

**UNIVERSITY OF
LUCERNE**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**SWISS ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (SAA)
ANNUAL MEETING**

**TOWARDS
AN ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR TROUBLED TIMES?**

LONG PROGRAM

**JUNE 6-8, 2024
UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE**



Schweizerische Ethnologische Gesellschaft
Société Suisse d'Ethnologie
Associazione Svizzera di Antropologia
Swiss Anthropological Association



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CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

The conference will explore the potential for anthropology to understand and respond to an increasingly complex and uncertain world. As socially consequential environmental and political challenges increase, what role can anthropology play in discerning and addressing their effects? Can anthropological theories and methods provide, or be adapted to provide, compelling analyses of contemporary crises? And can such findings be effectively communicated to wider audiences? For example, applied anthropology, "action research", and calls for postcolonial methodologies have reignited long-standing discussions in the discipline, but which are largely unheard by civil society at large.

Often students too hope to find answers to pressing questions in what anthropology has to offer, yet they—along with many anthropologists working outside academia—wonder why the discipline remains comparatively mute on a public stage on which, for example, the understandings of such disciplines as economics and public health are regularly considered. So, our questions revolve around both the productivity and the communicability of anthropology's perspectives.

Troubled times and the rhetoric of crisis

We can, of course, also ask what makes for troubled times? Are the intellectual and affective sensibilities that give rise to such a notion, in practitioners and those they teach, entirely new? How do the preoccupations of professional anthropologists articulate with the concerns that dominate global discourses? How should they articulate with them? We also welcome panels which discuss ethical questions that background our theoretical commitments and our concerns about broader perceptions of them.

Troubles in and outside anthropology

As the SAA is a "national" association, we also invite suggestions for roundtables and discussion fora that provide a space for the scrutiny of more local disciplinary concerns: declining student numbers; the cutting of funds (e.g., for individual PhD projects); the production of an academic precariat; and national policies regarding the support of universities. For even when these problems press elsewhere, they often have a significant specific twist in Switzerland. Drawing on diverse perspectives and approaches, this conference aims to foster a critical dialogue on the future of anthropology and its potential contributions to help in coping with troubled times at home and more broadly.

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024

13:00 – 14:00

Registration

University of Lucerne, 4th Floor

Student Meetup

Room 4.B55

14:00 – 15:30

Welcome

Keynote Speech by Prof. Dr. Ellen Hertz (Université de Neuchâtel)

How Fundamental are the Fundamentals

Room 4.B55

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee Break

Cafeteria

16:00 – 18:00

Panel 4

Ethical challenges in anthropology: risk and protection

Room 4.B51

[Commission de Réflexion Ethique et Déontologique]

Panel 5

Roundtable on Charter building for Transformational

change in troubled times [Interface Commission]

Room 4.B55

Panel 6

Medical anthropology in collaborations: practices and politics of knowledge

production across disciplinary and academic boundaries

[Medical Anthropology Switzerland (MAS)]

Room 4.B01

18:00 – 19:00

Apéro

Cafeteria

19:00

City Tour with Maria Papathanasopoulou

University of Lucerne, Entrance

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024

09:00 – 10:30

CUSO- Meet Up

Room 4.B55

Panel 1

Adapting Pastureland Practices: Herders, Animals,
and the Changing Network of Grazing

Room 4.B01

Panel 9

Thinking through impact: ethnographic approaches

Room 4.B51

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee Break

Cafeteria

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 7

Researching Precarity, Precarious Research: Insights from Anthropology
[DocPostDoc Commission]

Room 4.B55

Panel 9

Thinking through impact: ethnographic approaches

Room 4.B51

Panel 11

Troubled Kin Relations

Room 4.B01

Panel 12

Whose crisis? Queer and indigenous perspectives on 'rhetorics of crisis'

Room 4.B54

12:30 – 13:30

Lunch Break

Cafeteria

13:30 – 15:00

Panel 7

Researching Precarity, Precarious Research: Insights from Anthropology
[DocPostDoc Commission]

Room 4.B55

Panel 11

Troubled Kin Relations

Room 4.B01

Panel 12

Whose crisis? Queer and indigenous perspectives on 'rhetorics of crisis'

Room 4.B54

15:00 – 15:15

Coffee Break

Cafeteria

15:15 – 16:30

Keynote Speech by Prof. Dr. Naisargi Davé (University of Toronto)

Does that Which is Inevitable Cease to Matter?

Room 4.B55

17:12

Conference Dinner on Lake Lucerne

Departure from Lucerne Harbour, Pier 1

19:47

Return to Lucerne

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024

09:00 – 10:30

Panel 2

An Urban Anthropology for Troubled Times: Making and Engaging Anthropological Knowledge for Just Urban Environmental Futures

Room 4.B51

Panel 8

The Trouble with Religion? Navigating Discourses, Practices, and Politics

Room 4.B01

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee Break

Staff Room, 4th Floor

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 3

Perspectives for audiovisual in academic research, knowledge sharing and teaching?

Room 4.B51

Panel 8

The Trouble with Religion? Navigating Discourses, Practices, and Politics

Room 4.B01

Panel 10

Towards a Visionary Anthropology for Troubled Times

Room 4.B54

End of Conference

13:00

City Tour “Koloniale Verflechtungen Luzerns”
with Luzern Postkolonial and ZETHNO

University of Lucerne, Entrance
(mit Anmeldung, 15.– / 20.– CHF)

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Prof. Dr. Ellen Hertz (Université de Neuchâtel)

How Fundamental are the Fundamentals?

Room 4.B55

Abstract:

As a graduate student, I had the privilege and pleasure of studying kinship with professor Nelson Graburn, spiritual father of the anthropology of tourism, who famously remarked that 'everything that anthropology has ever discovered is either obvious or wrong'. That remark has stuck with me, and in this talk, I would like to put it briefly and selectively to the test. As I prepare for retirement after forty years of engagement with the discipline, what will I keep and what will I throw away? I will explore this question by looking at three anthropological meta-moves: stepping aside, taking them by surprise, showing them it could be otherwise.

Prof. Dr. Naisargi Davé (University of Toronto)

Does that Which is Inevitable Cease to Matter?

Room 4.B55

Abstract:

This talk attempts to address a question—does that which is inevitable cease to matter?—by way of an ethnography of producers, marketers, and consumers of industrial poultry in northern India, as well as those who seek to slow or abolish the industrial production of meat. The talk turns on an examination of two phrases. One is *hoga hi hoga*, or “it will be, no matter what.” This phrase is used to express the inevitability of the growth of the market for industrial meat. The other is *chahiye hi chahiye*, or “you have to have it.” This phrase was common among marketers promoting “ideal foods” like chicken that Indian consumers across faith would be unable to live without. I consider the question of mattering, both in terms of “making matter,” such as the establishing of tastes as must-have *things*, as well as what it means to decide, collectively and ethically, that things *matter*—despite their inevitability.

PANEL 1

ADAPTING PASTURELAND PRACTICES: HERDERS, ANIMALS, AND THE CHANGING NETWORK OF GRAZING

Room 4.B01

Convenors:

Almut Schneider, HES-SO Valais-Wallis

Abstract:

This panel is dedicated to a topic that is still rarely considered by the environmental humanities. It spotlights people who traverse grazing lands in mountainous regions with their animal herds. The land resource, alongside flocks of sheep, cows, or yak herds and the mobile, nomadic herders guiding them, faces significant challenges. Many grazing areas are dwindling due to construction activities, shifting wastelands, and the burgeoning presence of climate-focused industries such as water-reservoirs, solar, and wind farms. Some regions are designated as 'nature reserves,' rendering them off-limits to herded animals. Conversely, in certain areas like the summer pastures of the European Alps, land remains underused due to evolving agricultural conditions in the valleys, bureaucratic obstacles, and a shortage of skilled personnel.

What strategies do herders and animals employ in response to these altered and occasionally paradoxical circumstances? How do these changes impact the mobility of the flock, the herders' management of their animals, and the routes they use? This panel also encourages reflections on the herders' networks during these troubled times (though, has it ever been any different?)—their relationships with fellow herders, negotiations with flock and landowners, and transactions with animal and meat purchasers.

While ethnographically rooted contributions are valued, the panel also touches on a broader issue, namely the question how, or in what context anthropologists can contribute to recognizing and tackling the diverse impacts and adaptations arising from these contemporary challenges.

Papers:

Changing pastoral practices in contemporary Romania

Anamaria Iuga, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest

In 2013, two animal breeders' associations (from Romania and from Poland) organized a cultural project called „Transhumance 2013”. During the project a flock of 300 sheep, guided by shepherds, started to travel 1400 km on the old routes of transhumance from southern Transylvania (Romania, Rotbav village) to the Tatra mountains (Poland, Koniakow village). Their journey started in May and ended in September. The intention of the project was to celebrate transhumance as an ancient way of life. The problems they encountered on their way pointed out that long distance transhumance as a practice and lifestyle seems not feasible anymore. Other researchers have come to the same conclusion, transhumance is a fading lifestyle (as in Dragos Lumpan's photographic – and film– project called “The Last transhumance”, 2011).

Sheep owners were reacting to this, first by leaving behind their nomadic life and settling, and then, by practicing the short distance pendulation (movement of the livestock in Spring

and Summer to the alpine pastures, and then back) instead of the year-round movement with the herd. In 2023, transhumance was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO for Romania (and 9 other European countries): *Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock*, recognizes the knowledge that shepherds have about the environment and social practices.

My presentation considers some contemporary challenges that shepherds encounter in the Romanian communities where I have done fieldwork and points out the changes that occurred in recent time, like the decreasing number of sheep, abandoning long-distance transhumance and remote pastures or the lack of personnel.

Eco-cultural comparison of alpine farming methods in Val Senales, Italy and Verçenik Valley, Turkey with regards to traditional ecological knowledge

Oguz Kemal Basar, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen

Transhumance is one of the oldest traditional agricultural methods in Val Senales, Italy, and in the Western Pontic Mountains, Turkey, and plays a huge role in shaping the intangible cultural heritage in mountain areas. In Turkey, shepherds implement components of thousands of years of knowledge of pasture management. The aim of the paper focuses on traditional ecological knowledge of shepherds on grazing systems, human - non-human relations, and daily life activities about herding and pasture management. It is based on comparative ecological and ethnographic research in Italy and Turkey. Both research areas have similar alpine climates, but different cultural backgrounds and pasture management methods.

The bi-disciplinary research project analyses how traditional ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge seems to be coherent in what concerns transhumance and alpine farming systems. While staying with shepherds in both valleys for several months, I mapped the changing grazing areas and routes of the different flocks, as well as the dominant plant species along their path from barns to the high pasture areas. I observed the daily schedules of the shepherds and compared them for both valleys. The coherence of anthropological and ecological results might help to create new policymaking of pasture management which shapes the alpine landscape and shepherds' lives.

Between exploited plains and 'wildening' mountains: ethnographic insights into the uncertain world of nomadic herds in Northeast Italy

Stefan Festini Cucco, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen

Nomadic herding has been a long-standing practice in the Friuli, Veneto, and Trentino regions of northeastern Italy. Historical evidence dates back to Roman times, while it became more widespread during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Today, these three regions host several dozen large herds, each consisting of more than one thousand sheep, some goats, donkeys, guiding and guarding dogs, herdsmen, and women, and mainly Romanian assistant shepherds. These multispecies assemblages move long distances in search of grass, making their way across exploited plains and 'wildening' mountains. Every spring, the rush to the mountains begins as the herds move through narrow valleys and in competition with each other. They head towards the high pastures, the Alps, to spend the summer season there, and to live a more sedentary life for several months.

In the past, these high pastures provided a respite from the hectic, anthropized plains for both humans and non-humans. Today, however, the increasing effects of climate change, the abandonment and overgrowth of pastures, the return of large predators and the machinations of the so-called "pasture mafia" make the Italian mountain world uncertain.

During autumn, the herds move down again to the lowlands, and in winter, they cross vast plains in north-eastern Italy. Industrial areas, intensive agriculture, new farming practices, road and railway lines, urbanization processes, laws and regulations, bureaucracy, and measures for ecological sustainability require new route-finding and herding strategies. Herders, and increasingly herdswomen, can guide their animals through rapidly changing environments, relying on long-standing relationships and informal networks with local communities, technological means and improvisation skills.

