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"Down to Earth: Geosocialities and Geopolitics"

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"Nature" and "social life" tended to be separated by Enlightenment thinkers, setting the stage for a long-standing tension between geology and social-cultural theory. Such a division suppressed the liveliness that humans have often attributed to material things. Several scholars and artists, many of whom would advocate new materialisms, have attempted to recapture this liveliness. Drawing upon these developments, we use the notion of "geosocialities" (the commingling of the geologic and the social and the sensibilities involved) to facilitate appreciation of the mineral and the alignment between geology and social-cultural theory. While geosocialities overlap with nature-cultures and "biosocialities," they are "harder" in the sense of drawing attention to geology and its relation to social life. Such a move seems timely, keeping in mind the popular claim that in the Anthropocene, humans have become a geologic force. At the same time, it opens up a down-to-earth form of geopolitics that exceeds classic notions of the term, attending to different geologic scales; to living bodies, human and nonhuman; to solid rock; and to the planet. We develop our argument through engagement with two sites. One concerns the inscription of human activities in volcanic rock, the second the embodiment of isotopes in living beings. These examples raise questions about the multiple scales of geosociality, which intertwine biography and Earth "itself." (Text from authors' abstract)

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