

**Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2016. *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change*. London: Pluto Press. 192 pp. Pb.: \$30.00. ISBN: 9780745336343.**

Is the essence of anthropology indeed the study of local sociocultural specifics? Is its purpose to provide a microscopically detailed insight into the lifestyles of peoples in various parts of the world? In his most recent book, Thomas Hylland Eriksen says “no” to both questions. In a fairly short volume of fewer than 200 pages, created as the result of the project *Overheating: The Three Crises of Globalisation or an Anthropological History of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Eriksen focuses on the main global issues and crises: from climate change to the accumulation of waste, and the unimagined development of information and communications technologies, whereby he lists examples from various parts of the world, interconnects them with his own ethnographic experiences and those of others, and expands them with statistical data, diagrams, and graphs. The gist of this book can be summarised in one sentence: the social world is becoming increasingly crowded, dynamic, interconnected, and subsequently uncontrollable, and is too fast to be understood and studied from merely an ethnographic approach.

The selection of references Eriksen uses to support his claims is—and he also mentions this himself in the introduction almost apologetically—fairly eclectic: he refers to anthropological, sociological, economic, biological, environmental protection, and other works, skilfully combining them with data from the internet and other media. For example, his repertoire includes the unfairly neglected anthropologist and systems theorist Gregory Bateson, he quotes biologist and paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, uses Paul Virilio’s philosophical premises, and refers to the Red Queen from Lewis Carroll’s fairytale *Through the Looking-Glass* when explaining the situation in an “overheated” world, in which we are forced to run constantly in order to stay in place. When reading this book, it seems we are flitting from one topic to another like in a helicopter, descending down from the macro-level, where we have a view of the broader community and the global consequences of human activity on this planet, to the micro-level, from where we can look into our trash can and reflect on our daily commute to work.

The first topic Eriksen delves into is the energy that we have secured in abundance, but unfortunately to the detriment of the planet on which we live. This is most evident in the use of fossil fuels, which have influenced our lifestyles since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Coal, oil, and natural gas extraction have left an indelible mark on the Earth and its biotopes, and thus, according to some, started a new geological age: the Anthropocene. Eriksen draws attention to the main culprits that have contributed to the overheating of the atmosphere and climate change, whereby he is especially unforgiving towards his own country (i.e. Norway), which is indirectly responsible for 3% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Rather than reducing oil extraction and adapting their lifestyles, Norwegians prefer to invest in changing the habits of the Global South. In this regard, Eriksen highlights a telling paradox of those parts of the world that have built their welfare society based on fossil fuels: sweeping problems under the rug, which is often someone else’s rug, not their own.

Over the past two decades, fossil fuels have facilitated and accelerated human

mobility. Because of relatively cheap oil and its derivatives, we can travel more frequently and over much longer distances than in the past. A typical example is the exponential growth of international tourism. According to the United Nations, 25 million people travelled abroad in 1960, 250 million in 1970, 536 million in 1995, 922 million in 2008, and in 2012 the number of international tourists exceeded one billion.

While some travel for pleasure (and because they can afford it), many are forced to leave their homes. The second type of mass migration discussed in *Overheating* is the migration of refugees, whose number is also increasing. In contrast to the largely desired tourists, they are often viewed as an anomaly in the generally overheated, albeit still relatively well-organised world. At asylum centres, into which refugees are often packed for an indefinite period, their lives often turn into nothing but waiting for residence and work permits. According to Eriksen, such 'liminal, unproductive persons' are frequently treated as 'matter out of place', just like Mary Douglas put it in *Purity and Danger* (1966). The people we do not like and who do not belong to any of the predefined categories start piling up just like dirt under our rug.

We push away not only unwanted people but also things that have already served their purpose. As Eriksen puts it, waste is the most evident, visible, and malodorous consequence of globalisation. In this shortest and perhaps least a well-developed chapter, he highlights the vicious circle of consumerism, which not only leads to an accumulation of goods but also contributes to increasingly larger waste piles, at both the micro-level of households and the planetary macro-level. The solution presented at the end of the chapter is obvious, albeit somewhat utopian: a shift from neoliberal capitalism as the predominant form of production to a circular economy promoting recycling and self-sufficiency.