The presentation is based on ethnographic data collected during fieldwork in 2023-24. It will focus on some aspects related to the multiple entanglements that herders and herds are involved in, both in Northeast Italy and beyond.

Discussant:

Elisabeth Tauber, Free University of Bolzano-Bozen

PANEL 2

AN URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY FOR TROUBLED TIMES: MAKING AND ENGAGING ANTHROPOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR JUST URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURES

Room 4.B51

Convenors:

Madlen Kobi, University of Fribourg
Silke Oldenburg, Geneva Graduate Institute

Abstract:

In the first decades of the 21st century, humankind is facing a multiplicity of environmental crises that also and largely affect everyday lives in cities. Floods in New Orleans, heavy air pollution in Beijing, or urban heat in Mumbai – these events are challenging urban governments and citizens alike to find solutions for the future liveability of urban areas. In his influential 1915 essay on “The City,” Robert Park and other members of the Chicago School of Sociology pledged to not only depict urban life worlds but also to raise awareness for public engagement. More than a century later, the public dissemination of anthropological knowledge and the inclusion of anthropologists’ voices in urban environmental debates has remained a significant challenge.

Our panel explores how to make sense and engage anthropological perspectives on recent trends in Urban Anthropology that go beyond human-centred approaches and focus on the entanglement of society, environment, and infrastructure in the city. Desires of urban living (e.g. air-conditioning, car ownership, electronic devices, food provision) come along with an ecological footprint. Anthropologists have engaged, for example, with waste and environmental pollution, carbon emissions, infrastructural inequalities, urban heat or urban floods but also with the ways in which activists develop alternatives to environmental challenges. All these studies re-emphasize the need to consider the intertwined relations of city and countryside as urban areas depend on the continuous flow of resources from rural areas to sustain the workings and built structures of the city. Also questions of power, justice, difference and materiality form part of the discussions.

While this selection of studies outlines that environmental challenges are in the focus of urban anthropologists, these voices have so far little influenced public debates or policy-making for changing the ways we live in and organize cities.

We therefore welcome papers which are empirically grounded in ethnographic fieldwork and deal with epistemological challenges of doing research in the city. In particular, we aim to discuss the kinds of knowledges that are generated in relation to 'troubled times' that are particularly accentuated within the Anthropocene. We invite papers that discuss topics that concern urban citizens' relationships to their urban environment ranging from climate issues to natural disasters, from environmental justice to resource scarcity. We are especially interested in the questions Urban Anthropology can raise at an engaged and ethical level. The papers can address or go beyond the following questions:

- What challenges and opportunities arise when applying anthropological methods to study the impact of environmental crises on urban spaces?
- How can we empirically and conceptually research and make sense of urban practices in the context of environmental crises? Which methodologies assist us in critically examining and challenging taken-for-granted narratives when researching the urban environment?
- How can we communicate with the broader public without losing sight of the nuances and complexities that arise from environmental, economic, and political challenges in the urban space?
- What means of communication and transdisciplinary collaborations support changes in infrastructure and social practice fostering a less resource-intensive everyday life in our cities?
- What kinds of postcolonial and applied methods do anthropologists develop to work in cities around the globe?
- How does the decolonization of research methods contribute to a more inclusive understanding of urban life?

Papers:

Caressing the Parquet Slat. Human-Material Relations in the Circular Economy of Urban Building Construction

Madlen Kobi, University of Fribourg

In the troubled times of climate crisis, one trend in architecture is to diminish the ecological footprint of the built environment by highlighting the importance of circular economy strategies. While the construction business mainly talks about the circulating materials, this paper analyses the considerable inputs of labour, skills, and knowledge necessary at different stages of the reuse cycle to enable the circulation of materials. By ethnographically tracing the practices of architects, craftsman, policy makers and innovative entrepreneurs in Vienna (Austria) in their endeavor to implement circular economy in construction, the notion of the city as static entity is deconstructed. Such a new and radical socio-material perspective on reuse is not only key to understanding ecological and economic resistances within the circular building economy and underlining aspects of care and consumption, but also for finding methods to optimize the reuse process. Beyond analysis, the paper discusses different forms of transdisciplinary collaboration. Among others, the podcast *Squaring the Circle* – produced throughout the project and highlighting best practices in the reuse sector through interviews and visits to reuse sites – supports reaching out to non-academic audiences.

Cape Town – a City of White Domination: Navigating everyday spatial and environmental violence

Isler Danielle, University of Bayreuth

Three decades have passed since the official end of Apartheid, and South Africa remains a country with racial segregation, spatial and environmental violence as the norm rather than exceptions. Cape Town is amongst the South African cities with the most pronounced racial segregation, with the majority of the Black population living in poverty and undignified conditions.

Cape Town is also known for its extensive Whiteness spaces where PoC are made to feel unwelcome. To many PoC in South Africa, Cape Town remains a “city of exclusion” and the “last bastion of White domination”. An implicit assumption persists that the city belongs to Whites whereas Black people are “temporary sojourners” whose place is in the townships. Thus, the fight of Black people for a “right to the city” – the right to live and work in Cape Town –, which started in the 1970s, is still ongoing. In addition to these inequalities, Cape Town faces an increase in wildfires. Studies show that because of climate change, the risk of extreme wildfires in Cape Town has nearly doubled.

This paper discusses spatial formations in post-Apartheid Cape Town, which is also considered as a post-traumatic space. It discusses the constructions and the effects of Whiteness in space, citizenship, exclusions, trauma, racial spatial segregation, and structural, spatial, and environmental violence and, lastly, elaborates on how PoC navigate all of this on an everyday basis in Whiteness Cape Town

Filling up the Urban Wetland: Mangroves, Rubble, and Belonging at Cartagena's Urban Edge

Silke Oldenburg, Geneva Graduate Institute

Climate change and degradation of biodiversity have become pressing environmental challenges for coastal cities, such as Cartagena on the Colombian Caribbean. This port city and World heritage site has always been a global hub, strategically nestled along the Caribbean coast, drawing in a diverse array of traders, tourists, and transients. Throughout the 20th century, successive waves of displacement fueled an urbanization process that gave rise to unequal social and spatial dynamics, alongside lingering colonial legacies. As urban space becomes increasingly scarce, individuals affected by ongoing armed conflicts, intraurban displacement, or precarious living conditions establish settlements near the Ciénaga de la Virgen, Cartagena's largest urban wetland, some even opt for building into the water.

The practice of ‘land reclamation’ from aquatic environments echoes historical nation-building techniques observed in European low-countries and colonization endeavors across the Atlantic. My presentation focuses on the history of landfill in the city-archipelago Cartagena, highlighting how contemporary urban policies often resemble exclusionary practices of the past. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork, I will zoom into the southeastern part of the Ciénaga de la Virgen, reflecting on how the social practice of rellenar (filling in/up) shapes everyday dynamics of place-making and belonging, while also considering its implications for environmental and social change.

PANEL 3

PERSPECTIVES FOR AUDIOVISUAL IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND TEACHING [AUDIO-VISUAL COMMISSION (CAV)]

Room 4.B51

Convenors:

Kylian Henchoz-Manitha, Université de Lausanne
Lain Chanteloup, Université de Lausanne

Abstract:

This panel discusses the use of audiovisual media in research as a means of producing knowledge, but also as a means of collaboration to involve the populations studied. This work, which requires specific technical and theoretical skills as well as often substantial financial resources, makes it possible to propose a reflection by mobilizing a different way of writing about the world, in images and sounds. After a short presentation of their work, the participants will discuss how this work could be put to good use in research, teaching and among the general public. Finally, the discussion will focus on the main contributions of this type of academic production and how they can be encouraged.

Papers:

Participatory video with Nunavik students: a way to know their relationship to the land

Laine Chanteloup, Université de Lausanne

Today, 52.8% of Nunavik's population (North of Québec) is under 24 years old. These young people face many challenges linked to Canada's colonial history, the geography of the region, globalization but also climate change. Giving youth a voice is therefore fundamental to understanding their reality. Since 2016, video workshops have been carried out in different schools in Nunavik to understand the relationships they have with nuna (ᓄᓇ, the land in Inuktitut). The films provide a vision of the Arctic "from the inside", beyond the clichés. The presentation will review the organization of these video workshops, as well as the films produced to understand the contemporary geographies of Inuit youth in Nunavik.

Film, research and collaboration

Baptiste Aubert, Université de Neuchâtel

In the chapter Seven Types of Collaboration in his latest volume, the anthropologist and filmmaker David MacDougall describes the different forms of co-construction of knowledge in ethnographic film (MacDougall 2022). With this in mind, I will briefly review two of my recent works. Firstly, I will present and discuss a sequence from the film *La places des choses*, a feature-length ethnographic film produced as part of my doctoral thesis in anthropology, which is part of the observational cinema tradition. Secondly, I'll talk about a work in progress that uses participatory film to capture the experiences of people affected by homelessness in French-speaking Switzerland. These two pieces of research - which are different in many regards - will make it possible to address a number of issues relating to the use of film as a means of producing and disseminating knowledge.

A decisive sideline? Making ethnographic and documentary films

Alice Aterianus-Owanga, Université de Neuchâtel

The ethnographic film is a well-known form of co-construction between the audiovisual creative process and anthropological research, which leads many researchers to place the camera at the centre of their methods, issues, and productions. Here I will discuss another experience of complementarity between documentary filmmaking and anthropological practice, which consists of making documentary films alongside ethnography. My starting point will be the way in which documentary filmmaking emerged as a parallel practice, intertwined with my fieldwork on urban music and dance in Gabon (and then Senegal), following exchanges with the Gabonese film world. My discussion will take a retrospective look at two documentaries I have made (one about a Gabonese singer, the other about a Senegalese dancer living in Germany), to reflect on the way in which film (as a project, an experience and a product) has been a tool for sharing research issues, but also for transforming the positions occupied in research and revealing the dynamics of social control in which it is embedded.

Filming hunting in motion and music

Kylian Henchoz-Manitha, Université de Lausanne

Audiovisual techniques enable us to understand the complexity of certain emotional experiences more simply than a long speech. Without additional explanations, the viewer can perceive the tension in a face, a sound, or feel the atmosphere of a place. With an interest in hunters' lives with animals, I film and edit my videos, trying to translate into images and sound the dilemmas and tension of a hunter who identifies the sex, age and behaviour of a chamois before pulling the trigger; I try to show how the barking of hunting dogs may be considered by some to be 'music'; and, more broadly, I collect their testimonies, the way they look at a part of the world around them. These images and sounds generate emotions that question the viewer's relationship with animals, with life and death. This presentation will look first at the usefulness of audiovisual methods for working with hunters, and then at the value of this medium for academic analysis and for sharing this knowledge with students and a wider audience.

PANEL 4

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN ANTHROPOLOGY: RISK AND PROTECTION [COMMISSION DE RÉFLEXION ETHIQUE ET DÉONTOLOGIQUE (CRED)]

Room 4.B51

Convenors:

Faduma Abukar Mursal, University of Lucerne

Federica Moretti, University of Lausanne, KU Leuven

Abstract:

The understanding of what is ethical in anthropology has varied across time, and contexts. Since the second half of the 20th century, fieldworkers had to fulfill ethical requirements and practices as prerequisites to demonstrate an institutional aptness to partake in the economy

of grants and fellowships. In this process, “ethics” related to the type of interactions between fieldworkers and research participants through the questions of informed consent, and the impacts of projects on the research participants (Cassell, Wax, 1980). Then, universities’ administrators started to use a regulatory system based on “risks” to orient researchers in their choice of fieldwork destinations. Nowadays, anthropologists have to meet biomedically informed ethical requirements, while dealing with contemporary ethical challenges specific to their practices.

The panel aims to critically reflect on concepts such as risks, and protection at different moments of the research process. What measures protect anthropological practices from risks, and which ones threaten them? What kind of risks do they face? To what capacity can anthropologists protect themselves and research participants? What licenses and proofs of competences are required? Also, what are the effects of institutional constraints on the production of knowledge, and how can anthropologists evaluate and deal with epistemic injustices deriving from them?

