

Exploring Ecologies of Mind in (Mental) Health Eco-Pathologies and Onto-Politics of Healing Economies

Workshop of the Work Group Medical Anthropology (German Anthropological Association)

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Conveners: Caroline Meier zu Biesen (Freie Universität Berlin), Nasima Selim (Freie Universität Berlin), Claudia Lang (Cermes3, Paris), Dominik Mattes (Freie Universität Berlin)

How do we shift our epistemological habits of differentiating phenomena into binary opposites, such as body and mind, nature and culture, tradition and modernity, or biomedicine and traditional healing? Recent analytical approaches in the field of (mental) health are based on ontological perspectives that place emphasis on the *relations between* and the *mutual co-constitution* of actors and entities that are otherwise considered discrete and bounded elements of the social world. These approaches include, for instance, the “ecology of mind in health and illness” (Kirmayer 2015); “eco-psychiatry” (Chowdhury and Jadav 2012); “eco-centric self” (Kirmayer et al. 2009); “affective arrangements” (Slaby et al. 2017) or “digital ecologies” in youth mental health (Fullagar et al. 2017). Drawing from Gregory Bateson’s framework of *an ecology of mind* (Bateson 2000 [1972]; 1979), many of these approaches stress the inherent connections between the embodied minds of human beings and “nature” including the environment and non-human beings. Bateson’s *ecology of mind* itself redefines epistemology as knowing how to look for patterns that connect the living world as a series of formal and abstract relations. In this workshop, we wish to further experimentally explore these ideas with a particular interest in the intersection of (mental) health and traditional healing.

One way of doing this is to engage with the notion of *eco-pathology* that connects individual, familial, as well as wider socio-cultural and political-economic dimensions of (mental) health and healing with ecologies. The latter are understood as relationship[s] between living entities and their environments (Edgerton and Campbell 1994). We are interested in exploring the different forms of eco-pathologies that disrupt contemporary urban and rural environments in postindustrial and postcolonial settings. How do such disruptions affect the body-mind and may lead to “ecological grief” in response to the loss of species, landscapes, and climate change (Butler et al. 2014, Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, Russell et al. 2013)? How are humans caught up with animal, plant, and spirit life-worlds in *affective ecologies*, i.e. in often politically motivated nature narratives and practices that evoke emotional and sensual responses, addressing both the body and mind (Ogden et al. 2013, Weik von Mossner 2017).

Taking into account that (traditional) medicine does not only serve as a therapeutic or political, but also *economic* resource (Knipper and Wörrle 2010), exploring the notion of *ecologies of mind* also requires tracing their intersections with the economies of (mental) health and healing practices. Can the “marketplace” be a potential empirical and analytical site where such *ecologies of mind* and *healing economies* meet? How then do we understand financial exchanges of healing products or sites of exchange where individual experts compete for patients within an overarching (capitalist) economy (Fassin 1992), as well as *non-market* forms of social relations such as the gift economy (Basu 2016, Palmer 2011)?

Thinking about extensions, connections, and relations necessarily involves a critical engagement with ‘borders’ (Luedke and West 2006) and ‘ontological politics’ (Langwick 2011; Mol 1999) that become (or are rendered) relevant in the contested realm of health and healing. These analytical frames draw our attention to the ways in which particular therapies, body-minds, or ailments are brought to life, allowed to exist, or marginalized. They help scrutinize the patterns, discursive contexts, and socio-material settings in which boundaries (whether literal or metaphorical) are established, negotiated, transgressed, and dissolved. They also contribute to a better understanding of how medical landscapes are constituted through dynamic interactions and shaped by phenomenological diversity. The intersections of religious/spiritual, traditional and biomedical/psychiatric therapeutic practices are of particular interest in this context (Basu et al. 2017; Lang 2018; Naraindas, Quack and Sax 2014, Read et al. 2009).

Drawing on these ideas, we invite contributions that address questions including – but not limited to – the following:

- How do we connect minds, bodies, social and ecological relations, and economies in order to formulate a broader understanding of (mental) pathologies as eco-pathologies?
- What form do the political interests and power relations constituting a therapeutic field as “traditional,” “modern”, or “local” assume?
- Which factors affect the extent to which governmental and non-governmental actors secure (and market) resources that preserve the health of their communities?
- How do human and non-human entities interact in ecosystems of (mental) health and healing traditions in and across the ‘Global South’ and ‘North’? What kinds of new political, economic and contingent limitations or possibilities affect these entities and their relations with one another?
- What are the possible configurations of *ecologies of mind* in a region where diverse therapeutic traditions meet and compete with each other?
- How can we analyze these ecologies not only in terms of *power* that maintains the status quo or results in systematic disruption of human, animal and plant life-worlds, but also in terms of *productive power* that fosters thriving healing economies?

We seek ethnographic case studies from any part of the world as well as theoretical essays that address one or more of the above-mentioned themes. In addition to conventional textual narratives we welcome multi-modal presentations such as photo-essays, posters, body performances, video installations etc. Please mention whether you need additional space or technical equipment when you submit your abstract. Please **submit your abstract** (300 words max.) and a bionote (100 words max.) by **1 March 2019** to nasimaselim@zedat.fu-berlin.de and cmeier@zedat.fu-berlin.de. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by **15 March 2019**.

Members of the Work Group Medical Anthropology are warmly invited to present their ongoing research (even if unrelated to the workshop theme) in a separate session of the workshop. Please also submit your abstract and bionote by **1 March 2019**.

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