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Abstract

Higher education in the UK has become preoccupied with debates over the authority of knowledge and of criticality. In this article we argue that approaches to knowledge in higher education might benefit from a network sensibility that foregrounds the negotiated processes through which the material becomes entangled with the social to bring forth actions, subjectivities and ideas. We draw from a set of analytic perspectives that have arisen from actor-network theory traditionally associated with the writings of Bruno Latour. These approaches emphasise the contingent in knowledge production, even to claim that objects, knowledge or otherwise, come into being through enactment as effects within particular webs of relations. What becomes visible in such analysis is the precarious fragility of concepts and categories often assumed to be immutable, and the work required to establish their stability. We argue that this actor-network analysis helps to move away from a focus on separate entities and individuals to understand their material relationality. This analysis also foregrounds the

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controversies that tend to be foreclosed in what Latour calls 'matters of fact', and makes visible the different worlds in which knowing is evoked in practice. From this departure point the issue of interest is not which knowledge accounts are superior but how and when particular accounts become more visible or valued, how they circulate, and what work they perform in the process. These approaches afford a criticality that we argue open important entry points for rethinking curriculum, teaching and learning in higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Fenwick, Tara, E-Mail: tara.fenwick@stir.ac.uk