Anthropos and the Material: Challenges to Anthropology

Application for ISP

Aim and scope

Two of the main challenges to social anthropological research in Norway identified in the evaluation report *Social and Cultural Anthropological Research in Norway: An evaluation* were that it needs to increase its theoretical ambitions and that Norwegian anthropologists should be more visible in international anthropological debates. The follow-up committee recommended that research networks should be established with partners from several anthropological research institutions in order to achieve these goals. This application is a response to these recommendations. The proposal includes a description of a proposed research project and a plan for a research network targeting the thematic area *People, Nature and Environments* of the ISP call for proposals. The general aim is to generate research activities that will strengthen anthropological research in Norway by an increased engagement in theoretically development with a greater number of significant publications in leading international journals by Norwegian anthropologists as an important visible result.

We propose to do so by studying the implications for anthropology of the renewed interest in nature and the material. A great source of contemporary disquiet relates to the uncertain future of the 'natural world' and hence also of the place of humans in this world. Environmental and climate change, biodiversity, biosecurity, pandemics, global warming and the unequal and unpredictable supply and distribution of food and water are all serious concerns. Similarly, there is much disquiet relating to ‘the economy,’ in the wake of financial scandals, crisis and subsequent restructuring programs. As new forms of inequalities are emerging, national sovereignties are challenged. At the same time states and public authorities are producing regulations and legislations that frame local practices and political processes, intensifying a new political ecology (Escobar 2008). These processes, albeit often referred to as global, are at the same time manifested in concrete situated cosmologies, where people mediate distinctions between the human and the non-human, the material and the social. These distinctions are often expressed in organized practices referred to as ritual. This combined state of global affairs points to the problematic interrelationships between human and non-human agencies and a heightened concern, within the social sciences and humanities, with materialities as objects of analyses.

We propose to address these issues through conceptualisations and configurations of *anthropos and the material*, as well as the practices and relations through which they come into being. We focus on changing perceptions and figurations of the *anthropos*, particularly in relation to its material aspects of existence, i.e. its relations to ‘nature’ and environments broadly defined. The project is organized around three parallel themes: *domestication practices, economic practices, and ritual practices*. Each of these will be explored in relation to a perspective that perceives humans and materials as always and already enmeshed. The project thus aims to shed light on the changing constitutions of the *anthropos* and how it relates to and relies upon its material conditions of existence, and thus to contribute to crafting an anthropology that is better able to capture these conditions and processes.
Theoretically, the issue may be formulated as one of processes of historical emergence, and the task thus conceived broadly as identifying the emergence of particular constellations of various life-forms, life-worlds, networks, or ‘forms of life’ (Helmreich 2009). The project is framed by a set of overarching disciplinary concerns:

- What significance do various approaches to materiality and materializations have for comparative studies of the human existential condition?
- How can the field of anthropology contribute to conceptualizing, studying, and writing ‘the material’?
- What are the theoretical implications of the current shifts, and what is the edge through which anthropology can make a difference?
- How can attention to materiality help us to rethink anthropos in anthropology?

These are questions that we consider to be crucial to the discipline at the moment and through which we intend to bring together some of the most important research that has emerged at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, and the other institutions that will participate in the project. We also acknowledge that these issues are highly relevant to other disciplines, and we hope that by addressing them we will be able to expand the scope of anthropological approaches and thus open up for investigating these questions also within an interdisciplinary environment. We believe that through a shared focus on materializations and the material, we will highlight, and be able to compare, some of the unique contributions and theoretical potential of several research projects. Through this focus we hope to contribute to the discipline as a whole as well as to strengthen the theoretical impact of social anthropological research in Norway.

The project will be located at the Department of Social Anthropology (SAI), University of Oslo (UiO) with participants from the University of Bergen (UiB), Department of Ethnography at the Museum of Cultural History, UiO (KHM), University of Tromsø (UiT), Centre for Development and Environment, UiO (SUM), Section for Medical Anthropology and Medical History, Institute of Health and Society (IHS), UiO, University of Aberdeen, as well as guest researchers from the University of Manchester and University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Theoretical Background**

