

About Un/Commoning Anthropology

This *boasblog* accompanies the 2025 conference of the German Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology entitled “Un/Commoning Anthropology”, which will take place in Cologne from September 29 to October 2, 2025.

All panel convenors were invited to discuss their panels in their own subblogs in order to prepare for, accompany, and follow up on the conference.

Please find the formal requirements for submitting a contribution [at this link](#).

This *boasblog* is currently being prepared. Please check back in the coming days and weeks for updates.

Conference theme

In the face of polycrisis and endangered livelihoods, ‘commoning’ has come into increasing focus in recent anthropological debates. While earlier research on commons focused on communally managed resources, these renewed discussions about different practices and forms of commoning broaden our view to include emerging, decentralised practices of self-determination that resist various manifestations of power and capitalism. Commoning is often located in a tradition of utopian social projects. At the centre of commoning is the attempt to make resources administered by the state, or marketed by the private sector, the basis for new communities of solidarity of varying scales and scopes. In view of the Anthropocene as a ‘contaminated epoch’, commoning relies on establishing forms of transboundary solidarity, neighbourly responsibility, and mutual care to solve planetary challenges. Air, water, soil, and biodiversity, cultural heritage and different knowledge formations, are thus withdrawn as commons from extractivist exploitation and state appropriation, to be managed and preserved in solidarity as a common basis of life for future generations. Among other things, this means

discussing health not primarily as a property of individual bodies, but as a question of relational and collective forms of wellbeing, even across species boundaries.

In all areas of social life, people who had been denied political and cultural participation in colonial and post-colonial contexts often remain excluded, while new forms of marginalization continue to emerge today. Claims by these diverse groups to the commoning of resources, archives, and social futures challenge prevailing forms of classification and claims to ownership. New forms of co-operation and knowledge production aim at a radical redefinition of social relations and are meant to be translated into practical collaborations. This requires questioning assumptions and bodies of knowledge that are normatively set as “common sense”, while always giving rise to new forms of inclusion and exclusion.

At the same time, states, corporations, and other supranational organisations are increasingly co-opting and institutionalising claims to commoning in the entrenched relationships of international (knowledge) orders. To resist this logic of co-optation and maintain claims to difference, uncommoning is increasingly being brought to bear as a practice of resistance. Some social spaces, ecosystems, non-Western ontologies, and forms of more-than-human coexistence are involved in struggles to withdraw from hegemonic social formations, co-optation by state authorities, and the pervasive logic of the market. The digital commons, in particular, is caught in a field of tension in which people can benefit from enhanced participation, on the one hand, while technologies and media content, on the other, are increasingly being exploited, manipulated, and domesticated by transnational corporations and for political projects.

In response to crises of the post-colonial world order and the effects of an increasingly destructive capitalism, utopias of solidarity-based community, defiant differentiation, as well as authoritarian identity politics come into conflict, translate into one another, and produce different kinds of inclusions and exclusions.

The 2025 biennial conference of the German Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology invites you to critically examine the possibilities and politics of un/commoning in the face of multiple crises, as they are currently being discussed for the sustainable and just treatment of our planet and each other. In light of current ethnographic research, the conference calls for new discussions about questions of what can be common – and to whom – as part of local, situated struggles that may also have global implications. At a minimum, this includes critical reflections on whether, how, and by whom anthropological knowledges, methods, and theories can or should be used to solve boundary-crossing challenges.

More information about the conference including the program at:

<https://tagung.dgska.de/en/theme/>

This *boasblog* is produced by the [German Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology](#) in cooperation with [Worlds of Contradiction \(WOC\)](#) at the University of Bremen.



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie

Contact:

Ehler Voss | ehler.voss@uni-bremen.de

Martin Zillinger | zillingm@uni-koeln.de