The next important topic the book focuses on is the rise of the importance of cities in the modern world. Once again, Eriksen uses numbers to graphically outline the significance of urbanisation: two hundred years ago, 10% of people lived in cities; in 1960, the urban population accounted for approximately one third of the world population; in 1980, half of the world's population lived in urban areas. So how does rapid urbanisation affect our lifestyle? On the one hand, it facilitates the transfer of information and helps transcend cultural differences, and on the other, new conflicts arise among previously isolated groups that lead to an ever more rapid overheating of the world.

The last topic discussed is the information overload we have experienced during the rise of cell phones, tablets, the internet, and other technologies, which are supposed to make our lives easier, but often just make them tougher. For example, e-mail makes our communication harder rather than better and faster because we have to be available almost day and night and reply instantly to dozens of e-mails that arrive in our inboxes every day if we want to retain our social status (or even job many a time). A day without an internet connection can be a true disaster, and Eriksen describes this picturesquely using the example of people in the US who gathered in front of local McDonald's and Starbucks locations after Hurricane Sandy, which had destroyed all the infrastructure and power lines, because those were the only places where WiFi access was available. The information society chapter content follows quite closely the concept of Eriksen's *Tyranny of the Moment* published in 2001, and the overall impression is also reminiscent

of this work: a thin book that deals with big issues and spices them up with a bunch of revealing graphs, in which the curves nearly always rise steeply.

With *Overheating*, Eriksen comes close to the model of a specialist work that is accessible to masses and is at the same time essential for promoting and strengthening the scholarly discipline. A style of writing that is easy to read and convincing, an abundance of factual data, engaging real-life stories, and a pressing and current main topic connected with both the individual's everyday life and the fate of the global community—this could be a winning combination for the bestseller for which anthropology has long been waiting.

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**Dalsgaard, Steffen and Morten Nielsen (eds.). 2015. *Time and the Field (Afterword by George Marcus)*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. vi+160 pp. Pb.: \$27.95/£17.50. ISBN: 9781785330872.**

The eight essays in this volume (originally published as a special issue of *Social Analysis*) engage the reader in varied reappraisals about the ethnographic encounter. The traditional “field”, the site for ethnographic research finds innovative and contemporary expressions especially in the manner in which “field” is reinvented as “time”. In traditional fieldwork, the anthropologist was considered as placed in the present while the “field” was in the past; there was a lack of coevalness between them. The present authors evoke many situations and concepts that present fieldwork in the form of an interactive moment in time in which past, present and future are seen as continuous and inclusive of both the anthropologist and her field.

The traditional “field” is teased apart to reveal “objects” of interest, such as micrometeorologists and climate modelers, the surface of an ordinary dining table, an envelope, a visiting card, an entire machinery of government, and ritual rhythms that focus on inaction rather than action. One of the aims of this volume is to orient field work in a more practical framework where long-term fieldwork stretching over several years may not be feasible as it may defeat the entire goal of research that aims at more imminent results. This is not to say that long-term fieldwork is being viewed as redundant but as the chapter by Whyte indicates, even extended fieldwork, stretching over several decades has to be understood not only as changes in the field but also as changes in the fieldworker. In other words, the coevalness of the field with the observer has to be maintained as has been described by Whyte in terms of transformations in his sociability and social personhood over the years.

An interesting aspect of most of the papers is their attempt to deal with the concept of the “present”, which no longer is an encapsulated, eternal present as depicted in traditional ethnographic works. The “present” as well recognized in these papers, is only an intersection of the past and the future, the moment of time caught in the moment of fieldwork is fleeting and can only be understood in terms such as ‘protospective’ (p.129), put forward by Pederson and Nielson that refers to a composite of past and present that is reflected in the future. In other words, the distinction between the past, present, and future is redundant as social and natural time are both flows that never cease.

Thus, Sjørsvlev introduces Deluze’s concept of “fold” to show how there are internal rhythms within a ritual, which that are composed of repetitive, “boring” interludes, marked by “happening” periods. Anthropological fieldwork should not focus only on what is happening but also be inclusive of these periods of boredom, in terms of “deep hanging out” for these too are integral aspects of the data. Otto has problematised the notion of coevalness by showing that the “present” may mean different things to different people (here the anthropologist and his informants) depending upon their conceptions of “time”; Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” being particularly meaningful here. However in order to steer clear of the controversy about “us” and “them”, “our” time, and “their” time, Otto introduces the concept of historicity that should apply to all societies and that

refers to the ‘construction of pasts and futures in relation to the present’ (p.21). Building upon Bourdieu, Dalsgaard, in his study of the Manus (P.N.G), shows that for the local people, the government (“Gavman” in local terminology) is experienced not only in terms of a physical location but more as a moment or a time when actual positive interaction takes place with the human representatives of the government in terms of gifts, grants, and projects. At other times, the state remains shadowy and non-existent despite its legal and political incorporation into people’s lives.