We welcome contributions that address for example:

- The risks and pressures weighing on anthropologists and anthropological practice today.
- How anthropologists negotiate and are constrained by crisis, emergencies, and time-related pressures.
- What expands, limits, or reshapes the range of ethical possibilities to deal with risks.
- How violence, and repressive contexts impact on anthropological practices and how anthropologists impact on them.
- The possible epistemic injustices arising from the relationship with funding bodies and publishers
- How risks and protection are articulated in securing and managing data

Papers:

How dare they think I am vulnerable!" When ethics committee of EU universities rob the agency of anthropological subjects

Borpujari Priyanka, Dublin City University

I was convinced that the best way to understand the experiences of older widows who use social media would be to interrogate the lives of my mother and several aunts, whose lives had drastically evolved upon widowhood and their use of social media. I decided to embark upon intimate ethnography (Waterston & Rylko-Bauer, 2006) as my research methodology, with an “intimate other” as the subject of research.

Family outsiders—people who do not have a shared history or future commitment—may have a difficult time trying to access the lived, personal, embodied experiences of this history and commitment. However, an insider—a member of the family—can describe and analyse this in novel and nuanced ways (Adams & Manning, 2015), and this was what I was attempting in understanding the lives of older women in 21st century India. Key to my research questions was the idea of agency that the women exercised.

However, my application to the ethics committee within my European university was promptly rejected. Vulnerability of the widows was a key concern, even though I had explicitly mentioned that the women had been widowed since several years. So when my mother asked me about the progress of my research and I told her that my university viewed her as too vulnerable for my research, she blurted those words in anger and disdain.

This paper—drawing in from the application to the ethics committee and their responses—will delve into the mechanisms of how the ethics committees of universities find themselves far removed from the lived experiences of other cultures.

Colonial Dispossession, Mass Violence and the Ethics of Representation: the Issue of Online Positioning while doing Fieldwork in the Diaspora

Maillet Léo, University of Geneva

It is around 08:00 am when we take the first break of the day after having baked a batch of white naan (Uy. aq nan نان ااق). The master baker (Uy. naway usta ناۋاي ئوستا) grabs a hot loaf of naan. He breaks it into pieces that he hands us while we start sipping on our usual morning black tea. As we eat, the master listens to voice messages on WhatsApp and scrolls down the newsfeed of his Facebook page. Besides using their smartphone to get updates on the situation in their homeland (Uy. weten ۋەتەن), Uyghur bakers in Istanbul also use it to fight the monotony of work by watching videos, documentaries, TV series and listening to music, radio broadcasts, religious lectures and audio books. Through many of these acts, they are confronted with the fragmented images and sounds of colonial dispossession and mass violence unfolding in their homeland (Byler, Franceschini, et Loubere 2022; Byler 2022). In addition, these fragments and the comments that accompany their circulations on the internet form a key part of the representational politics that oppose the People's Republic of China (RPC) and Uyghur diasporic collectives over the issue of producing public narratives on political violence (Roberts 2020; Rodríguez-Merino 2023).

While conducting ethnographic fieldwork with them, I was showed many of these fragments of images and sounds. Quite frequently, I was asked to comment on them and more generally on the general situation in the Uyghur region or East Turkestan, as most of my research participants prefer to call it. I had initially decided not to go public with my research on the socio-political dimensions of Uyghur naan-making, which I conducted as a PhD candidate in Chinese and political studies. During the two months I spent working as an apprentice (Uy. shagért شاگەرت) in one Uyghur bakery in Istanbul, I was photographed by a client who then posted pictures of me on social media with a short description that included my name and my research, thus compromising my anonymity. This forced me to critically engage with my decision of not communicating publicly on my research, as well as the issue of publicly positioning myself with regard to the situation faced by Uyghurs in their homeland.

In this paper, I propose to address the ethics of representation and how our own decisions impact the way we conduct ethnographic fieldwork among diasporic communities whose members are confronted with unfolding colonial situations in their homeland. First, I will briefly situate colonial dispossession, mass violence and representational politics as fundamental dynamics that shape Uyghur's contemporary "diasporic problematic" (Trémon 2012). Second, I will reflect on the way that conducting fieldwork amongst Uyghur bakers in Istanbul has confronted me to this specific problematic and to the issue of publicly positioning myself with regard to it. Drawing on situations experienced while doing fieldwork between 2021 and 2023 in one of the three main Uyghur neighbourhoods of Istanbul, I will address the issues of self-censorship and online positioning through the perspective of risk and ethics. In doing so, I will contribute to anthropologic discussions on the issue of conducting ethnographic fieldwork under surveillance (Sökefled et Strasser 2016) from the perspective of diasporic problematics and online positioning.

Research ethics and power relations: Creating the conditions for transparent knowledge production under political violence

Schaeublin Emanuel, ETH Zurich

Extended anthropological fieldwork has become nearly impossible in communities affected by war (Anderson 2022). The populations governed by non-state armed groups are expanding (ICRC 2023). In such contexts, knowledge production starts relying on remote sensing technologies, social media, or consultants whose reports written for development or security actors are not open to public discussion and scrutiny. Based on a research ethics compliance process at ETH Zurich for five case studies on Islamic jurists close to armed groups in different conflict zones, I argue that anthropological research ethics guidelines, such as the ones provided by the ASA in the UK, are a resource for enabling methods of dialogical and publicly available knowledge production that is accountable to the people concerned by the political realities under study. The guidelines allow for clarifying working relationships with locally based researchers to minimize the risks they and the participants in the research are taking (e.g. listing gatekeepers to be informed; creating transparency about the project in the political community under study through locally based and oral peer review meetings; and detailing techniques of anonymization). Moreover, research ethics compliance procedures are themselves a site where the power relations surrounding a project of knowledge production become visible and thus open for discussion.

PANEL 5

ROUNDTABLE ON CHARTER-BUILDING FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IN TROUBLED TIMES [INTERFACE COMMISSION]

Room 4.B55

Convenors:

Doris Bacalzo, University of Lucerne
Peter Bille Larsen, University of Geneva
Shabih Zaidi-Esa, Korn Ferry

Abstract:

How do we respond to societal and environmental global crises and engage with social transformation both within and outside academia? In this 21st century, the enormous scale and extent of social inequalities and ecological devastation prompt us to revisit the relevance and positionality of anthropology as a discipline and a societal project. At the same time, there is a need to build shared visions of education and revisit the institutional organization of knowledge in the context of the dominant neoliberal economic rationalities pervading many spheres of human social life, including academia.

In overcoming dichotomies and fragmentation, engaged anthropology offers multiple entry points. As Eric E. Wolf put it, anthropology is “the most scientific of humanities and the most humanistic of sciences.” This roundtable seeks to strengthen this embracing and holistic perspective. It highlights anthropology’s intellectual heritage as a scholarly and transformative discipline (the latter often overlooked). The ongoing conversations on the

many challenges before us are a gateway to exploring the potential for charter-building. It is a process informed by consultation and consensus for the public good.

If anthropology is to thrive in these troubled times, we need to rethink our discipline's commitments and reconsider institutional arrangements. From dealing with pressures of precarity to attracting and mentoring students through academic programs and ethical career pathways and gaining public support, we draw on anthropology's bridging capabilities and reflexivity. In this roundtable, we aim to explore ways to systematically integrate and consolidate our disciplinary contributions for the common good.

Participants from the SEG and EASA networks share their insights on general and specific challenges in any of the following themes: (a) structural, institutional, methodological, and ethical issues on learning, teaching, research and public or policy engagements; and (b) strategies and adaptive initiatives to reverse precarity, marginalization, and neoliberal shaping of the discipline in the political economy of knowledge production. In response, can anthropologists come together with actionable agreements, as through the form of a charter, to bolster the future of the discipline in Switzerland and beyond? In these troubled times, exploring the potential for charter-building is a critical opportunity not to be missed.

Speakers:

Roberta Colombo Dougoud, Musée d'ethnographie Genève
Tobias Haller, Swiss Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, University of Bern
Ana Ivasiuc, Maynooth University, PrecAnthro
Alexandra Oancă, KU Leuven, PrecAnthro

Co-Discussants:

Doris Bacalzo, University of Lucerne
Peter Larsen, University of Geneva, University of Zurich

PANEL 6

**MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN COLLABORATIONS:
PRACTICES AND POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION
ACROSS DISCIPLINARY AND ACADEMIC BOUNDARIES
[MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY SWITZERLAND (MAS)]**

Room 4.B01

Convenors:

Nolwenn Bühler, Unisanté University Center of General Medicine and Public Health
Nils Graber, IUFRS, UNIL
Julia Rehsman, BFH, University of Bern

Abstract:

Calls for interdisciplinarity and science-society engagements are increasingly made to address the complexity of polycrisis (Henig and Knight 2023), related to global challenges such as the covid-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, wars, or climate change. In the context of health and biomedicine, these “demands of the day” (Rabinow and Stavrianakis 2013)

seem particularly pressing. With the rise of 'experimental collaborative ethnographies' to address an increasingly complex and uncertain world (Fortun et al. 2021), medical anthropologists have engaged with other disciplines, as well as various fieldwork actors and communities, and have taught and researched across disciplinary and professional boundaries. Yet interdisciplinarity and the public engagement of anthropology in practice carries potential as well as challenges and raises many methodological, epistemic, institutional, ethical, and political questions. We would like to address four questions in particular. First, how does the embarkment of anthropologists in different forms of 'co laborative work' (Bieler et al. 2021) shape the production of anthropological knowledge and the kind of critical stances they can make? Second, if each discipline comes with its world and enact a specific kind of reality (Mol and Hardon 2020), what kind of work is required to make them meet and to which extent is it possible and desirable to develop inter- or trans disciplinary research practices? Third, when medical anthropology tackles global health phenomena, how are collaborative practices in/from the Global South (Gamlin et al. 2020; Gamlin et al. 2021) negotiated and reconfigured? Four, what are the methodological and ethical implications of these engagements with different professional norms and epistemologies in and beyond the academia (Gibbon and Lamoreaux 2021)? In order to reflect on these questions, we invite colleagues involved in different forms of collaborations in health and biomedical settings to re-think medical anthropology and its publics (Fassin 2015; Fassin 2013). The panel will be organized in two parts: the first session will consist of a 'traditional' panel format with a keynote and paper presentations, followed by a roundtable discussion in the second session.

Papers:

The 'Improving Menstrual and Vaginal Health for All (IMVAHA)' project: Reflections on a feminist, multi-and transdisciplinary, international research collaboration

Sonja Merten Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute TPH

The IMVAHA project, initiated by an international group of women researchers from data science, medicine, public health, social anthropology, and political science, investigates menstrual and vaginal health: women's embodied experiences of menstruation, and alterations to the vaginal microbiome through the use of different menstrual products. The team includes researchers and women as participants from four continents, enabling bidirectional knowledge-transfer (Manderson 2018). The focus of the project is applied in the pursuit of a feminist and gender equity agenda: A key aspect of menstrual health is that people who menstruate have access to safe menstrual products and health information that enables them to make informed choices. Limited access to these now recognized human rights is known as period poverty. In addition, there are currently no international quality and safety standards for menstrual products, a gap that the IMVAHA study also addresses. The project is thus inspired by menstrual health activism and feminist scholarship, builds its legitimacy through reference to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, highlights the human rights issues of menstrual poverty and adopts a transdisciplinary approach to women's health research.

In this paper, I will present the project team's attempts to incorporate reflections on our collaboration and on the tensions that arise from the different disciplines, following Mol & Hardon's (2020) understanding of interdisciplinarity as negotiation. As an example, I will focus on the complexities and temporalities of bodily boundaries and flows of the vagina in the context of vaginal microbiome research, where the human microbiome challenges the current understandings of health and the biological body (Raffaetà 2022). I will then turn to the question of how this negotiation can be made fruitful in applied, action-oriented research.

Generating knowledge for pandemic risk - A case study of the World Bank's pandemic bonds to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Randolph Jenna Marie, University of Bologna

Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing fascination with the application of private finance and insurance mechanisms to devise solutions for catastrophic disasters. Aligned with the established financial market for climate risk, the World Bank employed analogous risk modeling strategies to forge a novel market tailored for pandemic risk in response to the Ebola outbreak. In 2014, this endeavor materialized in the form of the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF), an innovative pandemic risk facility employing a complex interplay of bonds, cash, and swaps within its financial ecosystem.

