

CALL FOR PAPERS

Urban Matters: Material Engagements with Communities and Borders in Times of Movement

9th Annual Conference on the New Materialisms

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Research program *Religious Matters in an Entangled World*

Utrecht University, the Netherlands

June 20-22, 2018

New materialist scholarship has in the last decade taken flight, and interesting connections have been found and produced between new materialisms, medical and environmental humanities, and science and technology studies. These innovations notwithstanding, the new materialisms have left untouched important theoretical debates and societally relevant areas of study. This has led to critiques of new materialisms' empirical applicability and political value, and to the question: how do the material turns of 'new materialisms' and of 'material approaches' in fields such as media and cultural studies and anthropology converge and diverge? Scholarship under the heading of 'new materialisms' can be strengthened by bringing it more explicitly into contact with Humanities and Social-Science research on matter and materiality. Practices of world-making, from religion to the (performing) arts, have been approached as ways to inquire into affective and socio-material assemblages from which emerging emotions and imaginaries have been articulated. Affective and socio-material assemblages give new insights into the ways in which every-day and artistic practices, alongside political, economic, and scientific practices, generate and rework not only structural in- and exclusions, but also seemingly immaterial things such as meaning, belief, and emotion. Communities and borders in pluriform cities in Europe and beyond provide a particularly fertile ground for experimenting with these interactions and for working towards an inclusive 'material turn.'

As we are moving into an Urban Age in which the majority of the world population lives in cities, questions of co-existence increasingly have to be thought in relation to high density, proximity and heterogeneity. This urban condition brings to the forefront the question how superdiversity is maintained and reproduced in relation to the built environment and technologies of mediation. Interventions in the field of urban studies suggest to approach this question by means of an 'infrastructural' perspective that understands the reproduction of social life in terms of socio-material assemblages that shape the fabric of urban life. This infrastructural understanding of the city offers us a concrete example of the empirical applicability and political value of new materialisms, and also a concrete domain where different material traditions can be investigated more closely. Important questions, for instance, are how different religious practices with their own material-semiotic ideologies inform lay and scholarly perceptions of the urban environment and how these perceptions influence the production of borders and communities and the possibilities of co-existence. Another set of questions concerns the processes through which religion materializes in concrete forms – through architecture and material culture - in urban spaces, thereby rendering the beyond to which religion refers tangible. Important questions concern how the ways in which religions took place in the past shape urban religious environments in which religious newcomers nestle, as well as how different religious traditions and their religious matters relate to each other in our time.

The conveners of *Urban Matters* invite abstracts for papers and panels on the theme of *Material Engagements with Communities and Borders in Times of Movement* and on the

new materialisms in relation to other material approaches. We invite proposals on topics including (but not limited to):

- Genealogies of 'material turns' in philosophical thought and political theory, and across the Humanities and the Social Sciences
- Convergences and divergences of 'new materialisms' and 'material approaches' such as material culture studies, media ecology and (performing) arts as a material practice, and the study of religion from a material angle
- Methodological reflections on studying affective and socio-material assemblages and practices of world-making
- Understanding movement and ideology, and communities and borders in today's cities from a material perspective

Proposals are to be submitted to urbanmatters@uu.nl and are due by January 15, 2018. Presenters will be notified by February 15, 2018.

For all information about the conference please visit our website at: <https://urbanmatters.sites.uu.nl>

This conference is a follow-up event of COST Action IS1307 New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter comes to Matter' (<http://newmaterialism.eu/>) and is sponsored by

- Descartes Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities (<https://www.uu.nl/en/descartes-centre>)
- Research program *Religious Matters in an Entangled World* (<https://www.religiousmatters.nl/about/>)
- Research focus area Cultures, Citizenship, and Human Rights (<http://cchr.uu.nl/>)