The concern with the ‘natural world’ is paralleled by what is referred to as a ‘turn to the material’ in anthropology and related disciplines (Damsholt and Simonsen 2009). A turn to the material implies a renewed focus on processes whereby forms acquire stability over time. It involves a notion of the material as something which may be ‘mobilised, translated, stabilised, connected or folded in networks – without the underlying presence of a sovereign creator or an acting subject’ (Damsholt and Simonsen 2009:15). Also referred to as the ‘performative turn’, this move engages an attention to practice and implies a shift from a sole focus on meaning and interpretation, to a concern with how entities are enacted or come into being (Abram and Lien 2011, Bennett 2010, Damsholt and Simonsen 2009, Hastrup 2011, Helmreich 2009, Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007, Larsen 2011). This involves, in turn, an ethnographic attention to the ways in which specific practices, situated in time and space, are generative of specific realities. Inspired both by science and technology studies (cf. Law 2007, Mol 2002) and concerns in anthropology about the problematic nature of dichotomies such as subject-object and nature-culture (e.g. Descola and Pálsson 1996, Escobar 2008, Strathern 1999), this turn to the material and to performativity has paved the way for re-conceptualizing the role of theory and analysis as ‘generative of objects in the world.’ In the words of Frida Hastrup, anthropological knowledge-making then, is a truly lateral endeavour, in which
‘one world is not a version of another, but form part of a shared world continuously under construction, in which givens and entities have to be created as such’ (Hastrup 2011:438).

One other inspiration for this project is the post-colonial critique. Similarly to the material and performative turn in anthropology, this critique has served to destabilize hegemonic Western ordering of the human and its surroundings, although still retaining that unequal relationships in the world are a part of the colonial legacy. By engaging a variety of different ontologies, not as objects of study, but rather as propositions of what it means to be human, postcolonial scholars have brought about a rethinking of the ontological premises inherent in fundamental dichotomies of human-animal, nature-culture, and subject-object.

A turn to the material is, of course, not a new phenomenon. Marxist inspired materialist critiques of the 1960’s and 1970’s took issue with imperialism and economic exploitation, often with a focus on political struggles and social change. Materialism privileged economic form (modes of production), productive processes and theories of value, but without sufficient acknowledgement of multiple realities and perhaps also at the expense of processes by which the real comes into being. Actor-network oriented approaches have shed light on the latter, but have been criticized for paying insufficient attention to historical dimensions and the systematic implications of political and socio-economic inequalities. A renewed anthropological focus on the material offers the possibility of combining some of the insights from Marxist materialist critiques (e.g. Caldeira 2000, Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Ong 1987, Ong and Chen 2010, Taussig 1996, 1997, 1999) with perspectives from the performative turn, thus remaining attentive both to the historical and political dimensions of practices and to ontological multiplicity and how reality becomes real through the material.

Such perspectives have inspired a rethinking of the relationships between humans and their environment broadly understood and consequently of the premises of the anthropological endeavour, and we wish to build on, as well as to further develop that trajectory. We emphasize also that the term ‘material’ can refer to many ‘things’ – commodities, money, technologies, architecture, landscapes, bodies and so on – and can thus be seen as a process whereby entities emerge. This implies that a focus on anthropos and the material requires attention, in specific sites, to the temporalities as well as spatial orderings that are involved as various entities come into being. It follows from this that we must locate material perspectives in a historical trajectory which includes historical developments in general as well as the particular historical shifts within the discipline of anthropology, but also question how the anthropos and the material are temporally and spatially inscribed in ways that are generative of particular historical and global orderings (e.g. us vs. them, now vs. then).

Anthropological perspectives that foreground the material may represent a particular challenge to social anthropology, at least with regard to the classical conception reflected in the discipline’s credo of grasping ‘the native’s point of view.’ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that recent analytical endeavours that seek to transcend entrenched dichotomies such as nature-culture or subject-object are paramount. This applies to analyses that seek to locate the place of human agency or to redistribute agency in a world whose future viability is critically assessed (ecologically, economically and politically) as well as for approaches that aim at reworking epistemological and ontological groundings of what the social and natural are about. In this direction, performative perspectives hold much promise, not least in relation to rethinking the relationships between human and non-humans, subject and object, society and nature, through the practices and relations that generate such oppositions in the first place. However, decentring human agency as an object of analysis does not preclude a discussion of the notion of ‘human.’ On the contrary, we wish to contribute toward anthropological theorizing by framing our research in ways that give room to questions with regard to the constitution of the human as well as notions of and crafting of personhood. While drawing on seminal works such as Carrithers, Collins and Lukes (1992) and
Dumont (1988) this effort will also require a systematic examination of the ontological premises regarding the conceptual divide between humans and their environment and their relation to the anthropological epistemological endeavour.