This paper analyzes the PEF as more than a financial instrument; it is an entity that both emerges from historical knowledge and shapes knowledge futures in the realm of pandemic risk. The discussion will consider the engagement with other disciplines including health policy, economics, and finance as well as with various actors including World Bank officials, policy makers, government officials, and communities to transcend traditional anthropological boundaries. Inquisitively probing the nature of knowledge generated by the PEF, the chapter seeks to unravel the mechanisms through which this knowledge is acquired. What connections are forged as a consequence? Which facets of knowledge are actively produced or replicated, and conversely, what aspects are overlooked or excluded?

The sectors of global health, climate disaster management, finance, and global governance each come with its own world and enact a specific kind of reality (Mol and Hardon 2020). This paper will consider how the development of transdisciplinary research practices involves the merging of approaches and knowledge assumptions, which result in both positive and negative consequences. Next, this paper will discuss the ways in which researching pandemic risk through the lens of medical anthropology in Washington D.C. and in Senegal reconfigures the collaborative practices in the Global South (Gamlin et al. 2020; Gamlin et al. 2021) insofar as it contrasts perspectives of pandemic risk across continents. Lastly, this discussion questions the methodological and ethical implications of anthropological engagements with climate data and health data within and beyond academia (Gibbon and Lamoreaux 2021)? In this way, this discussion will seek to re-think medical anthropology and its publics (Fassin 2015; Fassin 2013).

Dissection of 2 Anticovid kits: The Alasitas miniatures of La Paz (Bolivia)

Michèle Cros, Université Lyon

In Bolivia, in La Paz, at the Alasitas lucky market, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list everything is likely to be found for sale in miniature versions. You can find the most common consumer goods for food or transportation, not to mention bundles of money. With faith in the "germinating" power of these miniatures, treated ritually, it is expected that they will turn into full-sized objects in the following year... Now, it is possible to buy replicas of surgical masks, anti-Covid-19 vaccines, and various hydroalcoholic gels there. All of this is found in a "maletita de la vida y esperanza" or a "Contra Covid19 Kit" which also includes bottles of Kari Kari, an ancestral herbal medicine that certainly stands out in this collection of biomedical miniatures. The content of a second "Ancovid Kit" is even more eclectic. It includes the negative result of a "prueba rapida de covid-19," Bolivianos (local currency) and dollars, essentials for traveling (passport, visa card), and a certificate of good health featuring the miraculous virgin of Urkupina. It is in describing and analyzing this unprecedented intertwining of global health within an Andean cosmology adapted to a modern way of life where times troubled by a pandemic cannot durably impede the free

circulation of humans and their goods that this communication will focus. It is up to the health anthropologist to decipher this astonishing mixture of preventive and curative solutions adapted to a multicultural universe marked by elementary syncretism that disrupts our usual distribution between biomedicine and so-called traditional medicines.

An engaged ethnography within a humanitarian medicine programme that “saves the lives” of West African children. A morally untouchable subject?

Carla Vaucherm, Université de Lausanne

90% of children born with a congenital heart defect live in regions that do not have “adequate” access to diagnosis or treatment. To address this unequal access to healthcare, some Western NGOs have built humanitarian programs of “medical transfers,” where West African children are brought to Europe for heart surgery. Whilst these programs do participate in “saving children’s lives,” they are motivated by logics beyond the humanitarian.

My dissertation explored the experience of West African children who traveled alone to Switzerland as part of a humanitarian medical transfer programme. Over 18 months of itinerant, sensory and engaged fieldwork, I followed and accompanied 81 children (aged two months to 16 years old) at one or more stages of their trajectories, from Benin and Togo to Switzerland and back. I examined how deep inequalities in access to health, as well as representations of relations between countries of the global “North” and countries of the “South” shaped the kind of care these children received. I underlined the unexpected and undesired effects of humanitarian aid policies, which paradoxically contribute to maintaining certain inequalities in access to cure and care (absence of parents with hospitalized children, absence of people speaking their mother tongue, inequalities in medical follow-up, etc.).

My thesis was written in a context of strong tensions between the NGO in charge of the programme and the partner hospitals, highlighting current questions about the moral values that underlie the field of humanitarian aid. Bearing witness to the emotions, vulnerabilities, discourses, and practices of different actors at the heart of the trials they are going through is a delicate undertaking for an anthropologist. As Didier Fassin (2013:517-18) points out, this exercise can be all the more delicate as “the humanitarian world tends to shy away from critical analysis: because it is a valued good”.

In this paper, I will discuss the delicate task of collaborating both with humanitarian and medical teams, from Benin and Switzerland, while formulating a critique of a “morally untouchable subject”. I will give examples of how I went about formulating a sensitive critique, through writing strategies, regular feedback sessions with different groups of actors, empathetic human relationships, and the will to reflect everyone’s point of view, experience, difficulties, and emotions.

Keynote:

Infrastructures for/of the Biosocial; some reflections on old and new terrains for research, training and collaboration in Medical anthropology

Sahra Gibbon, University College London

Roundtable discussion:

The roundtable aims to develop a collective discussion on the promises and challenges of inter/transdisciplinarity in Switzerland and beyond. In addition, the discussion will engage

with Sahra Gibbon's work in relation to various empirical inquiries and theoretical reflections on collaborative practices and ethnographic engagement.

Participants:

Eva Soom Ammann (BFH)
Sandra Staudacher (Unibas)
Nils Graber (Unil/Unisanté)
Nolwenn Bühler (Unil/Unisanté)
Julia Rehsmann (BFH, UniBE)
Sahra Gibbon (UCL)

PANEL 7

**RESEARCHING PRECARITY, PRECARIOUS RESEARCH:
INSIGHTS FROM ANTHROPOLOGY [DocPostDoc COMMISSION]**

Room 4.B55

Convenors:

Nina Khamsy, IHEID
Olivia Killias, University of Zurich

Abstract:

While anthropologists tend to study precarity in their fieldsites, they are increasingly facing precarity in their own working conditions. This panel is interested in bringing different forms of precarity together to question their links with the politics of knowledge production.

Around the globe, we are witnessing a resurgence of (in)direct armed conflicts, authoritarian rule, right-wing, anti-immigrants and nationalist politics, but we are currently also facing climate change on an unprecedented scale. In this context, the slow pace of academic research - and particularly ethnographic fieldwork and its long-term immersions – seems to stand in contradiction with the rapid responses that such phenomena framed as “crises” apparently require. The protracted nature of crises calls into question the political nature of their designation as such and their framing in media coverage and academic papers. Anthropologists can bring decisive insights by untangling issues of global concern, and a way forward is to acknowledge “the ‘crisis-effect’ as “a dimension of a moral order that intensifies critique (Roitman 2014, Foucault 1976), as well as control (Strasser 2012, 2014)” (Strasser 2016).

Early scholars might face tensions when it comes to producing knowledge on often heated debates framed in terms of “crises”, such as the “migration crisis”, the “health crisis” or the “economic crisis”. Universities are likewise in the orbit of the “‘crisis-effect’ creeping into neoliberal working conditions in Europe, that is, the intertwining of neoliberal policies and audit culture with austerity measures” (Loher and Strasser 2019: 8). Early career scholars, in particular postdocs in non-permanent positions, are increasingly faced with uncertain employment, be it in their ongoing contracts or future academic prospects. Even in the relatively comfortable positions offered in Switzerland, economic precarity and related anxieties are common. Academics, and junior academics in particular, are directly impacted by the cutting of funds, such as funding for individual doctoral projects.

Ethnographic work dedicated to social and political precarity has demonstrated the myriad of ways people counter the sense of purposelessness and victimhood caused by precarity by engaging in solidarity, protests, social movements, or other less visible sorts of resilience (Khosravi 2017). In this vein, one possible pathway is to find a shared language that speaks to both anthropologists' sense of precarity and the precarity faced by people in their fields to uncover ways towards solidarity and action (Lems 2017). Inspired by this approach, this panel calls for contributions tackling the issue of precarity in academia and in our fields to look at common grounds, and to reflect on the ways different forms of precarity are entangled with political and economic transformation, knowledge production, and public intellectual intervention. Questions of interest include: How do troubled times impact anthropological outcomes? How does academic precarity shape anthropologists' intervention in universities, in their fieldsites, and in the public sphere? How does the neoliberal turn in academia frame the types of research conducted by early researchers and what does it mean for Swiss academia and beyond? Or, simply put, how do different forms of precarity intersect and shape knowledge production? We welcome papers ethnographically tackling economic, professional, political and personal forms of precarity, in the past and in the present, and examining how knowledge production is intertwined with the language of crises and researchers' positionalities.

Papers:

SESSION 1

Capitalizing precarity: Migrant labor's welfare in Russia

Turaeva Rano, LMU Munich

This paper aims to introduce the concept of capitalization of precarity to analyse the situation of precarious migration in migrant unfriendly contexts such as Russia. The material analysed in this paper concerns welfare and health inequalities in Russia. Welfare of labour migrants in Russia (both for internal Russian migrants and for foreign migrants) is de facto non-existent and largely self-organised by migrants themselves. State migration policies of Russia as well as welfare policies in the destination countries (Central Asia) are formulated in papers but in practice do not function to ensure some kind of wellbeing and social protection. Working conditions both at home (in Central Asia) and in destination countries (Russia and Kazakhstan) do not comply with average requirements of wellbeing of the workers. I was shocked but not surprised to see Central Asian migrant workers in winter cleaning the roofs of Russian houses without any protection. Accidents at work must be very high which one cannot even count as those are not only not registered or reported but also are not taken care of such as financial support of the victim. The paper analyses the situation of intermixing of legal and informal practices which have a direct implication for migrant wellbeing in Russia. The working conditions in Russia for both migrant and non-migrant labour can be compared to that of exploitation, and at times extreme forms of slavery violating human rights. The paper also shows that even citizenship does not automatically provide direct access to social welfare where the latter is bound to the permanent registration (propiska). Continuous precarity is capital for other actors such as those who can profit from it such as police officers or other migrants themselves. The findings of this research contribute to the broader literature of labour and welfare in terms challenging the boundaries between citizenship and mobility.

“Working without a boss”: Understanding experiences of independence and flexibility amongst precarious platform-based delivery workers in Bogotá, Colombia.
Ragazzi Constanza, Graduate Institute

Academic discussions of labour precarity, particularly those pertaining to the gig economy, tend to re-centre waged forms of capitalist labour as universally desirable. Precarity remains defined in negative terms, by what it is not (waged labour) and by what it lacks. Instead, in this presentation I focus on precarity not only as a site of violence and exploitation but also as one with the political potential of critiquing the normativity of capitalist wage-labour and think about what might lie beyond it (Denning, 2010; Li and Ferguson, 2018; Millar, 2018; Monteith et al., 2021).

This paper is based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork with, mainly Venezuelan migrant, platform-based delivery workers in Bogotá Colombia. It takes as point of departure workers’ opposition to their potential “re-classification” from independent contractors to subordinate employees. In March 2023 a draft labour reform was submitted to the Colombian congress containing an article establishing the presumption of employment for platform-based delivery workers. Many delivery workers opposed the reform, articulating their disagreement in terms of a “fear of the wage” and a profound valuing of their perceived labour flexibility and independence, encapsulated in the idea of “working without a boss”.

In this paper I explore what independence and flexibility mean to my interlocutors. I discuss how these values are forged in workers’ histories of first living amidst Venezuela’s “economic crisis” and then in their migratory journeys and experiences. Further, I consider how the values of independence and flexibility inform and affect workers’ imagined futures. Finally, I argue that ethnographic engagement with experiences of precarity and histories of “crisis” may provide the opportunity to re-think notions of independence and flexibility beyond the neoliberal framework and thus imagine a future of work beyond the normative ideal of currently dominant capitalist forms of waged labour.

Patchwork Life: Balancing Migration, Care, Fieldwork, and an Academic Career during a Global Pandemic
Ammann Carole, ETH Zurich

This paper is based on field notes I took during the so-called first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, while I was an SNSF-funded postdoctoral mobility fellow at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. First, I elaborate on the challenges of moving with one’s family to a new place and conducting anthropological fieldwork in a novel site—a European city—during a global health crisis. I also highlight how these troubled times led to different forms of data collection than initially planned. Secondly, I reveal how moments of uncertainty, disorientation, and vulnerability were integral parts of our lives as homeschooling and working from home caused my personal and professional lives to overlap and blur. Finally, I argue that our lives (as postdoctoral anthropologists) during this global crisis were precariously patchworked, through a constant bricolage of trying and retrying.

