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Call for Participation

Anthropologists Struggling with Neo-Nationalism and Authoritarianism: Challenges for Ethnography in Turbulent Times Workshop with Nitzan Shoshan (Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México)

Munich, 27 & 28 June 2019

Right-wing populism and extremism are increasingly setting the political and societal tone and agenda throughout Europe. These current developments are leading to the “mainstreaming” of far-right ideas. Language, signs, and imaginations are taken over by parties of the center, and they become part of mainstream media and everyday discourse in ways that only a few years ago would not have been conceivable. This resurgence of the varied manifestations of the far right – from extreme right grassroots movements to right-wing populist parties – across the world have, unsurprisingly, been attracting more and more attention from anthropologists. Anthropologists have turned their focus to right-wing groups because they form part of larger phenomena that have the capacity to transform the societies we live in. In the workshop, we are interested in the continuum of right-wing ideology and practices, i.e. from right-wing sympathizers to the extreme right. It is here where we see how right-wing ideology and discourse are seeping into mainstream discourse.

The workshop expands on these basic assumptions and seeks to stimulate discussions and facilitate exchanges among scholars from anthropology and related disciplines conducting research in this field. We aim at discussing research on neo-nationalism and authoritarianism both from an analytical and a methodological angle, since we assume that these phenomena pose a significant challenge for anthropology and ethnography. The workshop thus seeks to engage with anthropologists’ struggle with neo-nationalism and authoritarianism by sharpening our terminologies and theoretical avenues, discussing our conceptual frameworks, and reflecting on experiences we encounter during empirical research, also with regard to their ethical dimension. The questions we ask in the workshop include, but are not confined to:

- How do neo-nationalist and authoritarian ideas and imaginations speak to actors? How do they become “truth”?
- How are neo-nationalism and authoritarianism linked to emotional and affective politics?
- What are the implications for the wider study of socio-cultural change and social cohesion?

- How can ethnography and anthropology help to understand the current crises of democracy and political representation?
- How do we distinguish between different actors on the “far right”, and how do we make sense of their multiple overlaps and interconnections?
- Which practical problems do ethnographers face, ranging from problems of field access to questions of collaboration and intimidation? How to deal with emotional difficulties regarding one’s own (political) positioning in the field?
- And finally, what can political anthropology, or anthropology more generally, contribute to the study of neo-nationalism and authoritarianism?

The workshop will be complemented by a keynote by Nitzan Shoshan (Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México), author of “The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany” (Princeton University Press 2016). He will also contribute comments and join our discussions throughout the workshop.

The workshop shall function as a forum for scholars with an interest in the study of neo-nationalism and authoritarianism. We invite participants to send short statements (not exceeding 1 page) explaining their interest in the workshop topic, including a short bio, until 30 April 2019 to Esin Göksoy (E.Goeksoy@campus.lmu.de). We particularly invite early-career scholars and PhD students to present and discuss their ongoing research.

Venue: Richard-Wagner-Str. 27, 80333 München

The workshop is jointly organized by Alexandra Schwell (LMU Munich), Patrick Wiewlowiejski (HU Berlin) and Stefan Wellgraf (Hamburg University) within the framework of the dgv working group “Europeanization_Globalization. Ethnographies of the Political”, in cooperation with the Department of Intercultural Communication at LMU Munich and the Petra Kelly Foundation.

