

## **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the New Materialisms June 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Paris**

Organized by: New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter Comes to Matter', European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), Action IS1307 in association with Ladyss - Laboratoire Dynamiques sociales et recomposition des espaces, and UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

### **Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms: The Ethics of Decolonizing Nature and Culture**

Keynote speakers: Bruno Latour (SciencesPo), Angela Mitropoulos (University of Western Sydney), Rosi Braidotti (Utrecht University), TBC

We are immersed in matter, invaded by streams of living and technological subjects. Our bodies are exchanged, extended and interconnected in myriad different ways. The New Materialisms investigate the incessant materialization of the world. Matter is not a stable substance, neither localizable nor identifiable through clearly defined boundaries. Within both human and nonhuman environments, social and biological ontologies, everything exists in a constant state of change and materialization. The New Materialisms offer an alternative *literacy* with which to address the task proposed by the political consideration of the relations of difference, as well as those of divides. In the specific terms of feminist scholarship, this literacy has emerged as a "quantum literacy", offering a significant turn for critical and creative discourses. Yet quantum literacy also possesses relevance beyond feminist theory, as a tool for all of those who are interested in conceiving more adequate terms for expressing knowledge production and the ethical terms of life and nature itself (Bühlmann, Colman & Van Der Tuin, 2016). The political agenda of this literacy offers a number of strategies for the conceptualization of entities and events (for example, migration and refuge; border control and actions of militarism; climate change and ecology), and for wider knowledge production across the sciences and humanities. As such, the New Materialist turn and its provocations coalesce as part of a paradigmatic shift currently occurring in the environmental humanities, and media and technology studies – across the humanities and the sciences – some of which are articulated under the concepts explored in post-capitalist, post-humanist, and post-colonial positions.

Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms share an ethic of decolonizing nature and culture, as they depart from anthropocentric and constructivist positions. Our call is to consider ourselves as permeable, part of the ebb and flow of the Anthropocene, part of the "stuff of the world" (Alaimo, 2016). It is a call to investigate how climate change and the sixth great extinction are captured as scientific data, and to inhabit an environmentally ethical sense of matter within a world caught in the throes of change. New Materialist concepts of living matter upset conventional distinctions between matter and life, inorganic and organic, passive object and active subject (DeLanda, 2000). In Barad's "agential realism" (2007), material agency does not privilege the human, just as for Bennett, "thing power" (2004) emphasizes the shared material basis and the kinship of all things, regardless of their status – human, animal, vegetable, or mineral. It is through this sense of mutual implication that the New Materialisms can contribute to an ecological ethos. Our call is to consider the New Materialisms as an opportunity to enrich pre-existing conjunctions across environmental philosophy, environmental history, ecocriticism, cultural geography, cultural anthropology, and political

ecology, including their debates as captured by the environmental humanities. These fruitful alliances could help build environmental posthumanities, as environmental humanists, activists and stewards work to reveal and reshape the flows of material agencies across regions, environments, animal and human bodies.

The conference *Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms: The Ethics of Decolonizing Nature and Culture* wants to tap into as well as contribute to such debates.

The intention of the conference is to focus on the following broadly formulated topics and questions:

### ***Decoloniality and Environmental Ethics***

- How does decolonial theory and practice contribute to and reposition the New Materialisms as well as the Environmental Humanities? How does the emergence of the “other” in postmodernity and neo materialisms, differing in terms of gender, race or non-humanity reconfigure environmental humanities?
- As peripheries and margins restructure in counter-subjectivities and cores nomadize and deterritorialize, what does ‘autonomy’ mean in axiomatically agential worlds? How does autonomy refer to the ability to perpetuate the material agency of systems and institutions, impacting work, gender, race, or life? What are the links between the production of autonomy, the material-semiotic conditions of life, and political choices?

### ***The Environmental Ethics of Feminism, Work and Social Movements***

- (Eco)feminism and commoning are theories and practices interested in investigating the political dimension of autonomy. Paradoxically, only separate entities can be authentically interconnected, and only the interconnected can experience isolation and precariousness. How are old and new emancipatory forms gendered, themselves impacting the nature of matter?
- What are the relations of difference and divides playing out in relation to old and new material conditions of work? How can we open up to, and generate, new working collectives and co-working?
- What kind of gender issues are brought up by the question of autonomy and how does it relate to environmental materiality?

### ***Transversal Methodologies***

- As a critical and creative scholarly form, quantum literacy inspires us to ask: what are the generative intersections between, for example, academic research, artistic research, action research, and practice-related research regarding life and matter, nature and culture?
- How can we address these questions, taking into account the multiple processes of material-discursive production, translation, transformation, and diffraction?

### ***Environmental Aesthetics***

- What are the relationships between environmental aesthetics and the New Materialisms? Are these two movements able to support one another and what can we derive from their entanglements?
- As New Materialists affirm that beyond the human, matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns, and remembers (Barad, 2007), how does that claim reconfigure environmental aesthetics?
- Finally, we would like to investigate what kind of knowledge the autonomy of *aesthesis* is able to produce, and what such knowledge assumes and affords for our scholarship, politically, conceptually, and agentially. How does environmental aesthetics, including

urban aesthetics, renew the concept of materiality?

We invite submissions of proposals for academic papers, performances, projects, personal narratives, and artistic installations, addressing these themes. We also welcome pre-constituted panels and workshops around the topics of the conference.

***Practical Information***

Abstracts for individual papers and performances (300 words) should be sent in the following format: 1. Title; 2. Presenter(s) + short bio; 3. Institutional affiliation; 4. Abstract; 5. Key words; 6. Technical requirements. Proposals for pre-organized panels and workshops should additionally include a summary paragraph along with proposed session title.

All submitted abstracts, panel proposals, and workshop proposals will be peer reviewed by the conference committee. Deadline for abstracts is the **1<sup>st</sup> of December 2016**. Send the submissions or any questions to: [admin@newmaterialism.eu](mailto:admin@newmaterialism.eu).

***More information:*** [www.newmaterialism.eu](http://www.newmaterialism.eu)