SESSION 2

Negotiating precarity in times of crisis: Insights from an anthropology of the pandemic

Friedli Andrea and Schambron Livia, HES-SO Valais / FHNW

According to Butler (2010) life is inherently precarious and precariousness is coextensive with birth. Nevertheless, not all life is being perceived as grievable to the same extent. This uneven distribution of grievability is part and result of a social and political context. The

negotiation over distribution and definitions is always contested by different powers (Fassin & Honneth) and is in reference to a norm and a state of non-crisis or non-precarity (Roitman 2013).

In times of crisis the status quo is challenged and new precariousities can emerge. During the Covid-19 Pandemic precarity was (re)negotiated in politics, daily conversation, and media coverage. In our project on frontline work during times of crisis, we explore state and non-state actors who supported people in precarity during Covid-19. Thereby, we are confronted with different narratives of crisis and precarity from the perspective of humanitarian organizations and social institutions working with vulnerable groups. Also we are interested in how these narratives resonate with our personal and professionally informed representations of crisis and precarity.

In our contribution, we would like to discuss what kind of knowledge on precarity is generated during times of crisis and what governmental logics (Lorey 2015) are behind this knowledge production. Also, we are curious to draw possible parallels which can be made to precariousities in academia for example when it comes to insecurities and austerity measures.

Time precarity in academia: The case of social anthropology

Besençon Sylvain, University of Fribourg

“Time is money” as the saying goes. Sadly, early scholars in anthropology seem to lack both of them and lucky is the young researcher who can carry out research with a proper contract! Press articles on precarity in Academia often raise concerns about the type of contracts and the salary of young researchers. In this presentation, I pay attention to the other side of precarity: time. Indeed, nowadays trends favour short-term contracts with a lot of extra tasks and the time dedicated to one’s own research is often squeezed in what remains after the cascade of emails, teaching, correction, scanning, administration, and other things. In addition, it is often expected that PhD candidates carry out other work such as publishing in peer-reviewed journals and presenting papers at international conferences. As an outcome, being overwhelmed seems to be the norm among PhD candidates and postdocs.

In this paper, I reflect on time management from the point of view of early scholars (PhD students and postdocs). I draw on my own experience as a doctoral fellow as well as on my colleagues’ ones to underline the different dimensions of what I propose to call “time precarity”. I start by briefly underlining the iterative and inductive approaches and the long-term immersive fieldwork that are supposedly crucial to develop in-depth anthropological analysis. I then confront these methodological pillars with the reality on the ground by describing the material conditions of the three main kinds of PhD funding that remain possible after the SNSF decision to abandon doc.ch program: (1) teaching assistant, (2) PhD student hired in the frame of a bigger research project and (3) self-financing research. Finally, I reflect on how we could possibly improve the whole situation. As the institution won’t change so quickly, I mention several time management techniques that helped me to finish my thesis and make a few propositions to build healthier working conditions.

Discussant:

Sabine Strasser, University of Bern

PANEL 8

THE TROUBLE WITH RELIGION? NAVIGATING DISCOURSES, PRACTICES, AND POLITICS

Room 4.B01

Convenors:

Donald Nidhin, University of Lucerne
Julien Levesque, University of Zurich
Juerg Buehler, University of Lucerne

Abstract:

Over the past few decades, anthropologists like Talal Asad, Birgit Meyer, David Gellner have interrogated colonial, and secular approaches to religion. With the help of postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, they have elucidated the plural landscapes of religion. Nevertheless, postcolonial contexts – with its complex religious cultures which actively transact with national and transnational spaces – continue to present new challenges. The persistence, appropriation, and reinvention of seemingly ‘western’ conceptions of religion in ‘non-western’ societies troubles several assumptions of postcolonial and decolonial perspectives.

It is well-known that the onus of setting discourses on religion has never been an exclusive domain of the anthropologist. Rather, a complex set of historically contingent institutions and instruments have played (and continue to play) their part in evolving this classifier. Quite often, the anthropologist of religion, notwithstanding her methodological nuance, is not taken seriously by the civil society or the state. Further, the success of ‘world religions’ as a reified standard in state policies, jurisprudence and electoral politics has strengthened perceptions of religious difference, triumphalism of religious nationalism and pursuant conflicts — making the conceptual problem with religion a political one. This calls for the need to revisit usual tropes of critique, and modes of anthropological communicability.

This panel invites papers which reflect on discourses, practices, and politics of religions in specific empirical contexts, to highlight conceptual and historical troubles therein. The papers may shed light on the following questions: Do religious practices challenge religious categories, or do they dialogue and reconcile with each other? How do we understand the relationship between local and global conventions of a given religion? Do social and economic hierarchies complicate religious categories? Do they shape social mobilizations which forge solidarities across religious difference or nest outside formal categories? How does nonreligion and areligion challenge or reinforce the conceptual boundaries of religion? Can anthropologists, with their methodological distance from the truth claims of religious and nonreligious communities, devise new ways to understand and communicate? Finally, since religion is a shared concern of several disciplines (anthropology, law, sociology, history theology, comparative religion etc.), how do we ensure greater interdisciplinarity in our inquiries by diversifying our methods and sources?

Papers:

SESSION 1

Beyond Secular-Communal Binary: The Sachar Committee Report and the Trajectories of Marginalization of Lower Caste Bengali Muslims in West Bengal, India

Matin Sk Abdul, Jadavpur University

The publication of the Sachar Committee Report in 2006 and the Justice Mishra Commission report in 2007 have generated enormous public debates regarding the socio-economic and political marginalization of India's largest Muslim minority. The SCR is the first official comprehensive document with empirical details of 'everyday Muslim lives' in post-colonial Indian states. This report has not only broken the hegemonic myth of 'Muslim appeasement' as propounded by Hindutva politics but also produced the 'new' language of democratic articulations using the concepts of social citizenship, representations, and social justice within the larger democratic framework. The SCR has also debunked the myth of Muslim or Islamic homogeneity by invoking the social hierarchical structure of the Muslim community which is categorized as Ashraf, Ajlaf, and Arjal.

The issues of social justice, development deficits, and political deprivation of lower caste Bengali Muslims have been a subject of considerable debate in the post-Sachar West Bengal. Muslims constitute a substantial size of the state's population (27.1%) and are thickly concentrated in rural districts of West Bengal. The overwhelming majority of Bengali Muslims are sociologically linked to lower caste/ OBCs (other backward caste) and highly engaged with agrarian activities including informal sectors economy. Based on the extensive ethnographic fieldwork in rural West Bengal this paper is an attempt to map the trajectories of marginalization of lower caste Bengali Muslims in West Bengal going beyond the hegemonic categorization of religious Identity from the prism of secular-communal or Hindu-Muslim binary in Indian politics. In doing so this paper will also engage with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led Left Front Government (1977-2011) in the Indian state of West Bengal and their understanding about the 'Muslim question'.

Constructing a Global Hindu Rashtra: Transnational Infrastructures of Religious Violence

Kapoor Shrey, University of Basel

The enactment of anti-Muslim violence has become emblematic of Indian statecraft since Modi's ascent to power in 2014. Historically, the militant Hindu Right has sought to subjugate the Muslim minority through its systematic orchestration of communal riots. This violence, however, has functioned both as an instrument of coercion and consent: participating in and vicariously witnessing collective violence against Muslims has allowed lower caste Hindu groups to externalize feelings of inferiority while simultaneously concealing the Hindu Right's complicity in their own subjugation. Ultimately, this religious violence has enabled the Hindu Right to efface caste inequality by fostering cohesion around a monolithic Hindu identity that is exclusively defined in contradistinction to the Muslim Other.

This paper contends that the Modi administration has progressively institutionalized this violence within the built environment in the form of civic and religious infrastructures. This 'infrastructural turn' has further obscured the instigators and ideological underpinnings of religious violence and, most notably, expanded its reach beyond India's borders. This analysis demonstrates how spatial disaggregation gives rise to infrastructures in the West that present themselves as depoliticized and strictly functional, yet subtly contribute to and

legitimate religious violence within India. Through examinations of the Ram temple under construction in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and the infrastructural occupation of Kashmir, this paper thus unveils the subtle yet significant transnational manifestations of such violent infrastructures, exposing underexplored aspects of the Hindu Right's global hegemonic project.

Blasphemy laws and post-colonial nation-building: A perspective from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

Bilal Tantray, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence

After gaining independence from the British rule, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have all faced an internal struggle between contesting visions of nation building. In all the three cases, there are notably two contending views in this regard. One vision that is common to all three of these countries is that of building a nation on the principles of secular constitutionalism. The other visions strive to drive the nation building towards cultural hegemony of the respective religious majorities. Pakistan and Bangladesh have factions endeavoring for the creation of Islamic nations administered through Shariah or Shariah-like laws while India has strong Hindutva politics that views it as a nation of Hindus. Across South Asia throughout its post-colonial history, there is evidence of colonial laws being repurposed to facilitate dominance of the religious majorities. The aim of this paper is to look at the political processes and outcomes that resulted from the introduction, application, amendments, and re-application of colonial-era blasphemy laws in post-colonial South Asia. The paper argues that the post-colonial South Asian states have seen a shift from secularity towards majoritarian chauvinism. The widened use of blasphemy laws, and its disproportionate targeting of minority groups who constitute the non-core of the nation-building project, is representative of that shift.

SESSION 2

Contact 'Religion': Cultural Encounter and the Making of Billava 'Religion'

Kumar Mukesh, ETH Zurich

This paper explores the dynamics of 'religion' among the Billava community, a marginalized group that strategically engaged with Christian missionaries, Hindu reform movements, and the Vedanta philosophy of Sri Narayana Guru since the 19th century to improve their social status. It adopts a long-term perspective to trace the evolution of Billava 'religion,' highlighting its historically contingent and evolving nature. The Billavas, primarily impoverished farmers and landless laborers, faced discrimination and social exclusion from 'upper-caste' Hindus due to caste-based beliefs, economic disparity, and temple entry restrictions.

The establishment of Hindu temples marked a crucial juncture in their socio-religious development, leading to the founding of educational institutions, healthcare facilities, cooperative banks, and community associations. Influenced by the teachings of their revered anti-caste poet-saint, Sri Narayana Guru (1856-1928), the Billavas eventually embraced an inclusive vision of temple worship. Despite SNG's advaita (non-dualist) philosophy, which bore similarities to European missionary discourses and eschewed ritualistic practices, he allowed the construction of temples, recognizing their profound impact on communities. His teachings emphasized equality, urging followers to adhere to the principle of 'One Caste, One God, One Religion.'

This study also examines how the Billavas' experiences have shaped their understanding of 'Hinduism' and 'religion,' particularly through interactions with missionary ideas, Hindu

reformists, Brahmins, and temple worship. It explores the assimilation of English-language Protestant terminology into 'local' discourse and the accommodation of various religious traditions to fulfil socio-economic needs. The paper ultimately challenges the rigid boundaries of the category 'religion,' suggesting it is a dynamic concept shaped by socio-economic exigencies and the integration of conflicting religious traditions.

Beyond Bhakti or Within: Unravelling the Religious Thought of the Untouchables in Early Twentieth-Century Matua Hagiographies in Bengal

Roy Rajat, University of Zurich, Presidency University Kolkata

The paper explores the social-religious thinking of the Matua community, originating in the early nineteenth century among the untouchable Chandal (now Namasudra caste) in colonial Bengal. The Matua movement fiercely contested the entrenched caste hierarchy in Hinduism, critiquing both orthodox Vedantic Hinduism and Vaishnavism in Sahajia (liberal) and Gaudiya (orthodox) forms. Founded by Harichand Thakur (1812-1878), the Matua religious ideology evolved into a sampradāya (community), challenging societal norms and popular Vaishnava practices.

Focused on the foundational Matua hagiography, "Sri Sri Harileelāmṛita" (1916), and the song collection "Sri Sri Mahāsaṅkīrtan" (1900), this talk employs textual analysis to unravel the social thinking and religious universe among the untouchables. It sheds light on their intricate relationship with caste, Hinduism, and Vaishnavism in Bengal, while also exploring the Matua religion's political engagement during the late colonial period. The key problem for the paper is: how do the religions of the untouchables, who are the worst victim of caste hierarchy, interface with Hinduism and purportedly liberating bhakti traditions? To put it differently, how do the Matuas envision a potentially new and distinct religious order in the context of early twentieth century Bengal.

