PhD
Conference
WiSe 2024/25
13/14.02

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[1] First presentation = 20 minutes + 20 min discussion
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[3] Third presentation = 40 minutes + 25 min discussion

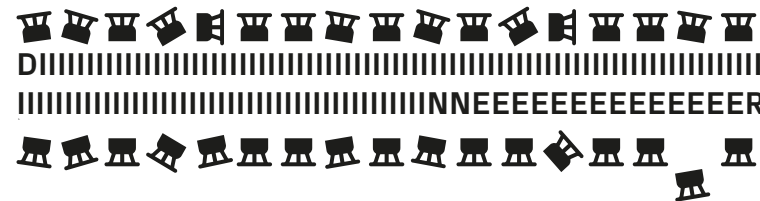# Day 1: Thu 13.02.2025

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Abstracts

Anna Altukhova [3]
Inclusion of those who were selected

🗎 *Supervisor*
Beate Binder

As Michel Foucault claimed, "We have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others: criminals, mad people, and so on" (1988: 146). However, what changed at the moment when the idea of inclusion of all these individuals emerged? The inclusion of those who, for decades, had been excluded from the world of the 'normative citizen' as the others could not occur spontaneously. In this dissertation, I analyze how an NGO engages in the selection and transformation of those deemed worthy of reentering society and compare this with how the state—the principal actor in the field of sifting—envisions such selection. I argue that this analysis can provide significant insights into the role of NGOs in Russia, the responsibilities assumed by civil society structures, and the ideologies they thereby create and sustain. I also explore what happens to individuals subjected to specific processes of subjectification and the influence of what I term a dispositif of upbringing. I propose that this

project can contribute to answering a broader question: what does it mean to be "normal" in contemporary Russia, and why is normalcy tied to the capacity to hold particular fantasies and desires?

Yinghan Guo [2]
Gatekeepers of the Grand Canal: Everyday Practices and Technological Changes of a Ship Lock Operating Crew

🗎 *Supervisor*
Sharon Macdonald

This research examines the evolution of ship passing and dispatching practices at a ship lock on the South Jiangsu Canal in China over the past 40 years, focusing on the daily operations of the ship lock crew and their adaptation to technological advancements in water transport. While often overlooked, ship lock operating crews play a crucial role in the functioning of the canal. Their work involves dynamic interactions between dispatchers, natural elements, and operational technologies. Over the decades, these interactions have been profoundly transformed by the modernization of water transport technology and systems.
The operation and dispatching

processes have shifted from decentralized, manual coordination to centralized, intelligent systems. Decentralized remote dispatching stations and specialized skills have gradually given way to centralized monitoring and digitized procedures, driven by the intertwined influences of technological innovations and systemic changes. Despite these developments, the importance of individual empirical skills remains significant. This research specifically highlights the evolving role of the 'master' and explores the impact of technological changes on traditional expertise, alongside the strategies for self-adjustment and adaptation

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Zeynep Doğusan [2]
Possibilities of Celebrating Life: Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Racist Bomb Attack on Cologne's Keupstraße

🗎 *Supervisor*
Magdalena Buchczyk

This chapter discusses the challenges and possibilities of contemporary memory politics in Germany on an urban scale, shaped by a complex landscape of struggles for political recognition, a lack of victim-centered approaches, and the symbolic politics of liberal cosmopolitanism. It focuses on the culture and commemoration festival organized for the 20th

anniversary of the racist bomb attack in Cologne Keupstraße exploring the potential for conviviality for an honorable remembrance despite the surrounding political atmosphere. It argues that while the struggle for political recognition can hinder honorable commemoration through symbolic politics, the potential for conviviality as a means of achieving meaningful social recognition remains a critical question.
The festival organizers of Birlikte 2024 aimed for an inclusive event with the participation of all memory-making actors in the community. The inaugural 2014 festival was criticized for years for excluding the survivors of the attack and centering political leaders. Despite local initiatives on the street having fought for a memorial for over a decade, and the survivors still struggling for political recognition, the announcement of the festival by the City of Cologne sparked excitement among them. The survivors' demand for political recognition culminated in the participation of the German President, which significantly heightened security measures on the street. However, the program had to be reshaped due to a bomb threat, leading to a securitized environment. On a street shaped by vibrant migration stories and long subjected to surveillance and security policies, the festival day once again restricted the participation and safety of the

victims.

Key Words: memory politics, securitization, conviviality, urban diversity

Fotini Takirdiki [2]

Urban Learning Ecologies: Cohabitation, Commoning and Curation at Floating Berlin

Supervisors
Ignacio Farías
Birgit Schneider

Since 2018, a group primarily consisting of architects with an artistic ecological practice has transformed the rainwater retention basin of the former Tempelhof Airport into a natureculture learning site, hosting public programs to foster new relations among humans and morethan-humans. Despite its role as a functioning infrastructure, the basin has evolved into a spontaneous wetland ecosystem with reeds, algae, and other life forms thriving within or even through contamination, decay, and toxicity.