Time becomes translated into a momentous and subjective experience in Lutz’s essay, in which the simple surface transformation of a dining table surface is used to illustrate the relationships between caregivers and the old in an institution that also reflects on how entities are constructed and deconstructed; how social obligations are met and culturally evaluated.

All the papers in this volume have made attempts to be theoretically innovative, drawing on many concepts and ideas from contemporary philosophy and social sciences. While appreciating the interpretative skills and explanatory power of the concepts used, there remains a slight doubt as to the limits to which interpretation can be stretched, unless backed by substantive data. How much can one interpret from an “envelope” or a “visiting card”? Certainly, these “intuitive” understandings are backed by the substantive fieldwork experiences of these authors. The question remains: can there be a substitute for in-depth involvement with the field?

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**Quayson, Ato. 2014. *Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. xii + 297 pp. Pb.: \$25.95. ISBN: 9780822357476.**

Ato Quayson's text is a rich ethnography of Accra, Ghana, elaborating the intersections of daily life with global influences. The book takes Oxford Street, an important shopping, and commerce area, as the starting point, but goes well beyond just this specific part of town. Oxford Street draws on historical and literary representations of the city, while also exploring specific communities that elaborate the tensions in its local-transnational streams and contacts. As such, while the book carries the street name, it is a more diverse view of the city that develops a deep understanding of the complex social-transnational dynamics that flow through Accra.

The methodology of the book is a finely balanced mix of ethnographic research, historical contextualisation, and the aforementioned theoretical elaboration. The ethnographic work entails a strong element of participant-observation, such as joining workout sessions with various gyms in the bodybuilding scene, participating in salsa parties, and of course the time spent on Oxford Street itself. In addition, the author collects and produces pictures and videos that help represent the analysis. He also conducts interviews with key collaborators to the research.

The introduction sets the tone for the book. The author uses it to give a brief literature review of leading scholars occupied with contemporary subaltern urban theory, particularly in Africa. This review allows Quayson to tease out the gaps in, and limitations to, existing contemporary research, such as a lack of historical context, or specific and clear examples. In his opinion, this has left a certain lack of complexity in much of the work. In turn, this enables him to frame his approach along these gaps. Quayson argues that this specific focus is important because '[p]ointing out the complex nature of local hierarchies does not obviate the criticisms we might make of colonialism; however, it also suggests that the problems inherent to African cities come from much more complex historical sources' (p. 8). Accordingly, he devotes a good portion of the introduction to an ethnographic stroll down Oxford Street, returning to considerations of space as he wraps up the introduction. In short, the author sets out to both challenge the approaches of existing literature on urban space, particularly within Africa, and fill in some of the gaps. Along the way, he touches on themes of transnationalism, globalisation, and universalisation, forming a meta-narrative that is constantly put into question through the perspectives offered in the book.

To achieve his objectives, Quayson breaks the book into two broad sections devoted to histories of the city, and then a series of contextualised ethnographies of specific communities in Accra. The first section, *Horizontal Archeologies*, explores different dimensions of the historical developments and their influences in Ghana. In these chapters, we encounter much more than "just" a colonial history. Rather, the author looks at the many facets of historical interactions of local and foreign communities. Through such histories as the ethnic composition of the region, the movement of inland populations to the coast (and encounters with existing coastal communities), Danish

settlers and the British colonial administration, the text examines how these influenced the development of racial politics, local elites, education, land use, and industry well into post-colonial Ghana.