By introducing critical caste perspectives previously unexplored in the region, the presentation emphasizes the dignity discourse within Matua hagiographies. This underscores the Matua community's distinctive position in the religious and social landscape of colonial Bengal.

Is it Islamic by any counts? Space and Inequality among Muslims in South India

Palamadathil Chembanthodika Saidalavi, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence

How do religious communities negotiate between what are deemed customs and what lies within the purview of religion? A common modality of negotiation, to follow Talal Asad, has been power, as to how can a particular practice be determined as custom or religion and by whom. This article complicates the issue of power by looking at a recent contestation between barbers and Mappilas among Muslims in Malabar, south India over barbers' claim to participate in the community deliberations at the mosque. Citing keezh-nadappu (iniquitous compartment), Mappilas denied their right to partake in the general meeting of mosque members. The idea was that barbers, as an occupational group serving other Muslims were only allowed to receive and accept command and other material resources from the patron and were not expected to contribute to the public life. Barbers challenged this position not only locally but also by going to the quasi-constitutional body of the state to resolve the issue. Rather than seeing power as religious authority in the case of Islam, I argue that power needs to be understood as a competing arena where multiple stakes are at play where individuals often choose to act not only by the religious rules, democracy and legality, but also by reconfiguring what 'true religious practice' is. In other words, power to determine a practice to be Islamic or not is not simply invested in religious authorities but also works through individual deliberations and practices.

PANEL 9

THINKING THROUGH IMPACT: ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES

Room 4.B51

Convenors:

Sandra Bärnreuther, University of Lucerne
Ben Eyre, University of East Anglia
Fiona Gedeon Achi, University of Bordeaux

Abstract:

The drive to produce, monitor, and measure social impact has permeated contemporary social interventions by governments and non-state actors. The importance of “impact” is linked to the rise of evidence-based policy which harnesses multiple practices and methods to justify intervention (Kelly and McGoey 2018). Social impact is also prominent in the financial world, where it seems to have joined cost-effectiveness as an organizing principle. From education to international development, welfare to sustainability, the search for “impact” seems to have induced its own regime of governance (Smith et al 2020). This relies on a complex infrastructure of funding schemes, social networks, and evaluation techniques and technologies (McLellan 2021).

This panel aims to examine “social impact” as:

- (1) a concept used to conceptualize and measure (positive) effects of social interventions and
- (2) as an aspiration to “do something” (good) by linking the past with the future.

Participants in this panel will explore the genealogies, practices, and consequences of this growing trend. Relevant questions could include:

1. What are the genealogies of “impact” as a concept to indicate the success of social interventions?
2. How and by whom is social impact defined?
3. How is social impact practiced and experienced in different contexts?
4. What regimes of governance are connected to impact?
5. How does a focus on impact differ, or on the contrary, help us make sense of anthropological concerns with metrics, quantification, and “audit cultures”?
6. What values does impact engender?
7. If impact is a buzzword, why should we take it seriously?

We would also welcome papers that explore impact as an ethnographic object through other question.

Papers:

SESSION 1

Elusive impact? Development, policy, and the uncertain power of evidence

Gedeon Achi Fiona, University of Bordeaux

At the same time that the search for "impact" has become a key shared practice in development and public policy, the meaning of impact, as well the capacity to measure that

impact has occurred, remain contested and often elusive domains for both actors who practice "impact" and for external commentators. To illustrate this paradox, this presentation analyzes how development experts seek to demonstrate the policy impact of their work to numerous publics, such as government bodies and international donors. It focuses on evidence-based development: the movement to reduce global poverty by producing quantitative evidence about "what works". Drawing on fieldwork with transnational NGOs in Kenya, India, and the USA, I examine the contrast between my interlocutors' commitment to "rigorous" evidence as a prerequisite to successful poverty alleviation and yet the difficulties they face when assessing the actual impact of that evidence on development policy worldwide. By asking, along with my interlocutors, such questions as "how to generalize our findings to different contexts" and "what does evidence manage to do?", I evince the various forces which struggle alongside their ambition to shape policymaking. I offer the concept of "uncertain power of evidence" to emphasize that, while the drive for impact is today ubiquitous in social life, the effects of quantitative indicators on action are actually multiple, unknowable, and unexpected.

What are they talking about when they talk about impact? Exploring Social Impact Bonds in Colombia

Gomez Muñoz Natalia, Università di Bologna

I first learned about Social Impact Bonds in mid-2020 when the results of the first Social Impact Bond in Colombia, 'Empleando Futuro,' focused on promoting formal employment, were being publicized in local media. At that time, this bond had been finalized, and it had been deemed successful in achieving its expected outcomes, specifically the formal job placement of 766 previously unemployed people, many of whom have not only struggled with unemployment but were also survivors of the long-standing Colombian internal armed conflict. After implementation, in the impact assessments that reflected on the scope, or impact, of 'Empleando Futuro' the verdict remains clear, the expected outcomes were achieved, all actors fulfilled their roles and received their expected benefits and rewards.

In this paper, I explore the experiences of the participants involved in the job placement projects of 'Empleando Futuro.' I critically consider the reported positive outcomes against the ethnographic data showing participants struggling to realize their aspirations. Many found themselves unable to get the 'good jobs' envisioned, to secure stable employment, or to achieve the prosperity promised by the initiative. The managers and parties involved in 'Empleando Futuro,' despite being aware of these shortcomings, remain firm believers in the success of this Social Impact Bond, pointing to the achieved the job placements. Considering the contradiction between stated objectives and actual results is critical for reflecting, based on empirical evidence, on the accomplishments of 'Empleando Futuro,' and for whom and how they were realized.

From measuring to explaining impact: the evolution of thinking about impact in program evaluation

Revillard Anne, Science Po, CRIS-LIEPP

While not exclusive from other evaluative criteria (relevance, coherence, efficiency, sustainability, etc.), the question of impact arguably is the foundational question of program evaluation. At the heart of the development of this meta-discipline in the 1960s in the US was the need to prove that social programs had a positive impact on society, in the context of Johnson's "Great Society" reforms (Shadish, Cook, and Leviton 1991). This led to an unprecedented rise in the use of experimental and quasi-experimental methods in social science, in an attempt to measure impact based on a counterfactual conception of causality

(Campbell 1969). As of the 1980s, the use of these methods was challenged by promoters of another approach to program evaluation which, under the umbrella term of “theory-based evaluation”, argued in favor of opening that “black box” of the inner workings and implementation of the intervention to shed light on the mechanisms through which impact is produced (Weiss 1998; Pawson and Tilley 1997). Through this approach, and without this shift necessarily being made very explicit, the underlying causal question evolved from measuring impact to explaining it, relying on a more generative or processual conception of causality (Revillard 2023; Mohr 1999; Maxwell 2004). This contribution will describe this evolution in program evaluation thinking about impact, from measuring to explaining, and show how an epistemological discussion of the types of causality involved can help shed light on the actual complementarity between approaches which often seem irreconcilable. While program evaluation often is associated with a very counterfactual conception of causality, this contribution will insist on the usefulness of qualitative and ethnographic methods to address this alternative causal question of how impact is produced. In this perspective, anthropology, maybe unexpectedly, has the potential to make significant contributions to program evaluation.

Investor and/or consumer: being ‘ultra-high-net-worth’ in the sustainable finance chain

Eyre Ben, University of East Anglia

The figure of ‘the investor’ is ever-more-central to business, government, and popular hope for positive and sustainable global change (Langley 2019; Dal Maso et al 2022). ‘Ultra-high-net-worth’ individuals (with investable assets of \$30 million or more) are seen as central to the capacity of sustainable finance to close the gap between the billions available in aid and the trillions needed to secure the future of the world and its people. However, there is little information on the preferences, knowledge, and actions of this group. Their small number, power, and desire for secrecy problematizes many quantitative approaches that are currently seen as key to rigorous, actionable data. Experimental methods suggest they may be less motivated by “having an impact” than assumed (Heeb et al 2023). This paper de-centres such enquiry by taking a cultural economy approach. Drawing on the author’s previous work experience and professional networks, it is based upon 57 ethnographic interviews with ‘ultra-high-net-worth’ individuals, staff, and advisors in the UK and Switzerland, as well as attendance at 3 wealth management and (sustainable) investment conferences over two years. It explores ‘ultra-high-net-worth’ personhood by engaging with anthropological analyses of consumers and investors. It suggests that insights and impasses reached in debates on the anthropology of consumption (eg Miller 2012, Foster 2007, Graeber 2012) should inform analysis of being ultra-wealthy and sustainable. The tension between investing and consuming resonates with internal critique of sustainable finance and its co-option by the wealth management industry. Different actors deal with the compromises made in diverging ways. The question of how the ‘ultra-high-net-worth’ are (not) investors and/or consumers illuminates the contradictions of linking sustainability and finance within investor personhood and agency in the world today.

SESSION 2

The Time of Impact: Articulating timescapes in investments for social impact

Campisano Claudia, University of Bologna

This paper aims to shed light on the ways time and timeframes are mobilized within socio-technical arrangements engendered by social and impact investments by presenting the case of, SustAgric-Africa (SSA), a social enterprise which aims to lift smallholder farmers in

rural Ghana out of poverty through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. By symmetrically considering discourses and practices of investors and investees, the paper will show how such arrangements insist on the articulation and juxtaposition of temporalities that greatly diverge in terms of magnitude, extension, empirical manifestations and how they are experienced by different actors. In sociotechnical arrangements such as SAA's, indeed, the time of finance comes to be articulated with that of project implementation, the timescapes of intended beneficiaries' lives, and the time of nature.

Against this background, the 'time of impact' comes to be constructed and mobilized in ways that weave together timescapes (Adam 1998) of distant futures – subsumed in grand narratives and imaginaries of a better future for the planet – and the micropolitics of presentism and near future management in project implementation. However, in their unfolding, such processes produce tensions between financial timescapes – which set dates anchoring imaginaries and discourses of impact generation to the rules of capital movements – and the empirical manifestation and experience of the 'time of impact', which ends up appearing ethereal and ever shifting. With this respect, in a sinusoidal movement, the urgency to act 'now' to tame what are framed as the most pressing global 'crises' of our times constantly transitions in the transposition of impact generation in undefined futures, potentially adumbrating uncertain generation of social impact, as well as the reproduction of existing social and economic global inequalities.

Beneath the 'Innovative Culture': Uncovering Social Impact Anticipation and its Side Effects in Social Entrepreneurship

Blumer Stéphane, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

Since the 2000s, there has been a socio-economic turn in public policies at the European Commission (EC), replacing strategies of development and progress with those of sustainability and innovation. While there is a significant body of literature on the positive societal impact of social innovation, driven in part by the 'pro-innovation bias' (Rogers [1983] 2010), there is a lack of understanding regarding the fate of unproductive, abandoned or failed initiatives within this context. My investigation explores the power dynamics that shapes what we can define as the 'innovative culture' and its evaluation impacts on both social entrepreneurial work and local communities. This conference paper draws on four years of ethnographic research involving long-term multi-sited participant observation with transnational collectives of freelancers in social entrepreneurship, operating within rural communities at the southern periphery of Europe. The analysis shows the changing definitions and methods of social impact assessment utilised by these individuals who engage in experimenting with new socio-economic models through social laboratories. The qualitative data collected reveals how an anticipated assessment framework influenced by the normative dynamics of an 'innovative culture' can shadow political and socio-economic alternatives. This paper argues that this phenomenon has consequences on potentially valuable self-crafted metrics devised by social entrepreneurs themselves. This situation calls for a political anthropology of social innovation that focuses on entrepreneurial subjectivity, highlighting the disconnect between dominant narratives on the prospect of social impact and actual lived experiences. By challenging the hegemony of metrics methods, the study emphasises the importance of considering diverse perspectives not only within success but also failures toward building a pluralist socio-economic future.