My dissertation investigates how learning unfolds within these messy, more-than-human relations in multiple ways. Learning at Floating is not always harmonious; it involves dissonances and constant negotiations with urban actors. Through interviews, participatory observations and collaborative research, I trace how learning is conceived and created: how Floating members learn as an organization, how learning formats are curated, how participants learn to cohabit with non-human entities in these formats, and how the site and its more-than-human cohabitants learn themselves. In this presentation, I discuss the first chapter of my research, which examines cohabitation as a learning process shaped by the site's histories, conflicts and conditions. By ethnographically tracing situated practices and human-environment relations, I analyze how the basin becomes a site for reimagining ways of living in the more-than-human city and critically reflect on Floating's interventions.

Sabine Biedermann [3]

Practicing the Microbiome. Talking, Making, and Governing the Microbiome from Food to Poop

Supervisors
Ignacio Farías
Jörg Niewöhner

The recent development in genome sequencing technology, that has provided new ways of "seeing" the hundreds of trillions of bacteria in human bodies and revealed their powerful agency in human health (cf. Benezra 2016, McFall-Ngai 2017). In parallel to the scientific interest in microbes, traditional fermentation techniques, now scientifically proven to be beneficial, have resurfaced, and become fashionable. Social scientists have not stayed out of this microbial moment. A growing number of panels, papers, and projects in the humanities are concerned with microbes: bringing attention to the social, cultural, and relational aspects of microbes (cf Brives, Rest & Sariola, S. (Eds.) 2021; Lorimer 2017; Paxson 2008; Paxson & Helmreich 2014).
My PhD Project follows this microbial moment and focuses on the question of how the human microbiome is enacted in everyday practices, focusing on human-microbial collaborations towards health and wellbeing.
Ethnographical encounters with microbiome actors like scientists, fermenters, and varied microbial tinkerers aim to answer this from an anthropological point of view and explore how human-microbial relations come to matter.

Anna Szöke [1]

Body Politics, Changing Attitudes towards Ancestral and Human Remains in Berlin's Institutions throughout the 20th Century

Supervisors
Larissa Förster
Magdalena Buchczyk

This thesis expands on critical heritage studies and museum anthropology by analyzing the care and exhibition of Ancestral and Human Remains in Berlin's institutions (Stoecker 2013, Winkelmann 2018). It focuses on the ethical debates surrounding these remains, tracing shifts from the early 20th century to the 1990s and emphasizing their complex ontological ties to the living. The research examines institutional practices regarding Berlin's "Virchow and Luschan Collections," specifically between 1945 and the 1990s, a period shaped by the city's division and reunification. It analyzes these collections' evolving discourse and handling at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and later at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. Key questions include the processes driving these changes, the influence of political and academic relationships with Eastern Europe and the Global South (Social Globalism), and their alignment with political agendas and public discussions in the German Democratic Republic.
Finally, the thesis explores how historical developments shape current debates over Ancestral and Human Remains, highlighting unresolved struggles and their implications for contemporary academic and ethical practices. This work underscores the need to contextualize current discussions within their historical and political frameworks, particularly in Berlin's unique post-war and reunification context.

Sasha Hnatiuk [1]

Displays of Violence: Exploring Ethics and Sensationalism in Crime and Policing Museums

⌂ *Supervisor*
Magdalena Buchczyk

Presently, European and North American museums are reexamining ethical collections
procedures to reflect contemporary issues including decolonization and repatriation (ICOM 2017). In contrast to traditional museology
that prioritized artifacts, twenty-first century museum ethics target museums' social responsibility within contemporary society (Marstine 2011, 7, 9-12, 14; Sandell 2003, 45). Previous studies on the consumption of violent narratives have focused on those related to times of conflict and world war. To date, research has failed to address how traumatic content related to crime, punishment, and policing is framed and interpreted in museum spaces. There are currently no ethical guidelines for the curation and management of true crime collections. This project asks: How are violent and/or traumatic objects, primarily criminal evidence, displayed and consumed in true crime and police museums?
To achieve this, I will use Vancouver Police Museum and Archives (Vancouver, CA) and Kriminalmuseum (Frankfurt, DE) to explore the relationship of ethical curation to the consumption of traumatic, true crime narratives in museum spaces.