This project, then, seeks to explore changing enactments, conceptualizations (in the social sciences and empirically) and figurations (empirically) of the anthropos. We will do that particularly through an approach that takes into account the material aspects of existence, i.e. approaching humans as always and already constituting and constituted by the material environment broadly defined. In order to do so, we delineate three research areas: domestication practices, economic practices and ritual practices. These are areas that capture, in our opinion, different aspects of the more overriding concerns described above. We envision that human-material enmeshments occur in different scales as well as temporal and spatial forms in these different areas, and in order to address these multiple enmeshments we will question within each of these areas how 1) values, 2) technologies, and 3) standardisations (regulations/legislations and basically all spatial and temporal orderings) have an impact on and/or are embedded in the historically evolving relationships between the anthropos and the material. In this way, we establish nodes of comparison between the three proposed sets of practices and also aim to transcend conventional divides between nature and culture, market and society, and the symbolic and the material.

Basic assumptions

Over the past four decades, research at SAI has addressed these issues in different ways: from a focus on material forces and relations of dependency to attempts to theorize sociality, globalization and how ‘worlds are held together,’ to more recent foci on domestication processes, local forms of global reforestation projects, and questions related to the multiplicity of global financial, environmental, and cultural crises. The other partners in this project have also dealt with concurrent issues in their research. The participants thus bring with them broad and diverse research experiences and regional knowledge as well as theoretical leanings, yet they share some basic assumptions, which will give shape to the present project.

First, we are of the opinion that the foundation of modern anthropology has been, and continues to be, the very question of the anthropos or a concern with the human condition. We see humans as compounds of relations, or to put it differently, we hold that human subjects are most usefully defined not by some autonomous or inner essence but by the particular networks, or sets of relations, in which they participate (Latour 2007, Pyyhtinen and Tamminen 2011, Strathern 1999). Rather than working from the premise that humans and their surroundings are a priori analytically separate (cf. recent work to undo dichotomies such as society-nature, subject-object etc.) we seek in this project to explore their boundaries, or their interface, as sites from which the very dichotomies emerge and sometimes solidify into seemingly separate entities. Examples would include how the very act of domestication ‘creates’ nature as separate, how specific economic processes work to conceal the way society and the economy are intertwined, and how in ritual, through the deployment of technologies of imagination, the anthropos is at once able to reflect on and help shape the constellations of relationships to and through the material as it were (Pedersen 2010, Sneath, Holbraad, and Pedersen 2009).

Second, we are concerned with the importance of studies of practices. Humans and societies are made, remade, and modified through forms of agency and specific practices. These are at the same time material, cultural, and social – in other words, practice or action can never be understood in isolation from its concrete, material medium (Graeber 2001:54, Law 2008). This implies that when we draw attention to the material, we attend to a set of materializations: practices that are deeply relational as well as performative (Abram and Lien 2011, Damsholt and Simonsen 2009). More precisely we focus not only on what things ‘are’ and what they signify, but also on how things are
Third, we are convinced that comparative studies of human practices should remain solidly rooted in ethnography (Harvey 2005, 2011). We hold that ethnography as a method is uniquely equipped to deal with precisely the interaction of the material and non-material and to explore the co-dependency of human and other forms of agency based on the above outlined ideas. In the last instance, we are concerned with the issue of how we can fruitfully conceptualize, analyze, and write about the role of the material and material effects if the central aim is to understand what defines the human. By engaging our ethnographies more systematically around these questions, we seek to theorize the implication of materiality in the *anthropos* as well as theorizing the changing enactments and conceptualizations – both empirically and in the scientific discourse – of the *anthropos*.

**Operationalization**

As indicated above, the project will be organized in three parallel themes and research networks. Each of these offers a separate empirical domain in which questions of materiality and the *anthropos* may be explored (each of which will be elaborated below):

- **Domestication practices:** Ethnographic investigations of processes and forms of ‘domestication’ through transformations involving agriculture, aquaculture, and hunting and gathering, as well as scientific exploration and investigation, museum collections, forms of governance, and ‘civilizing’ efforts.

- **Economic practices:** Ethnographic examinations of economic processes and ‘economic life’ and how these are given shape by and articulate historically specific combinations of value, technology, and standardization.

- **Ritual practices:** Ethnographic studies of processes and forms of ‘rituals’ and ‘ritualization’ including all systematically ordered/choreographed action characterized by technologies of imagination.