‘Slow Statistics’ and ‘Real-Time Data’: Implications of measurement practices, cultures, and infrastructures in Sustainable Development Goal monitoring

Marlee Tichenor, University of Edinburgh

Since the 1990s, international development and global health have been increasingly governed through quantified indicators to measure progress toward concrete and abstract development goals, a trend whose beginning we might mark with UNICEF’s 1990 World Summit for Children and culminating most recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a part of this trend, ‘statistical capacity development’ has become a development goal in its own right, and there has been a rapid increase in attention to and funding for producing economic, social, and environmental statistics and the infrastructure needed to support these data. The 2014 UN report ‘A World that Counts’ argued that the key to achieving development goals was, in fact, to leverage the data revolution to do so, prompting a need to negotiate between ‘traditional statistics’ and ‘non-traditional’ sources of data. As such, members of the ‘global statistical community’ (an emic term for those working in statistics and its allied fields in organizations linked by the UN Statistical Commission) have been forced to confront the epistemic encounter between statistics and data science, as the new players in the production of development data trouble existing ideological frameworks on the value and composition of statistics, temporal frames, and comfort with estimation. Ultimately, tensions between ‘data’ and ‘statistics’ and debates over legitimate statistical processes and data availability help shape what is ultimately included within the SDG monitoring framework, which has resulted in demands on national statistics offices and the ways that domestic governments and bilateral and multilateral funding organizations fund development projects in the global South.

PANEL 10

TOWARDS A VISIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Room 4.B54

Convenors:

Eda Elif Tibet , Wyss Academy for Nature
Cihan Elçi, University of Bern

Abstract:

Faye V. Harrison and Ira E. Harrison once asserted “any genuinely critical project designed to reinvent, decolonize, and transform anthropology” must first recapture “subjugated knowledges”. These knowledges were born and fed by the conflicts, unrests, wars, injustices, crises and troubles of each era. Hence, societies’ manifestations of hope and transformation, when not phrased as political or religious projects, often pass undetected and predictions about their possible futures have been barely elaborated upon. Yet there have been visionary anthropologists of which troubled times have unsettled and inspired them for long in their affectionate quest for the co-creation of just futures. Manuel Raymundo Querino, is one of the pioneers of ethnology in Brazil and the first Black scholar to study the origins, history and culture of the enslaved Africans and their descendants in Brazil; Rudolph Poch and Jean Rouch, are forerunners of visual anthropology whom worked with shared and

participatory methods; Max Gluckman worked on social conflicts and cultural contradictions of colonialism and encouraged anthropologists to confront and examine the troubles of the modern world; Gene Weltfish's "pragmatic anthropology" positioned education at the core of culture; Hortense Powdermaker's fieldwork embraced Black America, Hollywood, and the Pacific; Eleanor Leacock pioneered "advocacy anthropology"; Ulf Hannerz looked into the role of media and paradoxes of identity and new forms of community, suggested seeing culture in terms of flows rather than as bounded entities.

All these visionary scholars were at some point seen to be "troublemakers" for challenging the status quo and daring to bring about change into their fields and to society. They were criticized for their approaches at the initial stages of their research and dissemination, yet over time they were appreciated and applauded for their affectionate sensibilities and for the kind of difficult questions they asked on democracy, inequalities, systems and dilemmas they faced as social scientists, practitioners and theorists. They all left a lasting legacy, shaping the discipline and inspiring future generations of scholars to explore new ideas and perspectives within anthropology. Yet, the majority of the scholars we know as being pioneers in anthropology were mostly backed by (wealthy) Western Institutions, who gave them trust, security, independence and freedom.

Following Dr. Petrovic-Steger's research on "Visionary Practices in Comparative Perspective and Anthropology of the Imaginal" (2020, 2021-2024), ours is an invitation to critically explore whether anthropology is actually able to identify individuals, events and processes who could play a key role in shaping just futures and therefore enacting just transformations in practice and in imagination, particularly in troubled times. We invite contributions especially addressing the following questions: What can be considered visionary in visual and multimodal anthropology practices and imagination? What are the most up to date methods, methodologies in the field tackling troubling wicked problems? How can visual and multimodal anthropology play a role in shaping just futures and in enacting just transformations?

Papers:

Towards a Visionary Anthropology: The EthnoKino Film Festival Harvesting a Global Mov(i)ement

Eda Elif Tibet, Wyss Academy for Nature

This paper examines the case of the EthnoKino film festival, an applied visual and multi-modal anthropology initiative, dedicated to visionaries and pioneering storytellers across the world. EthnoKino identifies itself as an international action community of practice, working toward systemic change. Through the launching of a new training initiative Doc Impact Lab that fosters a global learning pedagogy for Mov(i)ement fellows, the film festival takes place

in various heritage sites in Bern, Berlin, Mexico City, Marrakech, New Delhi, Patagonia, and Cappadocia, aiming to harvest a global mov(i)ement.

While the film festival and the training program promote innovation and artistic dialogue, at the heart of this exploration is the recognition that film festivals can be dynamic showcases of diverse cinematic traditions of fiction and non-fiction. By curating diverse programming, championing cinematic preservation, and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, these events not only celebrate the richness of our shared cultural heritages but also inspire future generations of filmmakers to contribute to it.

Through panel discussions, roundtables, masterclasses, Q&A workshops, and networking opportunities, the festival facilitates the exchange of ideas and knowledge, nurturing a vibrant community of cinephiles and visual anthropologists dedicated to preserving and advancing the legacy of the transformative power of ethnographic and independent cinema. While it offers audiences a multifaceted lens through which to engage with the rich tapestry of global filmmaking, these events curated selections of films spanning genres, eras, and geographical regions, from avant-garde experiments to classic masterpieces. They serve as living repositories of cultural expression, and social memory, reinvigorating timeless narratives and introducing audiences to new voices and perspectives by spotlighting films at risk of obscurity or neglect, or by amplifying the voices of marginalized filmmakers to shine a light in troubled times.

A Plea for Vision in the Broadest Sense and the Use of Digital Cinematography as a Heuristic Concept

Alter Balz Andrea, University of Freiburg

With *Visio*, *visionis* (lat.) we point our fingers towards what can be seen – no matter if we talk about imagination perceived by our inner eye or pictures perceived by our physical eyes (Mitchell 2017). Vision in this context means far more than the act of seeing which is a fundamental aspect of fieldwork itself.

As a social scientist, I have been working for more than 20 years using digital cinematography as my main research tool. During this time, my primary challenge has been to establish a conceptual link between different vision(s) and optic(s). Through my theoretical and practical work, I have been able to make new discoveries in the field of anthropology. Recently, I have received funding from the Volkswagen Stiftung in Hannover for a high-risk research project, which will allow me to explore new areas of research.

The focus of this project lies on the dehumanizing dimensions of colonialism and their effects on scientific practice to this day. Using Ancestral Remains from the Maka community in Cameroon that was used by Eugen Fischer at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, to create his racial theory, the problem of human dignity – its violation and possibilities of restoration – will be explored in an entangled setting: In a cinematographic laboratory, Nadja Germann, a philosophy professor (University of Freiburg im Breisgau) and Albert Gouaffo, a literature professor (Université de Dschang, Cameroon) meet to (1) reflect on the concept of dignity, departing from the Ancestral Remains “collected” and used for research purposes. This transcultural dialogue is about ‘dignity’ itself – what is it: an abstract idea or something material, i.e., embodied in flesh, bones, history? – and about the implications for current science practices and policy. Their dialogue will be observed (2) in multimodal forms; recorded (audio and visual material), and presented to the two dialogue partners regularly. Thus,

they become at once subjects and objects, researchers and informants. In this way, a double process of reflection is initiated and documented at the same time: about the dehumanizing dimensions of colonialism from a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective as well as the blind spots of the participating scientists themselves.

Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype: A Visionary Reading of “Kali” the Goddess of Time, Subversion and Transformation

Sarah Keller, University of Zurich

Kali, revered as the goddess of blood, death, and eroticism, commands a polarizing presence within South Asian religious and cultural realms, embodying both terror and power. Often depicted with terrifying imagery—dark-skinned, wielding weapons, adorned with macabre accessories—she symbolizes the chaotic yet transformative forces of existence. Despite her portrayal as residing at the margins of Hindu society, scholars assert her origins beyond the Sanskritic Tradition, signifying her as a potent symbol of opposition and transcendence. Yet, her pervasive presence among diverse, non-elite communities across South Asia challenges conventional narratives of marginality, underscoring her enduring significance and multifaceted interpretations.

Moreover, contemporary perspectives, particularly from Western feminist angles, reframe Kali as a symbol of female empowerment, subverting patriarchal structures and asserting autonomy. This paper aims to delve deeper into the wild women archetype embodied by Kali, examining themes of time, subversion, power, and death. Drawing inspiration from extensive travels, multimedia artifacts, and contemporary readings, the author seeks to articulate and contextualize compelling interpretations of Kali's symbolism. Additionally, through engagement with Jungian psychology and symbolic anthropology, this study endeavors to enrich our understanding of Kali's multifaceted persona, bridging the realms of art, spirituality, and anthropology.

Furthermore, this exploration of Kali's multifaceted symbolism and evolving significance holds implications for a visionary anthropology. By delving into the intricate layers of meaning attributed to Kali across time and culture, this research illuminates the dynamic interplay between myth, society, and individual psyche. Kali emerges not only as a goddess of blood and death but also as a mirror reflecting the collective unconscious of human societies. Her portrayal as a symbol of female empowerment in contemporary Western feminist discourse challenges established power structures and underscores the fluidity of cultural interpretations. By interrogating the diverse lenses through which Kali is perceived, this study offers invaluable insights into the construction of meaning, identity, and social change within global cultural landscapes.

PANEL 11

TROUBLED KIN RELATIONS

Room 4.B01

Convenors:

Nora Lipp, University of Lucerne
Bettina Beer, University of Lucerne

Abstract:

We invite contributions from anthropologists (and other specialists) that consider the intricate dynamics of kin relations within families and the troubles and ruptures these sometimes produce. While close kin are often counted on for economic and emotional support, tensions, conflicts, and ruptures remain a standing possibility in kin relations. Anthropologists have long focused on the “structuring structures” close kin relations are disposed to engender. Of course, the ethnographic record contains numerous examples where amity between kin breaks down, producing social consequences ranging from the break-up of communities to fratricide. In this exploratory panel, we want to raise questions about less spectacular cases wherein ambivalences, discord and ruptures are engendered, and explore their causes.

Divorce (and the affinal fractures these involve) and the different forms of estrangement between parents and children or between siblings, indicate but do not exhaust the sorts of kin ruptures that we have in mind.

Are there broader social or psychological factors that mark out such cases? Are there built-in aspects of close relations that make them susceptible to the various schismogenic factors operating in a social setting at large, or do endogenous processes sometimes suffice to split a family? Are some links between kin more liable to produce discord leading to ruptures than others? What are the downstream impacts of familial ruptures on the social networks within which the main protagonists remain encompassed? These and other questions will be considered in an exploratory spirit.

Papers:

SESSION 1

“Can’t Imagine My Life Without My Little Brother – Where Would I Take Out My Anger Then?” Children’s Troubled Sibling Relationships and Subjective Well-Being
Vafina Luiza, University of Zürich

Many children share time and space with their siblings and have deep knowledge about each other. It can lead both to intimacy between them and conflicts, causing ambivalence in sibling relationships. The non-voluntary and constant character of sibling relationships means that children need to find ways of how to deal with various sibling experiences. These may include difficult and problematic, or troubled, experiences. In this presentation, we explore different levels of children’s troubled sibling relationships from children’s points of view. Our research is based on an ongoing project on children’s understanding of well-being in Switzerland. We discuss various children’s views and experiences: from openly admitting that a sibling is annoying and “makes mad” through “jokingly” inflicting violence on a sibling to being painfully subjected to it by a sibling. Finally, we make conclusions about how the experiences of troubled sibling relationships affect children’s subjective well-being.

The presentation would be prepared by doctoral researchers Luiza Vafina (University of Zurich) and Carina Pohl (Zurich University of Applied Sciences) and presented in the conference by Luiza Vafina.

Erbschleicherinnen & Rabentöchter: Estrangement Processes in the Context of the Intergenerational Transfer of Property, Money, and Heirlooms

Preissler Laura, University of Lucerne

Drawing from ongoing ethnographic research on rifts between parents and their adult children in Switzerland, this talk will discuss estrangement processes between kin associated with the intergenerational transfer of property, money, and heirlooms. The (prospective) death of a parent and the related questions surrounding wills, inheritance and distribution of heirlooms and mementos intensify conflicts that have often been simmering for a long time. By examining illustrative case studies, this talk will explore how inheritance disputes can result in protracted quarrels and, finally, long-term estrangement between surviving parent and adult child, which in turn affects relationships with other relatives. As the case studies will show, the final rift induced by the inheritance dispute is usually perceived as only the culmination of a parent-child relationship disrupted by other issues that sometimes lie deep in the past. As multifaceted social process, familial estrangement is often the result of different factors coming together and requires a nuanced exploration from a life span perspective. Taking a closer look at parents' and children's interpretations and contextualization of inheritance disputes in family history will provide insights into parent-child dynamics marked by emotions, ambivalences, and power differentials over the life course as well as the expectations attached to close kin relations.

