

CALL FOR PAPERS

LOOKING AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY – NEW MATERIALIST APPROACHES IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Conference on 20th and 21st March 2025 at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) in Mainz in cooperation with the AG Theorien in der Archäologie (TidA), the Cluster of Excellence ROOTS, and the Marburg Center of the Ancient World (MCAW)

[*\(siehe hier für eine deutschsprachige Version\)*](#)

Are things still as we imagine them? The different archaeological disciplines and related fields of study are largely concerned with material culture, but things have recently gained a life of their own. The insights provided by New Materialist approaches have turned the humanistic concept of science and the humanities upside down. 'Things' are now more than objects made only for and/or by humans, but are rather a gathering of things, assemblages and material forms of living together. Therefore, they are more than meaningful objects, symbols or media as they are examined by Material Culture Studies.

Proceeding from the philosophical works of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and others, there are several approaches to a post-humanist assessment of things that add a whole spectrum of new perspectives: that of relational entanglements, other ontologies, and notions of vibrant matter. These are summarised under the term the 'Ontological Turn', which emphasises potentially very different cosmologies and realities, and places the changed roles of humans, other beings, things and concepts in the focus of archaeological theoretical discourses.

In our view, the theoretical positions of the New Materialism share in common a different and more serious ways of looking at things: 1) Things were and are active in social processes and not mere passive objects; 2) Things are more than matter and its meaning; they are transforming, vibrant, obstinate forces whose potential can remain inactive; 3) Matter is not a stable and static entity but is constantly changing and in flow. These three aspects point towards the necessity of revising existing concepts of dualisms and dichotomies such as nature/culture, body/mind, matter/social or alive/dead.

For a relational and dynamic understanding of material worlds, new concepts are needed to describe collectives, social structures, assemblages and *agencements*, networks and material flows. These emphasise changes, relations and emergent enactments instead of essentialist characteristics and autonomous entities.

In archaeology, these approaches usually concentrate on ontologies of past societies and the way they viewed and lived in their world(s). To do so, cross-connections are drawn to related theoretical approaches such as New Animism, Feminist Materialism; New Vitalism, multispecies approaches, theories of inter- and trans-corporeality or assemblage theories which analyse how materials emerged, transformed, and were placed, treated, embedded, or preserved in archaeological contexts.



LEIBNIZ-ZENTRUM
FÜR ARCHÄOLOGIE



Philipps



Universität
Marburg

ROOTS
cluster of excellence

We would like to continue these archaeological approaches with our conference and to “look at things differently”:

- How can we re-interpret forms of living together in the past through the research perspectives of New Materialism?
- What impact does New Materialism have on archaeological work such as excavations and categorisations, restorations and conservations, interpretation and quantification, conceptualisation and theorization, as well as on exhibition and conveyance?
- Which new challenges and approaches, questions and perspectives are developing from the perspective of New Materialism?
- How is archaeology presented beyond dualisms in a relational mindset?

We invite contributions for the two-day conference that are related to New Materialism, especially but not limited to topics that concentrate on post-humanist narratives, assemblages, archaeological categories, entangled bodies, architecture, art or influences of New Materialism on archaeological records, excavations, contexts and features.

Please send your paper proposals or poster ideas with a maximum of 200 words to newmaterialism@posteo.de until 15.12.2024. A conference publication is planned.

Keynote Speaker: Ben Jervis (University of Leicester, UK)

Organisation: Sarah Bockmeyer (EXC ROOTS, Kiel), Sabine Neumann (Marburger Centrum Antike Welt, Marburg), Stefan Schreiber (LEIZA, Mainz).

Suggested Readings:

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Harris, Oliver J. T. 2021. *Assembling Past Worlds: Materials, Bodies and Architecture*. Abington, New York: Routledge.

Hoppe, Katharina and Thomas Lemke. 2021. *Neue Materialismen zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius.

Jervis, Ben. 2018. *Assemblage Thought and Archaeology*. Abington, New York: Routledge.



LEIBNIZ-ZENTRUM
FÜR ARCHÄOLOGIE



Philipps



Universität
Marburg

ROOTS
cluster of excellence