

Analyzing the Everyday: Complexity, Currency, Crisis

*44th Congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (DGEKW)*

Dortmund | October 4–7, 2023

Call for Papers

We generally understand the everyday as the self-evident, unquestioned part of life. It promises security, continuity and clarity through its specific cultural orders. By making the everyday explicit, effects of ritualization, self-evidence and routine on the one hand as well as processes of dynamization, variety and volatility on the other become tangible. The everyday life of others is currently receiving a high degree of attention through aestheticization and staging in social and other digital media. In view of multiple crises, both historical and current ones, everyday actions and experiences are increasingly questioned. Food and clothing habits receive critical attention, as do modes of consumption and mobility practices. Threats to the familiar are increasingly politicized. Against this background, the everyday is not only to be understood as a scene of crisis, but increasingly also as the actual cause of crises. Everyday life is not a mere given, but a complex product of culture.

The everyday has always been shaped by technology and formed by infrastructures. Particularly the latter are not an invisible framework for everyday action. Rather, digitalization and ecological transformations question which everyday life the existing and new infrastructures (should) facilitate. In addition, recent work in the anthropology of the Anthropocene (Welz 2019) makes human and more-than-human everyday life visible and tangible in its manifold entanglements, thus posing questions of representation and responsibility anew. Especially in the increasingly direct experience of the planetary ecological crisis, it is becoming clear how much the everyday as a stability of social expectations is a concept that is shaped by Western modernism. Its decolonization opens up new perspectives that illuminate both the historical and social contingency of specific aspects of everyday life and the global interconnectedness of their conditions of possibility.

In its self-understanding, empirical cultural studies have marked a special disciplinary competence for everyday life (Ehn/Löfgren/Wilk 2016, Schmidt 2018). In the systematic consideration of the everyday, one moves from structural history to the individual space of experience and thus to the subjective dimension of the historical and social world. Because it is rarely understood territorially and is not well suited to romanticization, the everyday as an analytical concept appears neutral and free of historical mortgages. With its flowing edges (Bausinger 1991), the concept remains elastic and adaptable, but also vague. The neutrality and indeterminacy of the concept of the everyday is part of the foundation of its scholarly career. This is one of the reasons why the terms everyday life and everyday culture have largely replaced older terms, for instance in museums. The diagnosis that “the everyday” is an extensively used but under-theorized term thus belongs to the theoretical history of the term itself (Lipp 1993, Tschofen 2006). The terms “ethnos” and “culture” have been the subject of intense debate – for example in the recent debates on

the renaming of this professional society. In contrast, the concept of the everyday – as another traditional core of the discipline – has not undergone an equally critical revision for a long time.

With its focus on the everyday, the 44th congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (DGEKW) directs its attention to a topic for which the organizing institution, the Seminar for Cultural Anthropology of Textiles at TU Dortmund University provides its special expertise. Against this background, the congress also addresses questions about the significance of material culture in everyday life worlds, about fashions and current topics, about the specific challenges as well as potentials in the communication of cultural studies knowledge about the everyday.

The congress aims to stimulate a deeper engagement with the everyday as an analytical category in the formation and study of contemporary as well as historical societies. Theoretical as well as empirical and practice-oriented contributions are welcome, which may have a contemporary, historical or comparative focus and which can, among others, focus on the following four thematic complexes:

1. Ethnography and cultural analysis of the everyday: How do people shape their everyday lives, how do they problematize it, and how do they claim agency in the transformation of everyday structures? Which role do media, technical infrastructures, or non-human actors play? How do processes of the transformation into the everyday take shape, also in historical comparison?
2. Theories / concepts / models: Which concepts of the everyday does cultural analysis operate with? How does the concept of the everyday relate to neighboring concepts?
3. Questions of disciplinary history and policy: How has the study of the everyday shaped the cognitive identity of the disciplines of empirical cultural studies / cultural anthropology / European ethnology / folklore studies? What are the implications for disciplinary policy?
4. Public life and interventions: How is complex knowledge about everyday life studied and communicated in museums, cultural work, or cultural education? Which publics can be addressed and in what way? How does this communication in turn inspire theoretical conceptual engagement with the concept of the everyday?

Organizational Notes

In principle, the 2023 DGEKW congress offers interested parties three different formats for participation:

Plenary contributions: Individual contributions of approximately 30 minutes in plenary sessions followed by discussion. The selection will be made by the congress organizers from the submissions. In addition, individual experts will be invited directly.

Sections: Parallel two-hours sessions, usually consisting of three thematically related individual presentations (each lasting about 20 minutes, followed by discussion). The grouping of the presentations is undertaken by the congress organizers.

Panels: Parallel two-hour sessions with an overarching theme. Panels with a maximum of five thematically related individual presentations (including introduction, comments or similar) will be proposed by a panel leader. The joint abstract includes the titles and short abstracts of all individual panel contributions as well as the names and short CVs of the panel participants.

Innovative and experimental formats: In addition to these classic forms of presentation, there will also be room for individual formats that allow for new or unusual didactic methods or interactive work.

The Dortmund congress also intends to continue the tradition established at previous congresses of practical research and disciplinary policy workshops. Topic here may include questions of research ethics, methodology, digitization practice etc.

The student panel, which is intended to provide various opportunities to discuss ongoing student research and projects, will also play an important role. For this purpose, a separate call for papers will be issued by the student representatives in the main committee of the DGEKW.

Submission guidelines

Please note the following guidelines when submitting your abstracts

- In addition to a brief summary of the content, abstracts must include information about the research question and the empirical basis or provide information about the context in which the paper is being written, including information about existing publications, the status of the author's own research, or initial results, if applicable.
- Research presentations must be new and previously unpublished. Readiness for the first publication of the contribution to occur in the context of the congress volume after the event (deadline in spring 2024!) is required.
- Contributions can be presented and published in German or English.
- Please provide current contact details; for panel proposals, this applies to both the responsible organizers as well as all participants! In case of changes, please inform us accordingly.
- Abstracts for individual presentations must not exceed 2,500 characters; those for panels 5,000 characters (including spaces).
- Please send abstracts including personal details as an open document (e.g., WORD) to the DGEKW office: <https://dgek.w.de/call-for-papers/> (below the Call for Papers). Only fully completed forms will be accepted.
- Deadline for submissions is **January 15, 2023**.

In order to facilitate the selection process and make it transparent, all submitters are urged to follow these guidelines. The board of directors and the main committee will select the entries and determine the program at their joint meeting with representatives of the local organizer in spring 2023. Notification of acceptance or rejection will be made in March 2023.