Plenary Session Un/Commoning Anthropology

Plenary Session III Un/Commoning Anthropology

Chair: Nina ter Laan and Hauke-Peter Vehrs (Universität zu Köln)

Anthropological methods and forms of knowledge-making are part and parcel of various forms of Commoning and Uncommoning.

This plenary brings together scholars from around the world to reflect on the histories, effects and potentialities of anthropological Un/Commoning. On the one hand, since its emergence as an academic discipline, social and cultural anthropology is deeply enmeshed in colonial and neo-colonial forms of extraction, and domination. On the other hand, as a discipline that foregrounds empirical research and learning relationships it also entails the potential to critically engage with, question and subvert existing power asymmetries. The panel un/commoning anthropology therefore addresses the extractivist histories of anthropology and engages with demands for an institutional, methodological and epistemological commoning of anthropology's knowledge-practices. It also asks which ressources anthropology may provide and continues to hold that can actually unfold a commoning potential. In what ways can and does anthropological practice support and enhance projects of commoning? And in what ways is anthropological commoning misplaced and a form of extraction? By examining past and current, manifest and potential roles of anthropologies in forging processes of in- and exclusion, commoning and uncommoning this session invites situated perspectives on the potentials and pitfalls for un/commoning the discipline – in past, present and possible futures.

Plenary Speakers

Tamer Abd Elkreem holds a Ph.D. from Bayreuth University and is a Co-Investigator/Sudan lead researcher of the ESRC funded project "Digitalising Food Assistance: Political economy, governance and food security effects across the Global North-South divide", hosted by SOAS, London. He is a lecturer at the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology and the Deputy Director of Peace Research, University of Khartoum. His research interest focuses on power relations of development, Anthropology of post-colonial state, anthropology of mega developmental projects and critical analysis of its discourses and practices in Sudan. Abd El Kreem will contribute his perspectives on Power and Representation and the current debate on decolonizing anthropology.

Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan (New York University) explores in his ethnographic and multimodal research how media consumption, production, and dissemination shape the understanding of migration, gender, ethnicity, and urban space. He is particularly interested in how corporate social media platforms have become a space for the rearticulation and disruption of persistent forms of coloniality, thereby engaging in "Digital Un/Commoning." For the plenary session, his focus on collaborative and multimodal forms of research is also relevant, along with his role as the editor of the multimodal section of the journal American Anthropologist.

Mary Mbewe holds a Ph.D. from the University of the Western Cape and works a Senior Lecturer at Mulungushi University, Sambia. Previously she has worked as Keeper of History at the Moto Moto Museum, the second-largest Museum in Zambia. Here, she was involved and has been involved in many programmes that have sought to transform museum practice by opening the core functions of the museum to multiple actors away from the conventional expertise of museum curators. By collaboratively reimagining problematic ethnographic museum collections she has explored in depth the challenges that come with past and present forms of Un/Commoning anthropology. Dr. Mbewe is also a case study researcher with Open Restitution Africa researching the provenance and restitution process of African

cultural artefacts.

Christiane Falge is Professor of Health and Diversity at Bochum University of Applied Sciences and a medical anthropologist whose research centers on migration, community health, and health inequalities. Following extended transnational research on the global Nuer in Ethiopia, Sudan and the US she founded the Bochum City Lab, a pioneering site for decolonial, collaborative knowledge production through community research and empowerment which she developed in close cooperation with her colleague Silke Betscher. Commoning is at the heart of her approach, fostering solidarity and co-creation between academia and local communities. She has co-authored publications and video based health informations with community members and promotes community involvement and empowerment to address health inequalities. Currently, her work focuses on reducing health disparities by establishing solidarity-based neighborhood health centers grounded in community research and collective action.