These three domains are proposed here as focus points for joint theoretical concerns, and we stress that the definitions mentioned above are intended as examples, not exclusive foci. Project partners will approach these domains from different angles and with different understandings of their boundaries and defining features. While the domains gather, or point towards, different ethnographic pursuits, they are also mutually entangled. Clear-cut definitions between them would therefore be inappropriate. In our common project, we wish to explore, through our broad ethnographies, how these domains are, in fact, entangled, materially as well as in other ways.

In order to ensure that the research across the three domains will yield comparable insights of theoretical value, we propose three themes that will inevitably be part of the ethnography in each domain and that can serve as common nodes/points/themes of comparison across them:

- Values
- Technologies/techniques
- Standardizations/spatio-temporal orderings/choreographies
We see ritual behavior as the organization of practice in recognizable segments. An example of this is illustrated by Wendy James’ concept of choreography (James 2003), which points to this quality of standardization that is achieved through habitual practices. Of relevance in this context is also the notion of choreography as a form of spatio-temporal ordering, as suggested by Charis Thompson (2004). General aspects of ritual practice may be described as the relational mediation of processes of internalization and externalization, of regulating for instance what is considered human and what is considered animal, what is conceived of as inalienably part of the human, and what is considered as non-integral to the *anthropos* (Arendt 1958, Hoëm 2006), or of delineating or constituting the market as something other than, or in opposition to, society or the moral domain. Such relational mediation may be described as a boundary establishing mechanism that runs through all practice. The emerging materializations, as Damsholt and Simonsen (2009:13-14) have described them, manifest – and may thus be explored as – compounds, assemblages, boundaries, arenas, nexuses, or hubs of activities. They may also be studied as expressions of ‘values’, of ‘regulations’, and as ‘techniques’ (Graeber 2001, Tsing 2011).

In the following, we indicate (cf. bullet points) how specific questions on value, technology, and standardization may be phrased in relation to each domain, and thus serve to connect and juxtapose each one. At this stage, these questions are merely illustrations of our analytic approach, subject to revision and further operationalization as we engage more directly with our respective ethnographies.

**Domestication practices**

Domestication refers to a fundamental shift in the way humans have historically approached the challenge of feeding themselves. Archeological and historical sources indicate that the implications were dramatic, for humans, as well as for non-human animals, and their environment. With domestication came a surplus that allowed, but also depended on, higher population densities. This, in turn, paved the way for division of labor and social stratification, and eventually also state formation and the world ‘as we know it.’ Some versions tell domestication as a story of success, of human conquest upon nature, or the emergence of European civilization (e.g. Hodder 1990). Other versions emphasize its darker side, as they highlight e.g. patriarchy, subjugation of women and people who resisted settlement. In most cases, however, it is a story of humanity, and our history (and future) on the planet, told through the lens of a fundamental entanglement of humans and their surroundings.

But domestication is not only about historical transformations. It has also come to serve as a grounding for the ordering of different societies (temporally), for ordering nature and society, and as a timeline for ordering and interpreting historical events. In this way, domestication also engages ontologies, in general discourse, as well as in anthropology. Domestication thus lies at the heart of the foundational rift between the tame and the wild, the civilized and the savage, culture and nature, and serves as a paradigmatic template – and a practice – through which a broad range of cultural and material features find their form.

We approach domestication both as a cultural legacy, a narrative of the origin of our civilization, and as ongoing practice, i.e. as a broad range of specific activities through which materialities (landscapes, material objects, non-human animals, plants, human ‘others’) are transformed, and ‘put to work.’ Domestication thus represents a common ground through which a broad range of ethnographic material may be connected and compared. Approaching domestication both as the outcome of specific forms of human and non-human entanglements, and simultaneously as site(s) in which the very delineations of nature-society are constantly evoked and reworked, we ask, for example:
1. How do narratives and practices of domestication generate value, economically, ontologically, socially, materially, and how is domestication involved in various reorderings of value (hierarchies, tournaments of value, etc.)?
2. How does domestication engage, or produce, specific technologies? What are the specific attachments through which ‘domesticated objects’ are produced, and what are the different sites at which domestication is enacted (in barns, in legal documents, in board meetings, in museums) – how are they different or interrelated?
3. What orderings does domestication bring about? How do practices or narratives of domestication engage and evoke specific temporalities and spatial trajectories? How does domestication relate to various temporal and spatial orderings of the world?

