

Resource – Event – Practice

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on New Materialism

Workshop of the Leibniz ScienceCampus *Resources in Transformation (ReForm)*,
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Keynote – Ian Hodder (Stanford University)

Placing the intertwining of different aspects of materiality (things, artefacts, bodies), which are understood as symmetrical, at the center of its theory, New Materialism represents an important reference point for the cultural and social sciences. Exemplary of the field are the writings of Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, who—despite their theoretical differences—can be described as the two most important exponents of this way of thinking. For instance, Karen Barad proposes a “new” concept of (distributed) materialism in critical demarcation or radicalization of Judith Butler’s very prominent focus on the effectiveness of apparatuses (for example, with regard to instruments in scientific laboratory situations in physics). Here, the intertwining of the various material particles of practice that inevitably arise when apparatuses and other material things become effective in practice is conceived as a dynamic event in which things, artefacts, and bodies mutually affect and are affected. It is precisely from this intertwining that an intense transformative potential emerges, though the quality of the assemblages that occur varies widely.

Such an understanding of entanglement, inspired by New Materialism in social sciences, is of great interest for the study of resources as those material things to which cultural and discursive expressions and articulations ascribe a central importance and particular value for social practice. Indeed, New Materialism allows us to grasp resources as occurring particles of practice that become possible through situational entanglements of things, artefacts, bodies, expressions, and articulations.

Within the framework of the Leibniz Science Campus *Resources in Transformation (ReForm)*, this conference will bring together various scholars from the cultural, social, and historical sciences in order to approach the coming into existence of resources from an interdisciplinary perspective at a theoretical and empirical level. **First**, the concept of materiality will be clarified and the problem of its linguistic comprehensibility will be discussed. **Secondly**, corporeality, sensuality, and affectivity within the material accomplishment of practice will be thematized. And **thirdly**, it is important to trace the material and corporeal entanglements together with their different forms and qualities. In doing so, it is also important to clarify the significance of cultural expressions and articulations for the manifold entanglements of practice particles. In the frame of New Materialism, they must be consistently understood in physical terms—hence material and corporeal.

This raises the following central questions for the conference:

- What are the possibilities and limits of New Materialism in the cultural and social sciences? What differences and similarities are there with the conceptual materiality of archaeology and sociology, for example?
- How can georesources be understood as material particles of practice? What meshworks are necessary for resources in the sense defined above to occur? How, if at all, can georesources like coal, farmland, metal, and water be distinguished from other kinds of resources, such as digital data?
- How can corporeality, sensuality, affectivity, and perception—terms currently being intensively discussed in the context of a new debate over the concept of aesthetics—be grasped as particles of practice? What kind of meshwork is necessary for corporeality to occur and have lasting effects on practice?

- What is the significance of cultural, theoretical, and sociological concepts such as expression, articulation, and aesthetics for the further development of a concept of resources aligned with New Materialism?
- What kinds of interweaving of practice particles can be empirically identified and investigated?
- What perspectives on New Materialism can be identified and pursued in response to these questions?

The conference addresses these questions to sociologists, archaeologists, cultural scientists, historians, and scholars from related disciplines. It will take place within the semester program 2023 of the Leibniz ScienceCampus *Resources in Transformation (ReForm)* (www.reform.ressourcencampus-bochum.de).

Organizers

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