

NEW MATERIALISMS: KEY APPROACHES

COMPILED BY DEBORAH LUPTON (Revised version, 10 April 2018)

DISCIPLINE/APPROACH	IDEAS	KEY THEORISTS
Sociology (new materialism)	<p>What can bodies do? All matter has an agential capacity to affect – ‘we need to explore relations’ capacities when assembled together and intra-acting’ – affects are ‘the engines of assemblages, altering capacities’ – using empirical data to identify affect-economies and relations and what capacities are generated and the affects producing these capacities – can identify lists of human-nonhuman relations forming assemblages from interview data – affects can have negative consequences for capacities (‘constraining affects’) (Fox & Bale). Rethorising power and resistance – resistance as continuing process – importance of acknowledging materiality and material forces, agency of things – no structures of power, just events that are emergent and dynamic.</p> <p>Key researchers: Fox and Alldred, Duff</p>	Deleuze, Guattari, Barad, Braidotti
Environmental feminism, material ecocriticism, Anthropocene feminisms	<p>Focuses on the nature-culture divide and the material agencies that are part of environmental systems and the Anthropocene. Attempts to understand the intersections and relations of humans and nonhumans in ecologies. Works towards ‘a posthuman environmental ethics’ (Alaimo) and a better understanding of humans’ kinship with nonhumans. ‘Posthumous life’ (Weinstein & Colebrook). Recognises indigenous knowledges and philosophies of nature. Sees materials and humans as ‘storied matter’: matter as ‘a site of narrativity’ (Iovino and Opperman).</p> <p>Key researchers: Colebrook, Alaimo, Wilson, Morton, Plumwood</p>	Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault, Barad, Haraway, Braidotti, Grosz

<p>Education - gender and posthuman performativity</p>	<p>Focuses on assemblages of sexuality/bodies/gender (including digital images such as selfies) and spacetime-matterings in education contexts. What are the affective intensities and the larger apparatuses of knowledge-making at work? (e.g. ideas about and material arrangements concerning girls' and women's sexuality and how they should act and look) – intra-activity/affect – activities directed at establishing boundaries. Using examples from data that have affective force and resonance with the researchers.</p> <p>Key researchers: Ringose, Renold, Coleman, Osgood, Blaise</p>	<p>Barad, Braidotti, Deleuze, Guattari, Butler, Foucault</p>
<p>Diffraction theory, post-qualitative inquiry</p>	<p>Focuses on diffraction theory and method. Reading theory diffractively – engagements with different disciplines to make new theories – reading insights through one another. Develops a method of diffractive analysis of data - looks at what data do rather than what they mean. Analysing data by tracing affective intensities in their empirical contexts – what do affective forces 'do'? How does matter make itself felt? – look for the agential cuts, where meaning is made from the constantly changing choices of meaning – reading the data with theory after coding – 'renewed' rather than 'new' materialisms (Coole and Frost) – 'plugging' theory and data into each other – diffractive analysis.</p> <p>Key researchers: Davies, Lenz-Taguchi, Mazzei, Jackson, Hickey-Moody, Ivinson, Lather, Coole, Frost, van der Tuin</p>	<p>Foucault, Barad, Haraway, Deleuze, Guattari, Butler</p>
<p>Vital materialism</p>	<p>The power, vibrancy and enchantment of more-than-human assemblages ('the force of things' and 'thing-power' - Bennett) – we are all compost (Haraway) – post-Anthropocene politics. Critical life studies.</p> <p>Key researchers: Coole, Frost, Colebrook</p>	<p>Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Bennett, Haraway, Braidotti, Merleau-Ponty, Latour, Agamben</p>
<p>Education – materiality and enactment theorising</p>	<p>Builds on Ball's policy enactment/implementation work (Foucauldian) by incorporating greater emphasis on materiality</p>	<p>Foucault, Deleuze, Latour, Mol, Law, Singleton</p>

