***Critique of Environmentality***

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Four seminar sessions: March 18, 20, 25, 27 2025 (1-3 pm)

**Abstract**

»Environmentality« (*environnementalité*) – under this title Michel Foucault diagnosed the becoming environmental of power as the basic characteristic of the contemporary governmenttality as early as the late 1970s, thereby initiating an original problematization of present-day societies. However, it was only through the ubiquity of digital media technologies, in particular through so called environmental media––a platform for immediate, action-facilitating interconnection with and feedback from the environment operating at high speed––that the general process of environmentalization, which has since taken hold of our societies and their ways of worlding, of subjectivation, of affection and of thinking, was exposed in its full scope and impact. Thanks to algorithmic environments, sensory environments and the becoming environmental of computation in general and on the media-technical basis of so-called relational technologies––these are technologies of algorithmic interconnection that not only relate, but also establish relations, materialize and accumulate, operationalize and skim them––we find ourselves in a new, environmentalitarian situation. This is essentially characterized by a pervasive cybernetic of behavior based on large-scale data processing, which no longer operates via a direct adaptation of actual, experiencing, present, sentient subjects and their behavior, but by means of constant ‘adaptation’ of environments to individual and collective ‘profiles’. ›Capture‹ mutates into a basic concept of environmentality, whose central problem is the capture and control, the management, the modulation of behavior, affects, relationships, intensity and forces. This environmental governmentality, which can also be described as automatic government, aims at a huge reduction of the possible. Its temporality is no longer that of prediction, but of preemption––a complete colonization of future. For psychosocial life, this means entering a regressive process of disindividuation. In fact, the question of constraining and reactivating possibles proves to be one of the political key issues of environmentality.

The seminar will discuss terms that are central to an investigation and critique of this power-form, e.g. preemption, algorithmic governmentality, datatcolonisalism, (data)potentiality, disindividuation, capture, adaptation, care. The list remains to be completed. In this way, the contours of the environmental apparatus of capture should become legible.

**Schedule**

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***Session 1 (March 18, 1-3 pm):***

**The environmental power-form (preemption)**

Introduction into the problem of environmentality: an automatic apparatus of capture

Reading:

Antoinette Rouvroy: »The end(s) of critique«;

Background reading on the concept of »environmentality«:

Michel Foucault: *Birth of Biopolitics* (pp. 239-265, 21 March 1979)[[1]](#footnote-0);

Brian Massumi: »National enterprise security«.

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***Session 2 (March 20, 1-3 pm):***

**The environmental (im)possibility-form (datacolonialism / data potentiality)**

Reading:

Mark B. N. Hansen: *Feed-Forward* (pp. 37-44 [environmental media], pp. 167-175 [data potentiality], 185-198 [modulation of worldly sensibility]);

Nick Couldry / Ulises A. Mejias: »Data Colonialism«.

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***Session 3 (March 25, 1-3 pm):***

**The environmental subject-form (disindividuation, stupidity)**

Reading:

Bernard Stiegler: *States of Shock* (pp. 48-66 = chapters 19-26).

Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition* (pp. 148-153, problem of stupidity).

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***Session 4 (March 27, 1-3 pm):***

**Against Environmentality: Being for Life, Caring for Possibles**

Reading:

Bernard Stiegler: *The Age of Disruption* (pp. 258-260 [»A reminder concerning question of denial and disavowal«]);

Bernard Stiegler: »What is Called Caring? Thinking Beyond the Anthropocene« (notably pp. 204-216)

François Zourabichvili: »Deleuze and the Possible«;

Background reading:

María Puig de la Bellacasa: *Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (pp.1-12 [Introduction: The Disruptive Thought of Care], pp. 69-93 [Thinking with Care])

1. In the English translation, Foucault's term »environnementalité« has been translated as »environmentalism« (p. 261), which is definitely misleading. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)