This is followed by the second section and the ethnographies of Accra's public discourse via Tro-tro slogans, cell phone advertising and choruses; the lively Salsa scene; "gymming" culture; and literary representations of Accra. In these chapters, we are continually brought back to the histories elaborated in the previous section. Rather than just connect the historical narratives, however, these ethnographies also introduce more contemporary questions, such as class and social relations across Accra today. For example, the presence of racial politics in the cell phone advertisements, in which lightness of skin and types of clothing are deployed as signifiers for certain perspectives on class and transnationalism. This is particularly present in the chapters on salsa dancers, and the following one on bodybuilders, where international contact and perspectives of the dancers and weightlifters is worked out, along with their views on the practices of (particularly) bodybuilding as a career opportunity and thus the place of bodybuilding in the cultural and social landscape of Accra. It also presents notions of body types and weight as class signifiers. In these we are confronted with a nuanced analysis of how modern citizens of Ghana form identities, how "the global" manifests locally, and how transnational dynamics influence these, including in the economic and social spheres.

In conclusion, the book offers a broad range of scholars with sharp and critical reflections on contemporary space and urban theories, a dynamic and multi-layered methodological approach, and above all, a rich and engaging ethnography of modern-day Accra. The centrality of Oxford Street itself, both as a physical place and symbolic space, at times, becomes somewhat lost when the focus shifts to communities not bound by the street. While this leaves the reader with a feeling that there is more to say about the street itself, it also allows the text to follow the research, providing a sense of the wider city, and of Ghana itself.

As such the book is a significant contribution to post-colonial spatial and urban theory, contemporary examples of local communities interacting with global trends, and complex historical perspectives that push our understanding beyond colonialism as the only frame on modern-day Accra. Moreover, it provides all ethnographers with a fine and well-written example of how to narrate daily life and balance description with the historical and theoretical material.

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**Birtchnell, Thomas and Javier Caletrío (eds.). 2014. *Elite Mobilities (Changing Mobilities Series)*. London, New York: Routledge. 270 pp. Hb.: £80.00. ISBN: 9780415655804.**

Published by Routledge, the *Changing Mobilities* series has in recent years brought forward some fascinating and ground-breaking titles. One of the first, published in 2014 is *Elite Mobilities*, edited by Thomas Birtchnell and Javier Caletrío. Elite, ‘the few’, ‘the 1 per cent’ are less (or not at all) interesting subjects of research for critical social science today, and at the same time too challenging to be studied, too hidden and even secretive to be caught in the methodological and epistemological frames. Authors contributing to *Elite Mobilities* try to challenge those notions by investigating precisely the ‘shadowy’ mobilities of people, finances, and resources.

In the *Introduction: The movement of the few*, co-editors list the main arguments for researching elite mobilities. Quoting Cato’s “Nobiliorem, mobiliorem” or “the nobility were the mobility” Birtchnell and Caletrío introduce the collection of articles that are well up to date, rich in literature and bursting in references, swamped with diverse ethnographic material and theoretical concepts alike. With the “mobilities turn”, they argue, the research on the “few”, i.e. the super-rich, the privileged, the nobility, the wealthy, the global super-class, etc., was made possible, as mobilities tie all those classifications together. They identify ‘mobilities as a useful optic [...]’ for studying elites ‘[...] in its utter centrality (a veritably global consensus) to how power is exercised and expressed in the world’ (p. 2). Two central theses of the volume are therefore: mobile elites ‘are also part of the ordinary, everyday world’ (p. 16), and regardless of their status elites ‘must move to and fro between their places of abode, foci of activity and the rest of the world’ (p. 9).

Studying mobilities in the fashion described by the contributors to this volume enables critical assessment of what being an elite represents in relation to the rest of the world (the poor, the second class, the pedestrian, the refugee, etc.). According to Birtchnell and Caletrío elite mobilities ‘are a useful prism of analysis for an otherwise secretive and inaccessible minority’ (p. 10). Further on, Birtchnell and Caletrío address the question of methodology in elite mobilities research and systematically and in-depth explain five central notions of the elite mobilities concept. The five notions (mobility-as-usual, stratification, super-inclusion, secrecies and residues) not only evoke academic interest: they are the key connecting elements between different chapters included in the book.

