

Tracking Contemporary Metabolisms - Historicizing Ecological Epistemologies

*Workshop to be held at the University of Erfurt, Germany, December 11th-December 12th 2018.
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“Following” elements, things, actants, and references as they move, connect, interact, and enfold has become a watchword in social theory, anthropology, history and environmental humanities. Regardless if the production of knowledge, the sustainability of industries, the organization of logistics, the ecologies of carbon, the question of energy or the recycling of waste is at stake – the activity of tracing, tracking, sensing seems a common denominator for rethinking ecologies and governing economies alike. In this context, the notions of circulation, metabolism and connectivity occupy a central position. They become the novel ontologies for linking material existence, the social fabric, and the making of knowledge. Metabolism and circulation call up images of movement and their infrastructures, but also of closed circles and reproduction. They are part of a critical language of analysis, but also belong to governmental promises of regulation.

In this workshop, we are interested in discussing and exploring this intermingling of ecological epistemologies, visions of control and ontologies of circulation and metabolism. For this purpose, we seek to create a conversation between historians of science on the one hand and anthropologists, sociologists and geographers on the other. Our aim is to link the critical impact of genealogies of circulation and metabolism with contemporary concerns of the environmental humanities. If we are to build the “infrastructures of knowledge in the Anthropocene” and to push for a common ground between the humanities and natural sciences, a reflexive knowledge about the historical ontologies of circulation and the attendant governmental programs is direly needed. At the same time, a commitment to models, relationalities and ontologies appears as unavoidable. How do we navigate this intermingling of ecologies, control and epistemologies?

We suggest following three themes of discussion and are open to creative changes:

- 1) Metabolism and Circulation as Ecological Ontologies – Genealogies of Elements, Energies and Models
- 2) Economies and Governmentalities of Matters in Circulation – Infrastructures between Capitalist Controls and Governmental Hopes
- 3) Epistemologies of Sensing, Tracking and Relating – Techno-Aesthetics and Transparency in Environmental Humanities

The workshop is the first of a planned series - it is planned as a small event that allows for extended discussion and exploration. We understand the themes raised above as initial problematizations and hope to form transdisciplinary and international collaborations for further research. The workshop is part of a research project “Ordering Dynamics – Political Epistemologies, Metabolisms and Moral Economies” at the University of Erfurt, Germany.