**Economic practices**

The part of the project that will focus on economic practices seeks to avoid a model of ‘the economy’ that sees the economy as an economic order governed by universal laws. Instead, we will set out from a premise which states that all forms of economic action are shaped by, and articulate, historically specific combinations of values, technologies, and standardizations (Guyer 2004, Roitman 2005). In other words, we seek a cultural analysis of economic activities that includes both social and material aspects. This general anthropological position has been powerfully asserted by Sylvia Yanagisako in her *Producing Culture and Capital* (2002), and in this project we are inspired by her thinking (see also Graeber 2001, 2011, Geyer 2004, Ho 2009, Roitman 2005). A key dimension in the project is to envision both ‘the cultural’ and ‘the economic’ as processes, i.e. in dynamic, processual terms. As Yanagisako states, ‘treating capitalism as a culturally enabled process through which people continually rethink and reformulate goals, meanings, and practices allows us to better comprehend the creative, unfolding dynamic of capitalist action’ (2002:6).

Three important questions arise from this: How do economic agents across the world produce capital? How do they obtain income and money? And how do people organize production, commercial ventures and businesses and find work? Not surprisingly, anthropologists and ethnographers have found that economic actors – both capitalists and workers, both people belonging to elites and people who belong to popular classes – frequently rely massively on personal relations based on kinship, ethnicity, nationality, and friendship from workplace and/or locality. They are used, for example, to obtain information and assistance and to secure customers. We will therefore study economic activities and processes as networks. Such economic-cultural networks include several human and material components. We shall consequently examine:

1. How can we account for the constitution, emergence, and transformation of value in the economic domain? Value is here taken in the broad sense as referring to morality (what is good and desirable) and economic aspects (standards and regulations, systems of distribution, surplus and scarcity). On a more general level, common to moral and economic aspects, value can be seen as a way of measuring and manifesting difference (Graeber 2001). In this we see value exhibiting similar characteristics as those described above (p. 6) as boundary establishing mechanisms.
2. What technologies, or techniques, are involved in constituting or reproducing value, including both materializations as well as what we have referred to above as technologies of imagination?
3. How are various ‘economies’ maintained through modes of ordering, standardization, and habituation? How can we account for the reproduction of inequality through such modes of temporal and spatial ordering?
Networks are not only about relations between people, but also include particular places and particular things or objects, goods, and services (Lien and Melhuus 2007, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Economic practices will therefore be approached from a perspective that perceives them as socio-material.

**Ritual practices**

The way in which the integration of ‘things in this world’ (including the natural environment) is achieved has been central to the study of ritual practices within anthropology. Much research has concentrated on the exploration of the *kinds of object relations* that manifest and are manipulated through ritual, such as for example totemism, animism or perspectivism, potlatch and sacrifice (Howell 1984, Hviding and Rio 2011, Lévi-Strauss 1962, 1966, Pedersen 2010, Smedal 2011, Tylor 1958[1871], Willerslev 2007). These categories tend to serve as a shorthand for the shaping of different kinds of relationships between people and their environment that become manifest through ritual manipulation and exchange of material and immaterial goods and objects.

In this study we wish to return to and explore these large issues in the light of our common focus on the *anthropos* and the material. In doing so, we aim to reach beyond ritual studies narrowly defined as the mapping of cosmology or as the study of religious beliefs. Through the comparative study of ritual practices we wish to explore those forces that contribute to the emergence, or materialization, of an entity (including configurations of people and things), making it endure as well as remain stable through a certain period of time (Koselleck 1985, Rabinow 2011). However, while the question of integration, of what ‘holds’ worlds or things together (Lien and Melhuus 2007) may point us in the direction of properties of networks, the question of what these properties consist of and what forces are involved still remains partly unanswered and undertheorized.

We draw on the definition of ritual behavior as the organization of practice in recognizable segments. From the literature that is more specifically focused on ritual as sites of reflection, of regulating the parameters of existence through conscious mediation of relationships, we gain knowledge of general aspects of ritual practice. Ritual practices constitute arenas that one may argue are particularly well suited for the study of relational mediation, or what we may call ‘technologies of imagination’, such as mirroring, mediating, defining, and giving shape to/manipulating entities and relationships (Sneath, Holbraad, and Pedersen 2009). To illustrate: many ethnographic descriptions describe how ritual specialists, through the creation and use of material objects and techniques for the focusing of attention, establish an instrument or a routine that function as a vehicle, allowing persons to enact and experience other realities and themselves as others. By this an entity and an event has emerged that carries value, and that is powerful and imbued with agency. If it is repeated, its effects and life trajectory may be long lasting, if not its effect and life span is ephemeral.