Anja Klein [3]

From Modelling Practices to Knowing Earth in the Anthropocene

⌂ *Supervisors*
Jörg Niewöhner
Tobias Krüger

In the thesis I explore the epistemological, ontological, and ethical dimensions of modelling as a relational knowledge practice. This is grounded in ethnographic fieldwork on the construction and use of statistical and numerical models to understand socialecological relations in two research groups in Stockholm and Accra.
How are these relations conceptualized and enacted in modelling practices, and how can an anthropological engagement with such practices be a generative one?
I suggest to understand modelling as patchwork – the creative and skillful work of relating patches. In the spirit of Stengers (2020), I propose this as a starting point for earthly modelling to engage with interdisciplinary knowledge production in the Anthropocene.
Next to anthropology, my theoretical framework draws on feminist Science and Technology Studies and process-relational philosophies. In my analysis, I use materiality, difference and complexity as sensitizing concepts and build on four principles for a practice of "Situated Modelling" (Klein et al. 2024).
After the introduction, Chapter 2 delves into the materiality of water in the Volta Delta, examining how different water(s) are known and modelled. This allows me to identify a gap in the anthropological literature on the multiplicity of water, namely a lack of concern with physicochemical water properties. Chapter 3 focuses on the sociomaterial embeddedness of modelling decisions in international research collaborations. I discuss the postcoloniality of North-South funding structures, "strange encounters" (Ahmed 2013), and the hauntings of certain datasets used. Chapter 4 presents two examples of doing complexity in model testing practices, exploring the performative aspects of modelworld relations. It shows how agency is distributed in model validation and highlights the epistemic value of debugging and calibration. Chapter 5 describes the collaborative experiment of developing a relation-based model of a small-scale fishery, integrating process-relational perspectives into agent-based modelling. It reflects on different ways of doing assemblage thinking and humanfish relations in modelling and ethnography, and on the potential of using collaborative modelling with ethnographic work.

Magdalena Dabkowska [1]

The Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real: Coal as Desire in North Poland

⌂ *Supervisor*
Jörg Niewöhner

In the public debate, "the move away from coal" (odejście od węgla) implies that coal is a homogenous unit, obscuring the material's diversity regarding its types and uses. In addition, academic discussion of coal in Poland is limited to its extraction, overlooking the role of imports on communities. This paper focuses on the coal imported to Poland, mainly from the Russian Federation, and after the embargo introduced in April 2022, mostly from Colombia and Kazakhstan. Based on ethnographic fieldwork that was carried out between June 2022 and May 2023, it describes the intimate relationship with the material in the Warmia region in North Poland.
That area hosted several coalimporting companies before the embargo put many of them out of business. The paper concludes that values people attach to coal are constantly challenged and reshaped while balancing economic, environmental, and personal considerations. Throughout these challenges, however, the material continued to be desired, which, on the one hand, signified its persistent importance and, on the other, represented a community in a region

marked by a turbulent history of population transfers, socialist planned economy and a subsequent neoliberal transformation.

Carola von der Dick [1]
Reconfiguring Human-Environment Relations in Berlin Primary Schools

⌂ *Supervisor*
Jörg Niewöhner

How are children and educators in Berlin schools learning to teach/learn/educate in the Anthropocene? In my PhD research, I conducted fieldwork in Berlin primary schools,collaborating with children, educators, and non-humans across four projects to explore human-environment relationships. These projects were grounded in the assumption that performative and participatory arts-based practices are particularly well-suited for investigating our relationship with the world and ourselves. This aligns with a broader movement within the theater pedagogy scene to critically engage with the multiple (ecological) crises of the Anthropocene.
My research questions are:
What forms of normativity, in terms of nature-culture relationships, are being inscribed in and through these performative educational formats?
What natural, social, and moral orders do practitioners of cultural education —predominantly women— seek to convey, and what happens during these attempts? I situate my project within the anthropology of learning (Blum 2019) and apply an STS lens to examine the social-material assemblages in which this learning occurs in. I investigate how educational practices are entangled with values, meanings, and worldmaking projects.
Currently, I am in the process of drafting my chapters. I aim to present an overview of my project to engage with and gather feedback from the diverse perspectives within the IfEE.

Canan Uçar [1]
Making commodity and landscape in southern Turkey: Antep Pistachio

⌂ *Supervisors*
Milena Bister
Ayşen Üstübici Önay

Particularly in the last 10 years, in southeastern Turkey, the cultivation of Antep pistachio trees has increased at unprecedented speed and scale. The expansion of pistachio is not only limited to production, but it also has consumption aspects. The diversity of food products involving pistachio as a main ingredient, like Antep baklava, chocolate, cream, and paste, and the recently growing market of desserts indicate the increasing consumption and rising demand for pistachio and food products with pistachio ingredients. The study aims to reveal how the capitalist/economic account of the pistachio boom, both in production and consumption, without an anthropological understanding of the complex and changing relationships between humans and the environment remains incomplete. Therefore, this study explores how the noneconomic relations of humans and the environment interplay the economic relations of local and global actors through the pistachio boom in the region. Based on multisided ethnographic research, it aims to understand the active role of pistachio as a more-thancommodity not only in landscapemaking in the region but also in commodity-making. The study tries to situate the commodity chains in an environmental context by focusing on Antep pistachio growing and commodity making processes.