The collection of 14 chapters includes: an ethnographic study on the mobile lives of “new global elites”, together with elite life-strategies, identity formations, practices and experiences conducted by Anthony Elliot; the conceptual framing of the super-rich mobilities provided by Jonathan V. Beaverstock and James Faulconbridge; Thomas Birtchnell, Gil Viry and John Urry discuss how the elites are formed in somehow unusual connection to new technologies, i.e. additive manufacturing or more commonly named, 3D printing; aerial mobilities, aeromobile elites or users of private business aviation in the context of the global economy are the main concern of the fifth chapter, written by Lucy Budd; the next chapter brings forward a study on the lifestyles of the rich

and super-rich where Mike Featherstone discusses living spaces, consumption activities, charitable pursuits, investment patterns, etc.; the social and cultural movement of the elites, also named “the ease of the mobility”, is examined by Shamus Rahman Khan; Matilde Córdoba Azcárate, Ana García de Fuentes and Juan Córdoba Ordóñez use the case of the Hacienda Temozón Sur in Mexico to critically examine the cross connection of luxury tourism and (local) development; luxury tourism is also central to another chapter, in which Crispin Thurlow and Adam Jaworski focus on social semiotics and the binary opposition of visible-invisible labour in luxury hotels and resorts globally; Javier Calterío shows how the travel aspirations of young European nationals are shaped by conspicuous consumption of the elite; social movement of the elite is in focus again by another author, Malene Freundendal-Pedersen, who examines the mobilities of the super-rich in connection to the Danish welfare system; finally, John Urry concludes the selection of “case studies” with the chapter on notorious offshore worlds, secret, but at the same time well-known tax havens and the role of super-rich in them. The last two chapters, *Epilogue* and a *Postscript*, are again reflective records of the elite mobilities concept. While Mimi Sheller in the *Epilogue* provides another summary of the topics included in the book, Andrew Sayer’s *Postscript* is an outsider’s critique of the elite mobilities concept and proposed approaches to studying it. It is an appeal to the academic community not only to pay more attention to the elites, the super-rich, and their movements but also to take more responsible and critical stances towards the source of their wealth, and especially the economic discourse, that is ‘central to symbolic domination’ (p. 253) of the elite. Analysing only four, often-used and what seems unambiguous descriptions in the neoliberal economic discourse, he provides most noteworthy argumentation for his appeal.

Despite rather weakly defined geographical contexts of the studies included in *Elite Mobilities*, their main ideas and conclusions, new knowledge and informative case studies will surely be interesting and inspiring for researchers and students of sociology, anthropology, migration and mobilities studies, economy and environment studies, as well as many other disciplines within the social sciences and humanities.

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**Gudeman, Stephen. 2016. *Anthropology and Economy. Part of New Departures in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. vii+225 pp. Pb.: \$29.99. ISBN: 9781107577206.**

With the economic crisis in the US and Europe, economic topics have returned into the focus of social and cultural anthropology. In this field, Stephen Gudeman shows another time how eye-opening his comparative perspective on the economy can be. Whilst Gudeman is often seen as the ideal representative of a culturalist approach, in his newest work he offers a broader view as he moves from household economies to the world of finance. However, Gudeman still aims to understand local concepts and spheres, even when analysing market economies. *Anthropology and Economy* is not a renunciation of his original mindset; it can rather be understood as a logical progression of it. To his anthropological lens, Gudeman adds, as he calls it, the perspective of an 'over-the-shoulder economist' (p. 8), which the author himself qualified for by taking a master's degree from Harvard Business School. With these different views, Gudeman wants to examine people's economic concepts ranging from the inhabitants of the mountains of Columbia to Harvard professors. Using highly diverse examples, the author develops a theory of how economies are established in five spheres: the house, the community, commerce, finance, and meta-finance. The connection between these spheres can be viewed differently: 'From one perspective, the house is the universal space of economy. Without it, the others do not exist. From a different perspective, the other spheres increasingly dominate house economies in the service of self-interest and profit, which is expressed as the need for efficiency and growth.' (p. 21). As the central connector between and within the spheres, Gudeman identifies rents as they flow between and within them. The author also uses the spheres mentioned above to structure his book as follows: starting with house economies and their relation to markets, Gudeman moves on to economic connections outside the house and the role rituals play in creating and maintaining these connections. Furthermore, he puts a focus on markets and their different spheres. By doing so, Gudeman offers an alternative perspective on financial crises and does not hesitate to offer suggestions on how to reach a higher level of economic stability.

