

HASTRUP, KIRSTEN (ed.). *Anthropology and Nature*. New York and London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. ISBN: 9780415702751 (hardback), 9781138952867 (paperback, forthcoming in 2016).

The 1990s provided a starting point for a new environmental anthropology that challenged the dualism of natural and social worlds in Western societies, in contrast to ecological anthropology which up until then had approached nature from the angle of human adaptation and the physical conditions of the environment. In the 1990s, in anthropology, questions as varied as environmental change, globalization, natural hazards, conservation, rituals, genetic modification and landscape were starting to be understood in a more productive research frame of relations that concern both humans and non-humans. The universal nature that had been assumed in Western science was thus brought into question. In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993 [1991]), Bruno Latour argued that the making of 'modernity' requires a purification process in which nature is separated from culture and then purified back into natural facts that science can neutrally examine. Philippe Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013 [2005]) was also representative of the new approaches, presenting four different ontologies of how people understand 'nature': Western naturalism is only one ontology alongside totemism, animism and analogism, Descola argued.

Anthropology and Nature appears in relation to these flows in anthropological critical thinking about nature and culture. Editor Kirsten Hastrup is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. She has published extensively on her research in Iceland, including three monographs on Icelandic history and society. Recently she has conducted research in North West Greenland about the implications of melting ice to the hunter communities there. She is the director of the University of Copenhagen Waterworlds project and has edited several books related to the project. For *Anthropology and Nature*, Kirsten Hastrup has compiled an impressive collection of chapters that represent the various new modes of thinking that emerge at a time of the Anthropocene, a term that has its roots in geology and which references the impact that humans have on the atmospheric and geological systems of the planet. The Anthropocene is an era 'when all nature has in some way become environment, defined by and defining human life in the planet' (p. 5).

The chapters of *Anthropology and Nature* confirm that many anthropologists are already beyond the dualistic debate of nature/culture or human/non-human. The writers explore how human life unfolds in the connections and interaction of multiple species, circumstances and changing environments, and how from these connections, people create their realities. Hastrup characterizes the writers as doing 'edgework' that challenges the scientific conventions of 'social life' (p. 2). Indeed, as the first paragraph of the book states, nature and society are inseparable, and the natural and social sciences are dependent on each other, especially now when the human footprint across the globe is larger than ever before and present on all the continents and oceans and even in the atmosphere. The book's chapters also make clear that the closer the domains of the 'natural' and 'social' worlds come to each other, the more questions arise. How can social scientists approach the concept of nature at all? When scientists think of 'nature', what do they think of?

In her chapter, Anna Tsing considers nature from the angle of 'mushroom sociality' in Japanese Satoyama forests; how mushrooms and other non-humans have social relations. She studies mushrooms in their relations to the trees they help to nurture, and also in their relations to humans that take them into the capitalist commodity chain. Tsing confirms that it is from the potential of freedom and 'world-making' that we should approach other species' socialities (p. 31).

World-making is present in other chapters as well, for example when Maria Louise Bonnelykke Robertson and Cecilie Rubow in Chapter Four analyze how people in the Kiribati and Cook Islands live in a world defined by the movement and transformation of different elements and species in their environment. It is not a world where Western climate change models, such as the 'bathtub scenario', easily apply, but rather one where people create their reality according to the constant changes around them (p. 68). Somewhat similarly, but turning more to knowledge-making and history, Hastrup shows how the Arctic as a place is constituted of diverse knowledge and histories and overlapping views of the natural and the cultural, arguing that people such as the Inuit constantly assess the present and the future in order to position themselves anew socially when major environmental changes are taking place.

From the general outline of the book, the reader gets an idea that there are many natures, and also that, while nature is made, it is also something that humans cannot totally grasp. For example, Morten Axel Pedersen notes that for the Mongolian hunters and nomads there are 'heavenly stones' and other treasures that fundamentally fall outside of shamans' totalizing spirit networks, outside of the relational world, where shamans can make interventions into the spiritual and non-human spheres (p. 99). Pedersen argues against the notion that Mongolian nomad culture unfolds against a passive backdrop of nature, the 'nomadic void', but rather that nature in its multiplicity is a non-holistic cultural construct, a residue of human actions; something that culture has chosen to leave outside of human interventions in a sense (p. 105).

In the Western world, the word nature is mediated through science as a holistic entity of the way things are, and 'nature' is used as a coercive and political power in different kinds of decision making strategies. Steve Rayner and Clare Heyward point out that nature as a rhetorical device in Western societies is perhaps a permanent fixture because of its global, political, regulating significance, and because justifications for moral and political preferences can be produced with the concept. Rayner and Heyward critically point out that the climate change rhetoric and catastrophic theories of planetary boundaries that understand Earth as having ecological limits that cannot be crossed without disaster, lean on nature as the 'ultimate arbiter' of political disputes over climate change (p. 142). They argue that the idea of 'an unacceptable environmental change' is not a scientific fact but 'involves judgements concerning the value of the things to be affected by potential changes' (p. 142).

I personally find this argument to be of a privileged kind. No matter how much environmental change is articulated through political rhetoric, climate and other environmental change already has dystopic and catastrophic consequences not only for people in different parts of the world, but also for other species. Does human action not have true power over the continuation of other beings' lives? That is why environmental change, whether 'unacceptable' or not, is inherently an ethical problem as much as it

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is to be empirically understood through science. Fortunately, in the final chapter, Tim Ingold points out the importance of paying attention to the division between experienced everyday life and its projected science environments, and highlights how the neo-liberal state and the global corporate industry now use institutionalized science in the pursuit of their own interests (p. 235). According to Ingold, closing the gap between experienced and institutionalized nature would be a first step towards the continuity of both human and non-human lives on the planet.

Even though the book feels fragmented at times since the topics vary so much, it is impressive how well the key theme, the interface of nature/culture and the consideration of a multi-species social world, is sustained throughout the chapters which are neatly organized so that similar topics follow each other. I feel that volume would perhaps have benefited from a contribution by an anthropologist who specializes in questions of power, economy and politics in capitalist large-scale resource extraction, such as mining, forestry or fishing as these themes were little addressed. Other than that, the book is a comprehensive selection of chapters and a joy to read for anyone who is interested in social anthropology's approaches to nature. In general, it is a thought-provoking work that offers inspiring examples on the different ways that anthropologists approach nature today. The book is also a must-read for other social scientists and especially scholars engaged in the natural sciences. It will also give policy makers in the environmental field valuable insights into their work.

REFERENCES

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