Hence:

1. In this project, the study of ritual practices will take as its common starting point the identification of social spaces/arenas (as nexus or hubs in networks) and explore what kinds of agency/relationships is produced/become manifest through them.
2. In order to do so, we shall compare such techniques for directing and shaping consciousness, what Sneath, Holbraad, and Pedersen refer to as ‘technologies of the imagination’ (2009), activities that are about ‘configuring and reconfiguring the deep structures or parameters of the life world,’ as Kapferer (2005) has proposed is a defining characteristic of ritual ‘in its own right.’
In sum, our comparative endeavor allows us to explore the material aspects and consequences of such techniques of focused attention, as an aspect of mediation or exchange. We envisage and invite a broad range of studies, taking into account the full array of concrete materializations of experiential/virtual spaces that emerge as part of ritual practices – taking into account and theorizing the aspect of power in the shaping of relationships and compounds (Rabinow 2011). This allows us to see how each compound carry a specific ‘value’ particular to that network, defined as distributed agency or as a potential for dispositional causality (Gell 1999, Remme 2011). In other words, the kind and degree of dispositional causality of entities in networks vary. This variation – although in principle measureable (Tsing 2011) – is qualitative in the sense that it has profound consequences for all the living beings and things partaking in the networks. That is, to put it simply, the relationship between an entity and its environment is ultimately a matter of life or death, in ordinary practice it is more commonly a question of more or less, of degrees and qualities of life and death. And it is precisely what these emergent qualities may imply that our study of ritual practices may bring to the fore.

**Organization and cooperation**

A total of 35 researchers are confirmed as partners in the project. The Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo will be the project owner. The total list of partners in the project include (official partner institutions are in italics):


- **Department of Social Anthropology, UiB:** Edvard Hviding, Mary Bente Bringslid, Ståle Knudsen, Olaf H. Smedal.

- **Department of Ethnography, Museum of Cultural History, UiO:** Rane Willerslev, Kjersti Larsen, Peter Bjerregaard, Anders Emil Rasmussen, Arne Perminow.

- **Department of Archeology and Social Anthropology, UiT:** Bror Olsen, Bjørn Bjerkli, Trond Thuen.

- Guest researchers: Penny Harvey (University of Manchester), Anna Tsing (University of California, Santa Cruz).

- Other researchers: Knut Nustad (UiO), Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme (UiO), David Anderson (University of Aberdeen), Harold L. Wilhite (SUM), Knut Rio (UiO), Gro Ween (UiO), Henrik Sinding-Larsen (UiO), Heidi Fjeld (SAI/IHS), Theresia Hofer (IHS), Benedikte V. Lindskog (IHS), Anne-Lise Middelthon (IHS).

All of the departments mentioned above were included in the NRC evaluation.

The project will be managed by the head of the Department of Social Anthropology, UiO, Professor Ingjerd Hoëm. When Hoëm steps down as head of department in December 2014, the new head of department will become project manager. The project will also be led by a steering committee consisting of the project leader and one member from each of the partner institutions: Marit Melhuus (UiO), Olaf H. Smedal (UiB), Kjersti Larsen (KHM), and Bjørn Bjerkli (UiT). CVs for these central researchers are submitted with this application.
Each of the three research domains will be coordinated by one leading researcher: Marianne Lien (domestication practices), Christian Krohn-Hansen (economic practices), and Ingjerd Hoëm (ritual practices). ‘Ritual practices’ will be headed by another project partner while Hoëm is head of department/project leader.

In addition to these confirmed partners, Penny Harvey and Anna Tsing are already funded by other sources (co-funding from the Faculty of Social Sciences at UiO and SAI). We also plan to fund one post-doctoral position throughout the period, with particular responsibility for this project as part of the compulsory work. Four short term guest researchers will be sought funded by the ISP-ANTRO. These researchers will also be used as guest lecturers in the doctoral training program of the Network for Anthropological Research Training in Norway.

The project will operate with some flexibility in terms of participation by opening up for including additional researchers through the project period.