Gudeman explores household economies by going back to his initial field studies in Columbia and Panama. His findings suggest that the material life in these regions is highly influenced by the life energy of the local people. The strength of the people keeps the rural economy running and is, as Gudeman argues, also their currency. This stands in contrast to standard models of the economy on the one hand, which state that self-interest is the main influence, and to those suggested by many anthropologists on the other, who claim that social relationships are central to economies. In regard to the significant role rents play, as a first proof Gudeman states that the connection between household economies and the material world is established through the claims and payments of rent. The local people formulate this relationship as 'giving and taking with the earth' (p. 50).

In the next chapter, Gudeman takes a step back by looking at some classical theories of economic anthropology. Here he states that Marshall Sahlins had discovered a similar concept to the one suggested by Gudeman when he interpreted Marcel Mauss'

idea of the Maori *hau*. Sahlins saw the *hau* as life energy, which is thereby similar to Gudeman's notion of 'strength' as they are both examples of how people constitute connections with the material world and other people. The author continues with this idea by presenting four different ethnographic examples from southern Africa and South America. Gudeman takes his idea of connection and mutuality onwards to markets and shows how, for instance, the Rothschilds maintained their financial imperium by family connections and marriage within the extended family. Next, the author shifts his focus towards the role rituals play in economies as they make social connections and strengthen mutuality. He also shows how magic is central to markets and analyses advertising as a "spell" that fills the gap in market economy between the cost-saving customer and the profit-seeking seller. In the following chapter, Gudeman moves on to celebrations and how they support the market. For this, he uses amongst others the examples of Mother's and Father's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. In analysing the ritualised transactions that are connected with these festivities, Gudeman shows how giving and receiving creates sociability and at the same time is one of the driving forces of the economy.

In the next chapter, the relationship between markets and household economies is described as the first colonising the latter. In analogy to this, he sees anthropology and economics as mutually colonising the other.

Within the last two chapters of *Anthropology and Economy*, the author brings the five previously named spheres together by analysing how money is used within and across them. Furthermore, he analyses the major financial crisis of the last decades and does not hesitate to name the following as the central urgent problems of market economies: 'Growing economic inequality, Increasing degradation of the environment, and Persisting bubbles and blowouts' (p. 170). As a solution to these problems and in order to realise greater economic stability, Gudeman suggests employing 'house therapy' (p. 170). With this therapy, he means to highlight the values of sufficiency, sustainability, and ecological awareness in the economy.

In this book, Stephen Gudeman shows how to apply central anthropological concepts such as sharing and reciprocity to the spheres of commerce, finance, and meta-finance. With *Anthropology and Economy*, however, Gudeman does not content himself with an analysing perspective but also offers solutions for some of the most pressing problems of our time.

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**Dransart, Penelope (ed.). 2015. *Living Beings. Perspectives on Interspecies Engagements (Association of Social Anthropologists Monographs Series)*. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic. 213 pp. Pb.: \$37.95. ISBN: 9780857858429.**

Edited by Penelope Dransart, this volume is composed of papers that were first presented at the conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (ASA) in Lampeter, Wales in 2011. As the title of the book *Living Beings. Perspectives on Interspecies Engagements* suggests, the focus of its contributions lies on the diverse engagements of humans with other 'living beings' such as mammals, insects, and trees.

The discussions presented in this volume fit well into the currently resurgent anthropological interest in the realm of the nature and the natural. This book, however, brings together perspectives that move far beyond the usual scope of anthropological writing. By combining contributions from social anthropologists, philosophers, and artists, it not only offers unique insights into diverse interspecies engagements but also serves as an example for the fruitful collaboration of multiple disciplines.

The authors of this volume have chosen a range of different theoretical approaches. While some emphasise agency or employ actor-network theory, others rely on phenomenological approaches or use relational ontologies as a base for a critical assessment of current theoretical trends in the field of study. The contributors to this volume stand united in their general scepticism towards notions that assume static, hierarchical oppositions between living beings such as humans and animals. As a result, hierarchies are brought into question within their unique cultural context in order to highlight complexity and the possibility of the 'simultaneous presence of different ontologies' (p. 7).

In *Chapter One*, Penelope Dransart starts the discussion with an introduction to the relevant concepts of this volume such as 'living being' and 'animality' alongside a short description of their historical and theoretical backgrounds. The metaphor of the 'turn' thereby serves as a structuring element as Dransart introduces the reader to the theoretical framework and to the individual chapters of the book.