	<p>and actor-networks and dynamic nature of assemblages and enactments ('becoming') – policy as performative agent/object that creates material effects – policy takes form in practices, territorialising and de/re-territorialising – lines of flight – policy assemblages as 'messy objects'/micro-negotiations of policy.</p> <p>Key researchers: Mulcahy, Fenwick and Edwards</p>	
Anthropology of material culture	<p>Focuses on making, doing, skills, articulation, becoming, moving through the world, creativity, cultural improvisation, incorporation of objects, the life of objects – decay, reinvigoration, 'mutable things' (DeSilvey).</p> <p>Key authors: Inghold, Hallam, DeSilvey, Edensor</p>	Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Barad, Bennett, Appadurai, Douglas, Bourdieu
Posthuman archaeology/museum studies	<p>Puts things at centre: how things connect with other things and with humans. Focuses on the properties of materials, their social lives and networks of things. Entanglement analysis - making 'tanglegrams' (Hodder and Mol). 'Symmetrical archaeology' – humans emerge from their relationships with things (Oleson).</p> <p>Key authors: Hodder, Oleson, Conneller, Alberti, Jones</p>	Foucault, Heidegger, Deleuze and Guattari, Barad, Latour, Haraway, Bennett
Cultural geography/anthropology – sensory ethnography/affective atmospheres/non-representational methodologies	<p>Focuses on the interaction between the senses, embodied habits, emotions and engagement with the more-than-human world.</p> <p>Key authors: Pink, Howes, Classen, Bissell, Vannini, Lorimer</p>	Haraway, Merleau-Ponty, Thrift, Latour, Law, Deleuze, Guattari, Whitehead, Marcus, Clifford
Design anthropology/sociology and arts-based practice	<p>Focuses on use of design and art methods for inspiring creative, speculative and imaginative thinking about presents and futures – generating more-than-representational artefacts.</p> <p>Key authors: Michael, Gaver, Suchman, Dunne & Raby, Pink, Hickey-Moody, Pink, RC Smith, Otto</p>	Marcus, Latour, Heidegger, Stengers, Whitehead, Serres, Law

Information systems/organisation studies/management studies - sociomaterialism	<p>Focuses on the relational ontologies of digitised information systems and organisations (data, archives, libraries, management and other infrastructures). Iterative material-discursive performances – entanglements – of assemblages of people, work, organisations and technologies. Builds on the sociology of scientific knowledge. ‘The mangle of practice’ – trajectories and ‘dances’ of human and material agency (Pickering).</p>	<p>Latour, Callon, Law, Deleuze and Guattari, Haraway, Barad, Ihde</p>
Object-oriented ontology (OOO), speculative realism (NB: often grouped with new materialism, but actually quite different – included here for sake of comparison)	<p>Focuses on the ontologies of objects: there is more to objects than humans’ knowledges and understandings of them. Monism (flat ontologies). Objects can rely on and relate to each other, but these reliances do not exhaust their capacities. There is a reality of objects beyond human perception. What a thing is is more interesting than what it does. Sees objects as independent from other objects (the ‘thing-in-itself’, ‘objects, not actors’, ‘immaterialism, not materialism’ [Harmon]). Less interested in relations or epistemologies. Privileges form over matter.</p>	<p>Whitehead, Latour, Heidegger, Husserl</p>
	<p>Key authors: Orlikowsky, Scott, Pickering, Wagner</p>	
	<p>Key researchers: Harman, Bogost, Bryant, Morton</p>	

COMMON THREADS: More-than-human worlds, human-nonhuman assemblage, vitality and vibrancy of things, ethico-onto-epistemology, relational ontology, sensory encounters, tensions between sameness and difference, how matter comes to matter, posthumanist performativity, identifying entanglements and shared agency, identifying exclusions, respectful engagements with disciplinary differences, the micropolitics of relations and affects, the generation and expression of agential capacities, encounters, forces (constraining and enabling) and intensities – how lines of flight might be generated - resistances, new possibilities for action or assemblages, thinking otherwise – intra-actions within assemblages between their various components- this includes power, which is transitory as it is enacted - interdependency between researcher and researched.

KEY QUESTIONS: How do objects under analysis establish conditions of action? How do humans incorporate and improvise with objects? What are the social lives of things? Which assemblages and networked power relations are they part of? How do the objects of study work and who does it work for? What imaginaries do they rely on and establish? Where are tensions/differences/novel formulations? Where are differences and exclusions? How do differences get made? What effects do differences have? What are the relations between things? How does matter come to matter? What theories can be brought to bear to make agential cuts of meaning? What are the affective intensities/forces and agential capacities generated by the assemblages under analysis? What do they do? After identifying the conditions of possibility (normalising agents), how to 'think the unthinkable'/escape normalising discourses and habituated acts and open up new conditions of possibility? What are the ethics of more-than-human worlds and encounters? What lies beyond the ascendancy of the human – what is posthumous life? What can non-western onto-epistemologies offer?