

Exploring {Democracy} in the {Anthropocene}: {The} {Case} of {Practices} of {Collective} {Care}

Rigkos-Zitthen, Ioannis; Granberg, Mikael (2024.0)

ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

What is philosophically interesting about how soil is managed and categorized? This paper begins by investigating how different soil ontologies develop and change as they are used within different social communities. Analyzing empirical evidence from soil science, ethnopedology, sociology, and agricultural extension reveals that efforts to categorize soil are not limited to current scientific soil classifications but also include those based in social ontologies of soil. I examine three of these soil social ontologies: (1) local and Indigenous classifications farmers and farming communities use to conceptualize their relationships with soil in their fields; (2) categorizations ascribed to farmers in virtue of their agricultural goals and economic priorities relied upon in sociological research; and (3) federal agency classifications used to manage soil. Using a perspectival realism framework, I argue that these social ontologies of soil are all partially successful in capturing aspects of soil properties, functions, and processes while also being limited in what they can represent. I use this analysis to advocate for a non-reductive interactionist approach to understanding soil ontologies where scientific and social ontologies of soil interact to improve soil management.