In *Chapters Two and Three*, the role of animals is explored within two very different philosophies. Veena Das explores the 'enigmatic analogy between death and animality' (p. 18) on the basis of Vedic texts on animals and the practice of animal sacrifice. She concludes that it is precisely the 'figure of the animal' that 'is important [...] for understanding the violence that joins life and death' (p. 25). Sarah Boss, in contrast, introduces the reader to the Christian philosopher Ramon Llull and his cosmology of life, the 'ladder of nature' which turns out to be marked by hierarchy just as much as it bears the notion of a unity of creation. While animals and plants are clearly 'below human beings in the order of creation', humans can only 'find happiness in God' by 'lead[ing] morally good lives' that is by showing respect for all of God's creatures (p. 42-43).

The next two chapters are not concerned with the relationship between humans and animals but revolve around the power of trees. In *Chapter Four*, Safet HadžiMuhamedović explores the 'entanglement of people and trees' (p. 66) through

the history of the Oak of Guernica. In the course of his analysis, this tree turns out to be not only standing as a powerful symbol of Basque identity, kinship, and safety but further emerges as a bearer of agency in the form of ‘active silence’ (p. 65). In *Chapter Five*, Ronit Grossman-Horesh introduces the movement of sacred song circles in Tel Aviv as an attempt ‘bringing the forest into the city’ (p. 74). Here, the forest serves as an imaginary locus enabling spirituality, transnationality, and egalitarian community within the confinements of a modern city.

The subsequent two contributions both make use of art to approach ‘the connection with living things’ (p. 92). While Carole Baker uses photography and phenomenology to develop a conceptual framework for experiencing nature, Alana Jelinek and Juliette Brown introduce *The Field*, ‘a long-term, collaborative, interspecies art project’ (p. 113) designed to explore ethics in a non-hierarchical way.

A similar notion of the ability of nature in shaping human ethics is presented in the paper by Rachel Ben-David who comes to see the growing trend of Bar Mitzvah safaris to Kenia and Tanzania as a ‘search of authenticity’ (p. 141) in the age of materialism. Safaris are thereby analysed as a means of reconnecting secular Israeli youths with ‘natural family values’ (p. 140).

A safari is marked by the distance between animals and their human observers. In D.S. Farrer’s study of Chinese martial arts such as ‘Southern Praying Mantis’, however, human and animal become one. Here, practitioners do not imitate but ‘must awaken the animal for the becoming-animal to emerge’ (p. 159), a skill only mastered by a chosen few.

The last two contributions of this volume could be said to address different expectations towards humanness and human behaviour. David Cockburn discusses anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism within the study of the language of primates, namely the language of bonobos. In a concluding chapter, Penelope Dransart finally explores the relational ontology of the Yaghan people of Tierra del Fuego through their ways of dressing. The dressing with animal furs and oil was regarded as a ‘sign of a primitive condition’ (p. 185) by Europeans. Yaghan explanations of dress, however, understand these garments as a ‘social skin’ (p. 185), to highlight ‘interspecies collaboration’, and ‘relate human existence to that of nonhuman and supernatural beings’ (p. 199).

Altogether, *Living Beings* provides a multitude of interesting and innovative ways to rethink the relationship between humans and other-than-human beings. By pushing methodological and theoretical boundaries, the ideas presented in this volume will be especially inspiring to readers who are interested in interdisciplinary research projects with art and philosophy.

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**Thomassen, Bjørn. 2014. *Liminality and the Modern. Living Through the In-Between*. Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate. xi+250 pp. Hb.: £65.00. ISBN: 9781409460800.**

This book is an attempt to introduce “liminality” as an anthropological concept which can be used by social sciences in order to understand the world in which we live. This is an ambitious theoretical exercise, which involves both building the concept of “liminality” and to propose its application to concrete examples. Borrowed from the work of Arnold van Gennep on the rites of passage (1909), the concept of “liminality” is understood as a rupture or suspension of ordinary structures, a time and a place out of the ordinary in which individuals or collectives must invent new forms of action or thought, which then become recognised permanently. It is ‘the loss of taken-for-granted structures’ (p. 113). The author’s thesis is that the current period can be characterised by the widespread and permanent character of liminality: rupture and inventiveness become the norm, to the detriment of the “re-aggregation” phase, identified by van Gennep as the last phase of rites of passage.

