

## **Call for Abstracts (special issue proposal): “Materiality-Critique-Transformation”**

**Editors: Doris Allhutter, Brigitte Bargetz, Hanna Meißner, Kathrin Thiele**

*[This is a call for abstracts for a journal special issue on the above theme. We are currently negotiating with a feminist journal (Feminist Theory), and we will pursue the next steps once we have a full set of abstracts for consideration. Provisional publication date is early 2020; first drafts of papers are due beginning of January 2018.]*

The rise of new materialism/s in feminist debates in the late 2000 and early 2010's was marked by a certain spirit of enthusiasm: "Something is stirring. Calls for attention are heard from within. Visceral movements resonate from within the belly of the beast of academia. They beckon us from inside the humanities and the natural sciences....Stirrings are felt more widely as well, from the world within and around us" (Åsberg/Koobak/Johnson, 2011: 218). Scholars involved in these debates present their interventions as projects of renewal, even sometimes of radical rupture with epistemic foundations of modern Western thinking. They call for fundamental epistemic shifts, they diagnose the implosion of analytical categories and, in particular, of dualisms such as nature/culture and human/non-human (see for instance the articles in Alaimo/Hekman 2008 and Coole/Frost 2010). In feminist theory a (re-)turn to the material has been proclaimed to counter a diagnosed dominance of social constructionism and the focus on language only. One general claim is that this theoretical renewal is conducive to new - and better - answers with regard to current political impasses and crises, because it promises to advance our grasp of complex imbrications of the political with/in material conditions.

As the debates grow and deepen, however, contributions seem to become more cautious. Feminist scholars engaging with new materialism/s increasingly articulate a desire to address (again) critical questions of exclusion, domination, exploitation, and to invest in political emancipation. This then calls for a more elaborate reconsideration of the theoretical relations of new materialism to the traditions of historical materialism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism, or - as political theorist Diana Coole says - it speaks for the need of a "multidimensional ontology" (2013, 464). Against this background the special issue proposes to address the complicated and tension-filled issue of 'critique' as a driving force of social theory. It aims to address the following questions: How does a new materialist debunking of anthropocentrism and social/linguistic determinism relate to (queer feminist) issues of emancipation and transformation? What are the political potentials of new materialism/s and how are we to position new materialism/s in relation to ongoing processes of economization, precarization and societal de-solidarization?

The issue aims to attend to today's precarious social structures as the contingent vibrancy of matter by zooming-in on everyday phenomena and asking how they are entangled with new modes of governance through political and economic incentive structures and concrete, material tools, instruments and 'motivational technologies'. In this way, this special issue seeks to explore the epistemological potentials of new materialist approaches and in particular the challenges of addressing different - possibly contradictory or even mutually exclusive - levels of inquiry simultaneously. Thus, how could a new materialist-inspired sensitivity to episteme-ontological entanglements, to queer feminist practices of knowing as "specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (Barad 2007: 91), contribute to our understanding of the changing relations of sociomaterial (re-)production that cannot be locally contained and effect and

affect human lives and more-than-human materialities on a global scale, yet in very localized, specific and unequal ways? Is it possible – and helpful – to consider new materialism/s as an onto-epistemological approach *as well as* a critical social theory? Does this contribute to a better understanding and exploring of alternative contemporary political modes and to a way to critically evaluate exploitative aspects as well as emancipatory promises? And last, what would a ‘multiple ontology’ look like that helps to approach the in/inaccessible plasticity, the un/intended effects, and the im/materiality of social formations as gendered, racialized and classed relations?

We invite papers that address these issues either in a more general, theoretical way, or focus on specific empirical phenomena, such as contemporary political and socio-economic reconfigurations, educational institutions, affective pedagogies, socio-technical assemblages, mobilizations and corporations, digital labor, sharing economies, forms of collaboration, self-organisation, and self-maintaining networks or new modes of (re-)solidarization and political organizing.

**\*\*\* Deadline for submission of abstracts: July 21, 2017 \*\*\***

Please send **abstracts of 500 words** to the special issue editors by the deadline of July 21, 2017:

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## References

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