

Our Lives with Electric Things: Call for Contributions

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Call for Contributions (max 300 words)

In: Cultural Anthropology / [Theorizing the Contemporary](#)

Our lives with electric things are positively charged with meaning. Our bodies are electric, our hearts and minds pulsing with electrical activity. Electric things have hope and anxiety, possibility and danger. Our electric attachments are sacred and profane, personal and political. Electrically powered things mediate human sociality across time and space just as they mediate our ecological and inter-species relationships. At the beginning of the 21st century, in an epoch (the electocene, perhaps) defined simultaneously by the global abundance and unevenness of electricity supply, our electric things simultaneously shock us into action and insulate us from change. Just as electrically powered goods, devices and appliances have transformed our possibilities for reproducing, nurturing and sustaining life (coming to define ideas of the good life) so too have they created new possibilities for controlling, managing, exploiting and ending life. Whilst our demands for artificial light, heat, refrigeration and information/communication systems push us up against planetary boundaries, electric things remain foundational to our infrastructures of renewal and our stories of the future.

This contribution to *Theorizing the Contemporary* sets out to confront the possibilities and limits of our lives with electricity by thinking through our relationships to electric things. Can our lives with electricity ever be disentangled from the social lives of electric things that mediate all human relationships to the electron? Must we ground an anthropology of energy in the metals and minerals that are crucial to all systems for generating, distributing, capturing and storing electricity? What are the unique capacities and material politics of electrically powered technologies, appliances and devices across global and comparative contexts? And what circuits do we make or break by wiring interests in the properties, aesthetics and qualities of electric things to traditions of critical scholarship in the anthropology of economy, material culture and design?

These questions took shape over the course of 2016 at the Wenner-Gren sponsored workshop, *Electrifying Anthropology*, at the University of Durham, and the *Alien Energy* workshop at the IT University. The images and texts gathered here are intended both as a provocation and an open call for contributions. Over the coming 12 months we aim to curate a catalogue of electric things that bring these questions and our responses to them to new audiences.

Guidelines for contributions

In this series we assemble a catalogue of electrical things and their lives with us. We invite authors to select one 'electrical thing' and to craft a short riff on an encounter with this thing. We are looking for short and concise meditations of maximum 300 words. Unconventional and experimental writings styles are very welcome. The short format does not allow references or footnotes, however the contributions should be theoretically sophisticated and seek to inspire novel ethnographic theory and methodology. Please send a high quality, freely publishable image of the object with your essay submission.

We are looking for a total of 30-40 objects/texts, which will be curated into exploratory and analytic themes and published in the Theorizing the Contemporary section of the Cultural Anthropology website. For inspiration on tone and discursive approaches see e.g. [Lexicon for an Anthropocene Yet Unseen](#).

Deadline: Please send text and leaschick@itu.dk no later than March 1st 2017

Picture should not be embedded in the manuscript but instead saved as JPG or PNG docs in a separate file.

The submissions will be reviewed by the editors: Jamie Cross, Simone Abram, Mike Anusas, and Lea Schick as well as by the Cultural Anthropology editorial collective. When published, contributions will be categorized as an 'editor reviewed' essay.