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Judith Bovensiepen (University of Kent)

Oil Fever: Animism and Infrastructure in Post-revolutionary Timor-Leste

In 2011, the independent government of Timor-Leste initiated a highly controversial oil and gas infrastructure project. To persuade Timorese citizens to embrace their vision of the future based on oil and gas, East Timorese politicians and oil company workers employed narrative strategies conventionally reserved for ritual authorities. This kind of “fiat speech” is thought to bring named realities into being, and hence is – just like infrastructure – an effective medium of “anticipatory transformation”. Infrastructure acts not just a symbol of modernity, progress and development, but as an index thereof. Combining approaches from semiotics with the anthropology of time enables an analysis of how the scaling of ritual speech to the level of the nation transforms the very entities that are being evoked.

Judith Bovensiepen is a Reader in Social Anthropology at the University of Kent in the UK and has been conducting fieldwork in Timor-Leste since 2005. Her research spans a variety of topics, including human-environmental relations, post-conflict recovery, natural resource development, and wilful blindness. She is the author of *The Land of Gold: Cultural Revival and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Independent Timor-Leste* (Cornell UP), and the editor of *The Promise of Prosperity: Visions of the Future in Timor-Leste* (ANU Press).

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Wo? Philosophicum P4

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de