



Working Group B: Multiple Futures through Time

23 Jan 2014, 4-6 pm

Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

Hugo-Rüdel-Str. 10

Harvesting the Future: views from various perceptions of Nature

The aim of this session is to explore the link between “Multiple Future through Time” and “Visions of Nature”. The notion “Visions in Time” implies that the past already contains multiple futures and the future may contain multiple pasts, i.e. different interpretations of the current “Now” turned into past. Future and past are two perspectives relative to a “Now”. We will consider the inside-outside perspective of modern subjects as two corresponding spatial perspectives. Hence we suggest modelling spatial perspectives in the light of temporal ones, rather than the conventional other way round.

How can these perspectives be classified in a systematic manner? A starting point is the distinction between living and non-living systems. Cells are the form of life that we know. All organisms, including the modern subject, require temporary cooperation among living cells. Yet, there is a huge difference in perspective: The inside of cooperating cells may come along with a conscious subject, whereas the outside is confronted by subjects as a world. We *are* our bodies, and bodies can be used as *self-expression*.

“Moderners” find themselves in a world without meaning; they have to “construct” their own meaning collectively. In various ways, this view has made the world of “moderners” self-referential and models may turn out to be logically inconsistent.

Issues of the internal world of a subject become “health topics” and issues of the external world become “environmental topics”. Both notions are relative to the models which subjects have of their past and their world. These models may turn out to be incompatible though we can smoothly switch between them.

Africa and its environments, its “external nature” are an interesting topic in this respect. In climate change and in the conservation of African “wildlife”, multiple models of nature and culture clash and can be used as a starting point for a classification attempt. There have been a number of attempts at explaining history by the environment. These have been partly successful in evolutionary biology as adaptation, but unsuccessful in human history or in anthropology. Here we will inspect the opposite direction. How do environmental problems such as climate change or loss of biodiversity change in perception when they are more informed by history?

We start by discussing a text that presents British views on the evolution and contextualization of the term Ecology and how these notions evolved to support aims of the British Empire. We will then define Sustainability and express it mathematically by using temporal logic. Last we will give some concrete examples of how scientific abstractions of temporality are implemented in the African political context of climate vulnerability and adaptation.



16:00 Welcome

Annalisa Urbano (Chair)

Christine Whyte (Scribe)

16.10 Introduction to the themes: relations of nature and future

Annalisa Urbano: concepts of future (modernity, development, progress) within human-environmental-relations in Africa.

16.20 Reading discussion „Imperial Ecology“ (*Annalisa Urbano*)

Anker, Peder (2002): Introduction. In Anker: *Imperial Ecology. Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945*. Harvard University Press. 1-6.

Suggested foci for the discussion:

1. Social construction of ecology and modernity?
2. Technologies and rationalities of nature?
3. Ideology, power, control of ecology and society?

16.45 Defining sustainability from a temporal logic perspective

Corina Buendia

- Sustainability definition
- Brief introduction to temporal logic
- Describing sustainability using temporal logic

17.05 Ideas of Future and Africa within the climate change and transformation discourse

Sybille Bauriedl

- Goals and presumptions of adaptation to climate change in Africa
- Brief introduction in territorialities and temporality of climate policy and climate science

17.25 Summarizing of the session theme

Michael Hauhs

- Summary of arguments for further discussions
- Contribution to the glossary (modernity and self-reference)

17.40 Open questions of WG-B

18.00 End of Session