Callum Fisher [3]
Nature and Culture in the Godeffroy Museum

⌂ *Supervisors*
Sharon Macdonald
Richard Dumez

This presentation will provide an overview of my thesis, which centres around a group of plants, animals, and other lively things that are today stored in museums across Europe. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, each of them was unearthed, uprooted, and extracted from across Oceania by agents of the Hamburg-based Godeffroy Museum, before later being sold as a commodity in the burgeoning market for museum objects. Today, each of them is embedded within a different web of people and practices, engaged by curators and scientists in the construction of various natures and cultures. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in a natural history museum and an ethnological museum, my ethnographic practice crafts new webs of connections between the disparate parts of this collection. Whilst helping to illuminate the entangled disciplinary histories of the natural sciences and ethnology, and providing insight to the commercial empires that preceded the formal German colonisation of the Pacific, these new webs also point towards methods of working across museums that are underutilised today. The tracing of their provenance histories often leads to dead ends, but an ethnographic engagement across museum contexts allows alternative trajectories for these lively things to unfold.

Alex Harder [2]

Cultures of Rejection: Transformations of labour and everyday life in socio-spatial and digital environments

⬚ *Supervisors*
Manuela Bojadžiev
Bernd Kasparek

How do right-wing politics become entrenched in contemporary everyday life? My work investigates the thesis that they rely on specific modes of living, on narratives, values, and affects that first and foremost *reject* a set of socio-cultural objects. Such "Cultures of Rejection" emerge in the context of crises and transformations. To better understand the conditions for the continuous rightward drift in Germany, I surveyed workplaces in crisis, virtual spaces of protest movements and urban spaces considered "socially strained" between 2019 and 2022. In this presentation I will discuss my first analytical chapter, dedicated to transforming workplaces in retail and logistics. The shift from brick-and-mortar stores to online retail, a process I will tentatively term "logistification", is epitomized by the developments of the ailing Karstadt department stores. Interviews and observations with workers there, enriched by material from other workplaces, show how these transformations are experienced in everyday life, how they are contested, and how they are articulated in ways that entrench rejective attitudes, occupied with bordering and enclosure.

John Aju Ghevarghese [1]

"When I faced a problem, they resolved it": Encounters of international student workers from India with labour law, unions, and worker solidarity networks in Berlin

⬚ *Supervisor*
Manuela Bojadžijev

A large portion of Berlin's platform delivery workers today are international students from India. In what ways do they encounter labour representation, labour regulation, and worker solidarity mechanisms in Berlin?
In what ways do invisibilised migrant workers encounter systems of labour regulation, labour representation, and worker solidarity in the West? The ethnography proposed here, of international students from India working for food and grocery delivery platforms in Berlin, will explore the opportunities and challenges that they encounter as migrants in the city's solidarity networks, grassroots workers' collectives, labour unions, and legal and regulatory institutions.

A large number of platform delivery workers in Berlin today are male international students from India, who are indebted and aspire to live in a Western country long-term. How and in what ways do they encounter the German systems of worker representation such as unions, works councils, and workers' collectives; other mechanisms of worker solidarity; and labour regulatory institutions and mechanisms such as labour courts? What experiences hierarchies, and social contexts constitute these encounters? In what ways are these encounters similar or different from those of workers from other migrant communities and those of Indian students in other work relationships? How do these contingent encounters further shape social structures in the city?
Drawing on literature from the anthropology of peripheral work, critical labour geography, labour law and industrial relations, legal mobilisation, racial capitalism, migration studies, and critical platform studies, this research will ask whether and to what extent labour representation and regulation affords migrant workers a route out of precarity. In doing so, it will add to our understanding of how workers' movements confront those aspects of migrant precarity that fall outside of the narrow work relationship even as labour regulation confines itself to the legal form of the work relationship. Ethnographic research into how Berlin's international students under invisibilised work arrangements access labour regulation representation, and solidaristic networks can provide more understanding about the realities of struggling through the informalisation of work in the global North (Bremen and van der Linden 2014) and the lived realities of migrant solidarity in neoliberal capitalism.

¹ First presentation = 20 minutes + 20 min discussion
² Second presentation = 30 minutes + 20 min discussion
³ Third presentation = 40 minutes + 25 min discussion