The book cannot, however, be reduced to this thesis, which, formulated in its simplest form, may seem schematic. On the contrary, each chapter offers many stimulating perspectives in various fields such as the history of French sociology, the political philosophy of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, bungee jumping or political revolutions. These chapters are organised into two parts: the first offers an intellectual genealogy of the concept of liminality, in order to reveal its contours and operational value, while the second offers a number of applications of this concept to objects related to different periods and scale levels.

The first two chapters are thus dedicated to the figure and work of Arnold van Gennep, considered the inventor of the concept of liminality. Without producing new materials about the life and work of van Gennep, Bjorn Thomassen nevertheless brings new light to his scientific project and his relations with sociologists of the time. His marginal position is thus presented as the result of strong opposition to Durkheim (both were concerned with the anthropology of religion), the latter managing to impose his views in academic institutions, while the former gave up a career as an anthropologist or sociologist and turned to the study of folklore.

The third chapter shows how the work of van Gennep on rites of passage was rediscovered much later and found continuation in the work of Victor Turner starting from the 1960s. According to Turner, the concept of liminality is not only a part of the ternary structure of rites of passage. It should also be applied to various situations and in particular to those that constitute “social drama” in which the ordinary course of life is suspended. Thomassen rejects the notion of “liminoid” forged by Turner to talk about artistic or recreational activities that take place on the sidelines of daily life (liminality must be limited to changes in state or status). He nevertheless emphasises the strength of an approach which sought to extend the validity of liminality beyond the study of rituals.

The fourth chapter provides some principles for this extended use of the concept of liminality. Several types of liminality are identified according to the different types of subjecthood they involved (single individuals, social groups, whole societies), to their

temporal dimension (moments, periods, epochs) and to their spatial dimension (specific places, areas or zones, countries or larger regions). Connected concepts are also presented, such as imitation (with a discussion of Kierkegaard, Tarde, and Girard), trickster figure or schismogenesis (borrowed from Bateson).

The second part opens with a chapter presenting the seventeenth century as a liminal period from which early modernity emerged. Through an examination of personal experiences and of their impact on the thought of Descartes and Hobbes, the author shows how the period was experienced as a ‘total collapse of order’, an age ‘in desperate search for new ordering principles’, a ‘liminal age’ (p. 113). New ways of conceiving the individual (Descartes) and the state (Hobbes) appeared as an answer to this liminal situation and then spread in European societies. Again, the aim of the discussion is less to offer an innovative reading of seventeenth-century philosophers than to bring together modern readings emphasising the notion of liminality. The following chapter draws a parallel between the appearance of the first casinos in Venice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the contemporary craze for games, including gambling in contemporary Italy and beyond.

The seventh chapter provides a comparison of rituals reported in various parts of the world, which have in common to include jumps into the void from a platform. The popular and commercial practice of Western bungee jumping, inspired by Melanesian practices, is a modern and de-ritualised version of these jumps. Drawing on Caillois and Turner, Thomassen characterises these jumping activities as liminal and argue that they serve as a metaphor for understanding liminality in contemporary culture and leisure.

The last chapter is finally a reading of political revolutions in terms of liminality. It argues that anthropologists should not leave the study of revolutions to political scientists (following Mauss whose text on the Bolshevik revolution is commented) and that an ethnography of revolution can benefit from a processual approach inspired by the work of Victor Turner. Political revolutions are seen here as ‘clear-cut liminal situations in large-scale settings’ (p. 201) and resemble rituals, especially as they appropriate ‘public squares as their ritual stage’ (p. 207).

The conclusion offers other possible fields of application, especially in the sphere of economics, and ends with a discussion of “home” as the possibility of re-aggregation in a period of widespread liminality.

At the intersection of anthropology, philosophy, and political sociology, the book draws on an impressive body of literature and demonstrates the great erudition of the author. There is no fieldwork as such, the ethnographical part is reduced to scattered observations on Italy, where the author lived, and the commentaries on philosophical and anthropological works are to a large extent second hand. The book is, however, a challenging proposal for an anthropological reading of modernity and social change. It calls in particular to reconsider periods of “transition” as liminal phases in which individuals, in a recursive work between experience and thought, invent new forms of living together.

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