



**The Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw, invites paper proposals
for the conference**

‘Materializations of the Political’

to be held on 23–24 March 2018.

Keynote speaker: Dr Hannah Knox, University College London

Politics and the political have long been a crucial area of anthropological inquiry. In its broadest sense, the term ‘political’ refers to a contentious dimension present in, or indeed constitutive of, all social relations (Foucault 1982; Mouffe 2005). More narrowly, ‘politics’ is used to describe the specific strategies social actors use to achieve their goals in competition with others, or modes of intervening, ‘arts of government’ (e.g., Gledhill 2000; Vincent 1994, 2005). Anthropology’s key contribution to the multi-disciplinary study of the political rests with our discipline’s hallmark method: ethnography. The power of ethnography to pin down that elusive object, ‘the political’, to feel for its boundaries and substance in ways more tactile, more concrete, and at once more open to serendipity and surprise than allowed for by other kinds of sociological inquiry, is widely recognized today across the neighbouring disciplines (e.g., Schatz 2009). In this conference, we invite ethnographers – anthropologists and not only – to join a conversation on how the political variously materializes in social life. We understand the political broadly: as that relational realm where ‘social aggregates, patterns of relations, values and horizons of the possible are defined, defied and defended; where experiments in structuring social life can be carried out, fail and be taken up again’ (Laszczkowski 2016: 3). Materializations, in turn, refer in our usage to diverse ways the political is rendered concrete in everyday life. These include, but are not limited, to the political agency of bodies and materials. We ask: how is the political variously enacted through the body and the senses (e.g., Linke 2006)? How does it take shape in people’s relations with the environment and non-human, living and non-living material entities (e.g., Bennett and Joyce 2010)? How does the political become tactile and visceral through the elusive materiality of affect (e.g., Thrift 2007; Laszczkowski and Reeves, *fc*)? Likewise, our understanding of ethnography as method is also open to creative interpretation. We invite papers that explore the above and related questions through conventional ethnographic ‘thick description’, as well as through other, more innovative or experimental literary styles and media, for instance audio-visual ethnographic projects.

The conference will begin with a special thematic session in memory of Georges Balandier, with invited guest lectures. This session will be held in Polish (otherwise, the conference’s working language is English).

Please send your abstract of maximum 250-words, plus your name, e-mail address and institutional affiliation to political.materializations@gmail.com by **21 January 2018**. Selected authors will be notified of the acceptance of their proposals by mid-February. Those wishing to submit a visual or audiovisual presentation, please bear in mind presentation length should be kept to roughly fifteen minutes.

References

- Bennett, T. and P. Joyce, eds (2010) *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1982) 'The Subject and Power', in: H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, pp. 208-228. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gledhill, J. (2000) *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspective on Politics*. London: Pluto.
- Laszczkowski, M. (2016) *'City of the Future': Built Space, Modernity and Urban Change in Astana*. New York: Berghahn.
- Laszczkowski, M. and M. Reeves, eds (forthcoming 2017) *Affective States: Entanglements, Suspensions, Suspicions*. New York: Berghahn.
- Linke, U. (2006) 'Contact Zones: Rethinking the Sensual Life of the State', *Anthropological Theory* 6(2): 205-225.
- Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*. London: Verso.
- Schatz, E., ed. (2009) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thrift, N. (2007) *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. London: Routledge.
- Vincent, J., ed. (1994) *Anthropology and Politics: Visions, Traditions, and Trends*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- (2005) *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique*. Malden: Blackwell.