

EDITORIAL: INDIGENEITIES: TERRITORIES, SPACES AND CONCEPTUAL MAPS

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## Editorial: Indigeneities: Territories, Spaces and Conceptual Maps

The notion of indigeneity has been met with increasing interest over the last few years within the study of culture, due to its analytical potential as a research concept that stands at the core of the expanding field of Indigenous Studies. Indigeneity is also most fundamentally a form a personal or communal self-identification, informing struggles for socio-political, judicial, and cultural recognition. Such politicization underlies the category's controversial nature as well as its potential for disrupting and correcting preconceived notions, situations of injustice, and forms of discrimination.

This special issue of *On\_Culture* aims to discern and question commonalities as well as fissures between various forms of and theoretical approaches to indigeneity. The plurality of *indigeneities* thus necessarily informs this issue's interdisciplinary approach, which includes diverse disciplines, regions, and periods. A major question raised throughout is how positionality affects indigeneities — or: who speaks, from where, and whose voices can or cannot be heard. Julian Reid's *Essay* takes a critical look at the construction of *indigeneities* through the concept of dispossession so prevalent in Indigenous Studies. Dispossession refers, for one, to the historical experience of dispossessed indigenous people that, for instance, did not legally own the land they inhabited. Reid also suggests that discourses of dispossession often entail a normative assumption in contemporary Western liberal thought that reaching a state of dispossession, with dispossessed peoples as role models, as an alternative, better way of being. Reid disapproves of such dispossession eulogies and calls upon humans to free themselves from the regimes of power underlying any form of dispossession and reclaim autonomy and self-possession for themselves.

Along the same lines, this issue implicitly asks whether there are different forms of indigeneity that vary according to a given group's region of origin, its specific histories, and its experiences with colonialism, thus prompting the pluralization of indigeneity. Diana C. Rose and Snežana Vuletić's *Article* explores this question with regard to the decolonialization of Western notions of time and history in the case of two indigenous communities. Analyzing Igbo Anglophone writer Chinua Achebe's deployment of narrative time in his novel *Things Fall Apart* and the visual strategies of contemporary Maya artists to represent their ancestral philosophies of coexisting temporalities, the

authors successfully locate the respective groups' efforts to challenge normative accounts of time and history.

The increasing interest in Indigenous Studies has been posited as a challenge to the historical complicity of disciplines such as Cultural Anthropology and Comparative Literature with projects of imperial subjugation. Such upheavals within the humanities and social sciences question the extent to which indigeneity is a product of these same disciplines. Overlaps as well as divergences amongst approaches including Post- and Decolonial Studies can be traced in this criticism of academia's colonial roots. Mario Ricca's *Article* takes this meta-critique much further by asking how far (and towards which groups) an identification with indigeneity can be extended. Is indigeneity tied to geographical and historical origins — a supposed duality between “West” and “the rest” —, or are other factors at play?

As one common denominator, indigeneities can be perceived in specific historical connections between communities and territories. Struggles over indigenous groups' traditional lands and rights are and have been shaped by such territories' spiritual and cultural significance — with the destruction of ecosystems irreversibly severing ties of ritual and cosmic significance. Andrew Dietzel discusses in his *Article* the entanglements of indigenous cultural identity and geographical territory in a historical account of the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations or Iroquois) struggle for border-crossing rights between the U.S. and Canada, specifically through close examination of Tuscarora chief Clinton Rickard's fight for freedom of movement and recognition of Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

Native resistance to territorial appropriation can be traced back to the beginnings of European colonialism in the Americas. It remains highly topical, with activism against extractivist projects connected to global capitalist expansion often being led by indigenous groups — be it in the highly publicized protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the US or in the ongoing resistance to extractivism in the larger Amazon region, to name but two recent examples. These continuing conflicts also provide a perspective on how difference is produced and maintained: by indigenous people and their international allies, as well as by the governments or corporations they struggle against.

The plurality of indigeneities is not only evident in historical specificity, but also in different spatio-temporal configurations, cosmologies, and ways of knowing. Indigenous ontologies have been posited as alternatives to “Western” ontologies and ways of

living — with the latter having violently replaced the former in many parts of the world through (neo-)colonial expansion. Looking towards the future, can indigenous forms of knowledge provide different modes of relating to nature and recalibrating humanity's place within the earth's ecosystems? In her *Article*, Greca N. Meloni addresses the ways in which Sardinian beekeepers attempt to preserve the notion of a pure and authentic Sardinia. Utilizing findings from her extensive ethnographic fieldwork on the island, she expands upon the relation between different notions of autochthonous and nationalism within this context. From national and regional political actors to differing groups within the beekeeping community itself, the diversity of opinions and thereby the complexities inherent within any dialog on autochthonous or indigenous issues become apparent.

Finally, Verena Tochtermann in her *Perspective* demonstrates the applicability of the concept of indigeneity to another field undergoing a surge of interest in the study of culture: architecture. She analyses the architectural traditions of indigenous peoples in Costa Rica through the theoretical lens of Mieke Bal's "travelling concepts." She shows the interdisciplinary potential of studying architectural objects such as indigenous tribe houses with cultural concepts that are — one might say — indigenous to the study of culture but have travelled to other disciplines such as architecture. We warmly welcome readers to contribute to this issue at any time by submitting further pieces for the *Perspectives* section.

This issue was first conceptualized in collaboration with the organizers of the concluding conference of the IGHERT project, "Indigeneity in an Expanded Field," which took place in November 2016 at Justus Liebig University Giessen. We thank the organizers for their input.

We hope you find Issue 5 as intellectually stimulating as we do and wish you a wonderful summer!

Giessen, July 2018

The Editorial Team