



Gastvortrag

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How science and technology studies contribute to cultural and social anthropology. Insights from the case of tasting.

Donnerstag 29.06.2017, 10:30, Sitzungszimmer, IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock



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Dr Mann's research lies at the intersection of science and technology studies (STS) and social and cultural anthropology. In her current project she investigates life with a disease, illuminating "the everyday life" and "the mundane". In the past she did a project on "Tasting in mundane practices" looking at how tasting is done in various practices in different situations and sites in Western Europe.

Ethnographies from anthropology of food and the senses have shed light on the ways in which moments, in which people taste food and drinks, are tied up with memories (Sutton 2001; Seremetakis 1996), create a sense of place (Trubek 2008; Meneley 2014) and structure age and gender division within a group of people (Holtzman 2009). Recently, it has been recognized that such moments can be shaped by scientific methods and rationales (Roosth 2013). Drawing on an approach developed in science and technology studies (Latour & Woolgar 1986; Mol 2002), this talk investigates how scientific knowledge is constructed about taste and what in this process taste is made to be. It presents ethnographic materials gathered between 2009 and 2011 in sensory science laboratories in Western Europe, focusing on two experiments in particular. The first one investigated flavor perception in chocolate liquids, the second sensory specific satiation in humans. The analysis brings out that both experiments turn tasting into an object of quantitative science, which is a bodily response; that they enact two versions thereof, however; and that each of the versions ties up with a bigger societal concern. I will conclude that moments in which people taste food and drinks, rather than being "more than a physiological response" (Howes 2003: xi), are staged as such in particular practices, which can be studied with STS methods and that this strengthens the insights that have been provided by ethnographies from anthropology of food and the senses. Through the case of tasting, the talk will thus reflect on the challenges and possibilities of using a science and technology studies (STS) approach to contribute to social and cultural anthropological insights into the phenomena that we are studying.