu, Luciano, Francesco Bachis, and Valeria Deplano. Donzelli Editore srl, 2015.

Geschiere, Peter. "Autochthony: local or global?." *Translocality*. Brill, 2010. 205-228. *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 73:6, 988-1005.

Moore, Lisa Jean, and Mary Kosut. *Buzz: Urban beekeeping and the power of the bee.* NYU Press, 2013.

Social consequences of environmental conservation in post-apartheid South Africa: A case study from the iSimangaliso Wetland Park
Böhm, Tibor (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT)

The community of KwaDapha lives within the boundaries of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a vast protected area which was declared South Africa's first UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. While many inhabitants were evicted when the region was for the first time proclaimed a nature reserve, a number of locals resisted forceful removal and remained within the boundaries of the contemporary park. Formerly, local people were able to sustain their livelihood by ways of subsistence such as fishing, farming and hunting. Since conservation authorities have taken over control of the area however, local ways of subsistence have been increasingly restricted and people are no longer able to survive by their own means of production. Thus, in a powerful and sometimes violent act, the environment has been redefined from a space of local production to a space of conservation. The underlying logic of environmental preservation is based on an ontological dualism between nature and culture. In this perceived binary opposition local people are regarded as a threat to the natural environment which is intended to be preserved in its allegedly pristine primordial state by conservationists. At the same time, the protected environment is commodified and sold to tourists who are willing to pay for their exclusive access to presumably untouched nature. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is promoted as a role model of post-apartheid nature conservation which doesn't focus solely on environmental preservation but seeks to combine it with sustainable community development. Nevertheless, this engagement for community development seems to be restricted to settlements surrounding the park and not to apply to those within the park. The inhabitants of KwaDapha are facing the impossibility of their subsistence while, at the same time, being denied any establishment of infrastructure or a share in tourism developments. While the forceful eviction of local people is not a popular option in the so called new South Africa, the situation in KwaDapha can be interpreted as a form of slow violence as well as a powerful reconstruction of space by conservation authorities in which the community is left with little choice but to leave their ancestral homes on their own account.

'Natural' disasters? Anthropos in the spotlight
Valent, Karl (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT); Paredes Grijalva, Daniela (independent researcher, Vienna, AUT)

Over the last decades the world has witnessed a dramatic increase in disastrous events – since the new millennium we yearly count more than 400 so-called natural disasters with more than 200 million people affected. But by 'naturalising' these events, by describing them as events that strike out of the blue, one of the major variables of the equation is left out: humans and the way they shape and build their environment, infrastructure and agencies. Building on discussions that go beyond dichotomies such as culture/nature, the authors will shed light on the notion of "natural disasters" with two case studies on opposite sides of the Pacific Ring of Fire.

In Indonesia, at the slopes of one the world's most active volcanoes, a population of over a million people goes about their day to day, profiting since generations from fertile volcanic soil and vast pastures. A deadly eruption in 2010 destroyed more than 6.000 homes and temporarily displaced more than 400.000 people. Yet most chose to return and live in this landscape of risk, vigorously resisting State implementation of no-settlement zones.

In coastal Ecuador, at the conjunction of two tectonic plates, a population of around 1 million people profit from seaside tourism, fishing, and farming. In 2016 a coastal stripe of 700km was violently shaken by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Fatalities, displacement, infrastructure destruction and loss of livelihoods followed. The current nationwide effort for (safer) reconstruction is a critical opportunity to acknowledge and reshape the environment-human relation.

In both cases, material and human losses were substantial. But can the damages be attributed to the merciless force of nature alone? What is the role of settlement patterns or architectonic traditions? What about traditional readings of environmental risks and strategies to live and cope with them? Instead of insisting on a fragmented analysis of humans as victims of natural forces, we look into the formation of these two so-called natural disasters, and how human behavior in the past and present can create vulnerabilities and resilience.