

Biochemical afterlives: Industrial metabolisms and more-than-human health

Workshop at the German Anthropological Association's (DGSKA e.V.) biennial conference "Worlds. Zones. Atmospheres. Seismographies of the Anthropocene", University of Bremen, 27-30 September 2021

Convenors: Sandra Calkins (Freie Universität Berlin), Janina Kehr (University of Bern) and Claudia Lang (Leipzig University)

Chair: Daniel Münster (University of Oslo)

Discussant: Tomás Criado (Humboldt Universität of Berlin)

The rise of industrial chemistry has brought about far-reaching transformations of daily lives, industries, economies and landscapes. Its technologies and substances have inadvertently remade biological, nutritive and chemical relations at both planetary and intimate scales. Toxic substances, atmospheres and residues can intensify long-standing economic, racial, gender, geographic and species inequalities. This prompts a rethinking of what constitutes health, wellbeing, illness and care today and for whom. Our workshop addresses the often unreckoned afterlives of modernist promises in agriculture, medicine, urbanism or other domains and their effect on more-than-human health. It examines how industrial metabolisms texture the lived experience of the present. Papers ask what it means to live with often-toxic remains that have sedimented in bodies and environments, and how they are to be grasped methodologically. A focus on afterlives invites tracing continuities and surprises, multiple temporalities, mutations and excesses that leak out of the original frames of chemical projects. Thinking with biochemical afterlives, that which "lives on" both materially and metaphorically, complicates facile boundaries between life and death, past and present, natural and synthetic, and points to the inseparability of living and nonliving matters. As we live with residues, leftovers, remains of past epochs, can we also devise ways of living well?

Among other topics, papers may address:

- Afterlives of modernist projects in agriculture (i.e. pesticides, fertilizers, plant/animal engineering) or medicine (waste/discard/leakages of pharmaceuticals or biomedical products)
- Sensing biochemical afterlives in water, soil, bodies, communities, the atmosphere and popular imagination
- Temporalities of decay, sedimentation, and recuperation
- More-than-human health, wellbeing and ethics of care

Please submit both a long version (max. 1,200 characters including spaces) and a short version (max. 300 characters including spaces) of your abstract to sandra.calkins@fu-berlin.de, janina.kehr@anthro.unibe.ch and claudia.lang@uni-leipzig.de.

Deadline: 15 February 2021