The participants will be primarily associated with one of the three research themes described above, but are also expected to engage the two other themes in their research. Together with the common focus on values, technology, and standardization, this will facilitate research cooperation across the research themes as well as common publication projects.

Research activities

Our main intention with this project is to seek to organize a set of common academic activities. We intend to organize one starting conference, three workshops, and a closing conference as well as other forms of intellectual encounters. The starting conference will be used as a forum for consolidating the research group and theme, discussing possible approaches and specific issues of investigation both within and across the three main research domains. The three following workshops will have one core focus each. In order to facilitate cooperation and learning across the domains, the workshops will focus on themes that are common to all of them. During the closing conference, the general research results and their implications for the discipline will be presented and discussed.

We will work towards collective publication projects, both in terms of special issues in leading international journals and edited volumes. We aim for a total of minimum 7 (up to 14) articles published in leading international journals and 2 edited volumes. We will also encourage individual publications of papers and articles during the project period.

The project will also include a common engagement together with the ISP-project called De-naturalizing Difference: Challenging the production of global social inequality in arranging an annual anthropological theory debate, on the model of the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory at the University of Manchester. Two of these debates (in 2014 and 2016) will be arranged by Anthros and the Material, while the debates in 2013 and 2015 will be arranged by De-naturalizing Difference. The papers presented at these debates and a transcription of the following discussions will be published in two special issues of Norsk Antropollogisk Tidsskrift.

We also aim to produce one or two larger applications for external funding of new research. At SAI, Marianne Lien is already engaged in developing an application for the SAMKUL program regarding domestication, and Wenzel Geissler is involved in developing an international research project on materiality, temporality, and domestication in scientific work in polar research stations. These and other ongoing and planned research projects that fit into the project theme will be
included in the project activities, thus making the ISP-ANTRO funded activities in line with the participant institutions’ plans for scientific and strategic development.

The project partners are encouraged to participate in international conferences and workshops (e.g. AAA and EASA), and part of the ISP-grant will therefore be allocated to a panel participation fund from which the partners can apply for funding.

The project will be arranged in cooperation with the doctoral training program of the Network for Anthropological Research Training in Norway, thus aiming to enable PhD students to benefit directly from the research activities of the project as well as participate in the theoretical development that the project is targeting.

A detailed plan for the activities and milestones is found in the application form and in the following table:

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<td>Publication of theory debate in NAT</td>
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<td>Visiting scholars (1 per year)</td>
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**Budget commentaries**

A detailed budget is provided in the application form. We will, however, include here some commentaries regarding the specific entries.

The starting and closing conferences will be larger events than the three workshops. We will allow researchers who are not part of the project to participate in the conferences, while the workshops will primarily be open to the project partners.

We have included funding of 4 guest researchers in the budget. The two guest researchers funded by UiO (Harvey and Tsing) will be partners in the project, but in addition to these we will invite 4 additional researchers for shorter stays and participation in conferences and workshops as well as for giving PhD-courses.

Three 10% positions will be allocated to heading the three research themes, where half of the costs are covered by the project owners and half by the ISP-ANTRO grant. We have therefore included in the budget 5% payroll compensation for the leaders of the three research domains.

As mentioned above, the budget includes a fund from which the partners can apply for financial support of participation in other international conferences and workshops.
To support production of supplementary empirical data, the budget includes funding of supplementary fieldwork.

We will arrange 2 of the planned annual debates on anthropological theory and have therefore included in the budget money for arranging them as well as for copy editing of the resulting special issues.

The budget entry for publication is intended to cover copy editing and other publication costs of the 7 articles and 2 edited volumes. We emphasize, however, that this is the minimum number of publications we intend to produce. We therefore estimated higher costs here than what this minimum number would require. As the project develops we will also have to make adjustments regarding the balance between the number of articles and the number of edited volumes we would like to publish. As costs related to articles and volumes differ, we do not specify publication costs beyond this general publication entry. This entry also includes costs for a publication seminar and a course in academic English writing. Based on previous experiences, these activities will result in more and better publications.

**Conclusion**

Through these activities we seek to benefit more and better from a wide range of ongoing ethnographic and anthropological research conducted by the project partners and in this manner stimulate and generate more comparison as well as bolder and more direct attempts to contribute to theory building. We think that the result of this project will be the production of high quality international publications, increased international cooperation, and a more active and visible presence of Norwegian anthropologists on the international scene. In general, the proposed project will strengthen anthropological research in Norway.

**References**


