



GAA Biannual Conference 2015

30.9. – 3.10.2015 at Marburg University

Crises: reconfigurations of life, power and worlds

Crises call into question self-evident routines and entail change and transformation. Pointing to fissures in existing social and cognitive orders, they mark points of potential transformation. Crises compel decisions under conditions of uncertainty and existential threat. Whether economic, ecological, political or humanitarian, crises may be manifested as societal turning points or ruptures in individual biographies. Yet crises also harbour the potential for dynamic developments and radical change that may engender new possibilities.

The recent financial crisis, the Arab Spring, the upheavals in the Ukraine and the tragic fate of refugees on the shores of southern Europe are just a few of the crises that recently have demanded European media attention. In contrast the 2015 German Anthropological Association (GAA) conference will systematically explore and reflect the diversity of crises by asking such questions as: How are crises perceived in various regional and socio-cultural contexts? How are they linked to different ontological, cultural and historical conditions, interpretations and consequences? How do crises take on collective and individual meaning? Which conceptions and perceptions about the world and which practices are confirmed, questioned or considered to be obsolete in the face of crisis? How do new social orders and interpretations emerge? To what extent are current forms of modernity perceived as manifestations of crisis, as symptoms of loss, decay or neo-colonial domination?

Accordingly, the upcoming GAA conference invites participants to consider crises from various angles. What light can anthropology shed on how crises engender reconfigurations of life, how power is renegotiated and how this transforms and creates worlds? To what extent do crises lead to transformations in social configurations and the technological, ecological and cognitive preconditions for the reproduction of life? How do they transform conceptions of life and the corresponding distinctions between subject and object, nature and culture? What "powers" are summoned, resisted or overcome in times of crisis and how are power relations transformed, established or reinforced? How are dominant conceptions of the world called into question and what new perspectives emerge? To which narratives and rituals are such reconfigurations connected? How can an Anthropology of Crisis contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary and historical crises? And, what does this suggest about the discipline's capacity to engage with a dynamic world and develop new perspectives?