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## João Biehl and Peter Locke on "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming"

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By Eugene Raikhel



The June issue of *Current Anthropology* includes an article by Princeton's [João Biehl](#) and Peter Locke (who has [written for Somatosphere](#) in the past): "[Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming](#)." One of the wonderful things about CA articles is the commentaries genre — and this particular piece includes comments by Michael M.J. Fischer, Vanessa Fong, Angela Garcia, Clara Han, Lisa Wynn, Sarah Wagner and several others. This article will definitely be of interest to social scientists thinking about suffering, distress and that ever-elusive yet increasingly ubiquitous category: subjectivity.

Here's the abstract:

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze emphasizes the primacy of desire over power and the openness and flux of social fields. In this article, we place our ethnographic projects among the urban poor in Brazil and Bosnia?Herzegovina in dialogue with Deleuze's cartographic approach to subjectivity and his reflections on control and the transformative potential of *becoming*. As people scavenge for resources and care, they must deal with the encroachment of psychiatric diagnostics and treatments in broken public institutions

and in altered forms of common sense. By reading our cases in light of Deleuze's ideas, we uphold the rights of microanalysis, bringing into view the immanent fields that people, in all their ambiguity, invent and live by. Such fields of action and significance—leaking out on all sides—are mediated by power and knowledge, but they are also animated by claims to basic rights and desires. In making public a nuanced understanding of these fields—always at risk of disappearing—anthropologists still allow for larger structural and institutional processes to become visible and their true effect known. This fieldwork/philosophical dialogue highlights the limits of psychiatric models of symptoms and human agency and supplements applications of concepts such as biopolitics, structural violence, and social suffering in anthropology. Continually adjusting itself to the reality of contemporary lives and worlds, the anthropological venture has the potential of art: to invoke neglected human potentials and to expand the limits of understanding and imagination—a people yet to come.

Read: João Biehl and Peter Locke, 2010. "[Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming](#)." *Current Anthropology* 50(3): 317-351.

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