

AG Umweltethnologie Tagung 18.-19. October 2018
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial-und Kulturanthropologie

Loss and Hope: Contemporary Debates in Environmental Anthropology

Workshop Program

Fürstenzimmer, Schloß Hohentübingen
Ethnologische Abteilung, Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen

Tagungsteam: Heribert Beckmann (Heidelberg), Sandra Calkins (Freie Universität Berlin),
Jeanne Féaux de la Croix (Tübingen), Silja Klepp (Kiel)

Thursday 18th October

16:00 -18:30 Room 338, Wilhelmstr. 56.

**Excursion to the Heart of Stones: Geology Labs and Earth System Dynamics,
with Professor Todd Ehlers**

Todd Ehlers will introduce us to Tübingen research on the deep history of active mountain ranges in South America, the Himalaya and Central Asia. The excursion will provide an alternative understanding of time-scales and climate change in the Anthropocene, as well as natural hazards for humans. We will visit the department's laboratories to learn about (and try out) techniques such as geochemical sampling and thermochronology. This event will provide insights into natural sciences relevant to a wide range of environmental anthropology topics. We hope to open up questions of interdisciplinarity and different forms of understanding landscape processes.

19:00 Informal get-together and dinner: place tbd

Friday 19th October

9:00 - 9:15

Welcome and introduction of workshop themes and goals

9.30 - 10:00

Introductions, spatial mapping of research interests

10:00 - 11:00

Plenary Discussion: Motions for and against 'Hope' and 'Loss'

How do we work theoretically and ethnographically with these concepts?

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee

11:30 - 12:30

Wishes and Concerns for the Umweltethnologie-AG

Introducing small group work on discussion topics:

1. Environmental Change: "One Person's Loss is another Person's Gain"?
2. Alternative Ethical Imaginings of Loss and Hope
3. Nature - Culture or NatureCultures: perennial favourites or old hats?
4. Position and Contribute? A death-defying Attempt to articulate a coherent Definition of Environmental Anthropology
5. Across the Great Divide? Anthropology and the Natural Sciences

12:30 -14:00 Lunch on site

14:00 - 15:30

Small group work on discussion topics, outlining common concerns and research interests

15:30 - 16:00 Coffee

16:00 - 18:30

Presentation and discussion of small group work. Discussion of idea to found a DFG-Network
Summarizing workshop and feedback

19:00 Dinner, place tbd

Description of small group topics

1. Environmental Change: "One Person's Loss is another Person's Gain"?

It has been amply demonstrated that various people's understandings of what constitutes "the environment" and "environmental change", how to interact with its different components, how to evaluate and explain "environmental change", and how to protect or not protect "the environment" vary greatly and are embedded in manifold power relations (see e.g. Fairhead & Leach 1996; Shah 2010). How and to what extent are understandings and experiences of "loss" and "hope" in relation to "the environment" subject to positionalities shaped by class, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, caste, age, involvement in environmental programmes or activism (see Agrawal 2005), or other factors? To what extent can we speak of contradicting or common experiences of "loss" and "hope" and how feasible is it to describe or compare such experiences beyond their socio-cultural, economic and political contexts?

2. Alternative Ethical Imaginings of Loss and Hope

To what extent can powerful notions of hope, such as the ideas of the development and progress of nations or of humanity as a whole be seen as losing their resonance with various populations around the world or as resurfacing in different, more radical and exclusionist manners?

What alternative and potentially less harmful narratives could be employed to frame and evaluate human attempts at engaging in multi-species interaction and making a living in various habitats? How can we conceptualize "loss" and "hope" in relation to such approaches?

3. Nature - Culture or NatureCultures: perennial favourites or old hats?

For decades, anthropologists and scientists from other disciplines have tried to conceptually overcome the nature / culture divide in the sciences as well as in popular discourse, proposing new concepts and perspectives. Can working toward overcoming this distinction be regarded as an important contribution by, and a source of hope for, anthropologists or is it mostly a self-referential exercise? Should we completely abolish distinguishing between natural, cultural, social, political, biological and other factors and if so, which alternative "monistic" terminologies could we agree on and how does that facilitate or hinder our communication with other scientific disciplines or the general public?

4. Position and Contribute? A death-defying Attempt to articulate a coherent Definition of Environmental Anthropology

What are or should be important intellectual building blocks and political aims for an "environmental anthropology" in the "Capitalocene"? How, for example, can or should it be distinguished from "political ecology", "human geography," or "Science, Technology, and Society"? What can or should environmental anthropology contribute to larger academic discourses of the environment? How can or should it contribute to non-academic endeavours related to protecting human and other-than human habitats or to the lobbying for such endeavours?

5. Across the Great Divide? Anthropology and the Natural Sciences

Environmental topics frequently necessitate a good understanding of material and biological processes: to what extent is interdisciplinarity, particularly with the natural and applied sciences, a must? What are the obstacles to different forms of collaboration and communication, and how can they be overcome? What are the implications for one side being treated as an 'auxiliary' science, or as is often the case with large funding-proposals, 'the People People' in the consortium? We welcome sharing both critical and positive experiences, abstract and pragmatic thinking on these relationships.