Closeness and Conflict: Marital Separations in the Philippines

Beer Bettina, University of Lucerne

This talk will examine aspects of the intricate consequences for familial and broader kin relations of marital separations. Drawing on long-term fieldwork on the Visayan Island of Bohol, in the Philippines, I present data on the conflict that marital separations precipitate for those "nearest and dearest"—children, parents and siblings—to the partners, who represent the closest nodes of the kin networks in which husband and wife are situated. The Philippines does not permit divorce, so the resolution of conflict between conjugal partners is a focus of much effort by the state and the Roman Catholic Church. Yet the breakdown of unions is common and their effects widespread and long-lasting. Familial loyalty looms large in perceptions of conjugal conflict and in responses to marital separations. The sometimes impossible stresses separations produce affect all other kin relations to some degree, but in a context like Bohol, where poverty is common and out-migration for work is encouraged by the state, separations can have great consequences on families and their members.

Given the usual ontogenetic roots of humans in a familial context, its intimacies and material support, "the family" has been a touchstone for the social sciences since their birth from the womb of political philosophy. Accordingly, the research reported on here speaks to broader discussions in anthropology about the formal and affective constitution of the family in kin networks, as well as its place in contemporary nation-states.

SESSION 2

Disentangling and Reconfiguring Troubled Kin Relations: At the Crossroads Between Orphanage, Family Placement, and Family of Origin

Lipp Nora, University of Lucerne

This talk provides an insight into the decision-making process of social workers, psychologists, and other welfare experts working with so-called “families in difficult life situations” in Russia. In addition, it will discuss the consequences of these decisions from the perspective of the people concerned. Based on case studies collected in a temporary shelter for children and teenagers “in difficult life situations”, this talk will explore how welfare experts approach and describe such families and how different family members tell their situation. The case studies will highlight not only the challenges of researching families that social workers (like social scientists) face but also the importance of family history in children's and parents' explanations. By comparing and contrasting the different interpretations of the same situation by children, parents, and various welfare experts, this talk sheds light on aspects such as alcoholism, neglect, violence, and the possibility of change that play a role at this crossroads as well as important figures like the ubiquitous grandmother.

"Lost Connections" Exploring Troubled Kinship Dynamics in Closed Child Adoption

Jayarathne Surangika, University of Bern

This research delves into the troubled kinship dynamics resulting from closed child adoption practices, focusing on the experiences of Sri Lankan adoptees in Switzerland and first/birth mothers in Sri Lanka. Through this case study, it investigates the impact on adoptees' identity formation and the emotional challenges on first/birth mothers longing for reunion within the specific context of closed intercountry adoption practice.

Utilizing qualitative methods, including semi structured interviews and narrative analysis, this study examines the relational strains, unresolved emotions, and longing for connection characterizing troubled kinship within the framework of closed adoptions. It explores the unique cultural and societal factors influencing adoptees' and first/birth mothers' experiences, as well as the systemic barriers and ethical considerations surrounding closed adoption practices.

Biographically Burdened Fathers and Their Daughters: Integrity-Violating Experiences of Ambivalence in the Context of Compulsory Welfare Measures

Abraham Andrea, Bern University of Applied Sciences

Using the example of men who experienced coercive measures in Switzerland up until the 1980s, such as institutionalization, out-of-home placements and forced labor, the presentation shows the effects on their relationships with their daughters. The coercive measures interrupted familial, emotional, and spatial affiliations with potentially traumatizing consequences. The empirical article explores the question of how the first generation's (fathers') experiences of being placed outside the family affected their relationship with their offspring (daughters). As a sensitizing concept for researching intergenerational dynamics, ambivalence expresses the fact that familial intergenerational relationships are fundamentally characterized by the coexistence of contradictions and require family members to oscillate between closeness and distance, dependence, and independence, etc. The analysis of biographical-narrative interviews with daughters, which were conducted as part of the NRP76 project "From Generation to Generation", shows how this fundamental ambivalence developed into a pronounced intergenerational experience of ambivalence for

the daughters as a result of their father's traumatic childhoods. It was pronounced because it affected the daughters' biographies in a way that was stressful, violated their integrity or threatened them: by daughters feeling compassionately attached to their fathers, by experiencing their violent fathers as unattainable figures of longing, or by choosing a clandestine lifestyle out of fear of their father. The daughters interpret this pronounced intergenerational experience of ambivalence as a direct consequence of the negative relationship experiences that their fathers had in childhood and adolescence, such as rejection or abandonment by the family of origin, removal by the authorities and enduring institutional violence in out-of-home placements.

PANEL 12

WHOSE CRISIS? QUEER AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON 'RHETORICS OF CRISIS'

Room 4.B54

Convenors:

Stefan Binder, University of Zurich
José Meléndez Duarte, University of Bern

Abstract:

As a diagnosis of the global present, the notion of “troubled times” suggests situations of conflict, crisis, or instability marked by decisive turning points and heightened uncertainty as well as a reflexive “rhetoric of crisis”. However, anthropologists have been witnessing since the inception of their discipline how growing inequities result from the extractivism of the territories and resources of indigenous peoples as well as from the imposition of lifestyles, moral values, and social models on colonized bodies. Marginalized communities at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion etc., are often most severely affected by “troubled times;” yet, the lives, practices, and political discourses of such communities remind us that “troubled times” may not be new, that other realities exist, and that different forms of permanent crisis have been resisted for a long time.

This panel critically examines the conceptual, political, and ethical work of ‘rhetorics of crisis’ from the perspective of queer and trans* positionalities: troubled times may appear as the ordinary texture of everyday life rather than only an effect of extraordinary times of emergency. Queer and trans* communities have themselves been cast as “crises” for hegemonic sex-gender systems in academic, medical, and political discourses. At the same time, especially indigenous and postcolonial critics have pointed to the implication of Euro-North American Queer Theory and LGBTQ+ activism in the developmentalist models and extractivist structures at the root of many current crises and their expansion across the planet.

For this panel, we invite contributions that consider how intersections beyond gender/sexuality, e.g., ethnicity, class, race, caste, or age, shape how queer and trans* communities cope with growing experiences of social, ecological, political, or moral crises. This also includes reflections on how anthropological scholarship can further intersectional and decolonial approaches to academic knowledge production, which divest from

hegemonic or universalist perspectives in the study of the everyday lives, modes of quotidian resistance, or aspiration for radical change within queer and trans* communities.

Papers:

SESSION 1

Welfare Schemes and Spectre of Inclusivity for Queers in the Digital Age

Ghosh Banhishikha, University of Konstanz

Human rights and social justice goals have become a primary justification of national and international welfare policy agencies worldwide in the last few years. In numerous countries, new legal and judicial developments enfranchising the rights of queer communities have been put into action. Specifically in the Global South, this period has often been referred to as a judicial revolution as several court rulings in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal have buttressed the imaginary of the postcolonial state as the protector and the guarantor of fundamental rights of queer communities. In India, this had led to direct state interventions in the form of initiating the process of identification, defining, extending human rights, and providing health and welfare resources to queer groups.

Using a mix of qualitative methods, such as participant observation, interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis this paper raises critical questions on the ramifications of the fledgling advances of the post-colonial state towards advancing social justice systems for queers in the digital age. It further examines how working-class queer communities join broader networks of marginalized groups to problematize and negotiate with different notions and forms of the digital. In this process, they engender perspicacious pathways of mediation to counter the unintended consequences effectuated by digital welfare systems. On the corollary, queer individuals function as a significant force for collective action via civic engagements and solidarity building. They contest the notion of themselves as individuals requiring protection and replace it with a counter-narrative to de-subalternize themselves and imagine more desirable and ameliorative futures.

Sexualities and decolonization: Re-think Queer discourses and LGBTIQ+ movements from racialized bodies, indigenous ethnic identities and dissident sexual practices.

Meléndez Duarte José, University of Bern

Times of crisis are presented as a novelty in Western societies and their political and institutional models. But there are those who, with the imposition of a morality, a religion, a language and colonialism, have lived in constant crisis and resistance to exist.

The dissident Indian bodies, the black and racialized skins, stand up to a process of hominization of their ancestral identities. Liberation movements and LGBTIQ+ and Queer discourses are posed linear to a consumer and capitalist system, where other ethnic identities and social realities are left out of the approaches of the occident point of view.

My proposal focuses on the experience, mobilization strategies and discourses of the Queer/CUIR and indigenous grassroots collective "Maricas Bolivia" of La Paz, Bolivia; who have been resisting, from different realities and their bodies and identities in times of crisis since the colony and its evolution. The purpose of my proposal is to discuss (1) the relevance and meaning for indigenous peoples of the decolonization of their sexual identities and (2) the relationship between ethnicity and sexual identities from an intersectional point of view.

The main objective of the paper is to contribute to the discussion on the decoloniality of sexualities and sexual practices from an ethnic perspective.

The crises of the 'casteless queer' and indigenous organising in Nepal

Rana Kumud, Lancaster University

Artistic means of expression allow us to democratize access to research results and to overcome the text-centredness of our discipline (Schneider and Wright 2011; Elliot and Culhane 2017). During the last decade, alternative ways of practicing ethnography as well as artistic forms of restitution and publication have gained increased interest: comics, drawings, photos, films, blogs allow us to give something back during the research process, in the field as well as beyond, to a broader public. Furthermore, the question of giving something back immediately during the research process is raised as soon as notes, photos or clips are taken and drawings are created in the field. Finally, fund-raising agencies tend to increasingly formalize research processes with sophisticated ethic protocols, asking for proof of consent for the use of images and data, with the intention to protect research partners from potential abuse. Those noble intentions may however lead to non-intended consequences (e. g. when it comes to asking vulnerable people like refugees for their names and signatures). Here, an awareness of the co-construction of images in anthropology (Salzbrunn 2020) lead to greater responsibility, based on in-depth field-experiences rather than over-formalized procedures. The ERC Artivism team has experienced alternative research methods and set up innovative ways of disseminating processes and results by creating a blog, producing several films, setting up an exhibition and currently writing a comic book. We invite contributors who work in similar veins and wish to share their artistic feedback and restitution experiences with the SSE audience and beyond.

This paper focuses on the intimate relationship between crisis and the queer subject in Nepal to argue that two periods of global and national turmoil have discursively constructed a 'casteless queer', whereby queerness has been conceptualised as independent of caste and other intersecting issues of marginalisation. I consider indigenous groups as caste groups in this paper to highlight how the former have been legally, socially and culturally enfolded into a Hindu caste hierarchy.

Starting from the movement's inception during the global AIDS pandemic and its shifting use of vernacular and cosmopolitan collective identities, I show how the queer subject was founded on a European, 'universal' conceptualisation of queerness that considers only the gender/sexuality of that subject. I then situate this seemingly universal queer subject within the context of the civil war and indigenous activism in Nepal to show how the 'casteless queer' persists within secular, cosmopolitan articulation of queerness and within the conceptualisation of a pan-South Asian, non-secular category of the Third Gender. I argue that it is only through indigenous, ethnic and caste consciousness that the 'casteless queer' can be subverted, and that Nepal's simultaneous condition of 'non-postcoloniality' (Des Chene, 2007) and coloniality in South Asia offers valuable lessons for such 'queer' subversions.

My paper draws from ethnographic research, activist organising and conversations with Nepali queers and peers since 2015, while being reflexive of the 'partial perspective' (Haraway, 1988) granted by the position of the 'outsider within' (hooks). The paper contributes to indigenous queer and feminist theorising and poses questions on decolonial approaches to academic-activist knowledge production.

SESSION 2

“The Billboard Affair: competing for narrative legitimacy about queer & LGBT* lives in the thick of “troubled times.”

ADOMAKO Kwaku, University of Lausanne

This presentation examines local forms of LGBT* activism in Ghana. This localization emerges in view of globalized debates over protecting, promoting and restricting rights, identities, cultural productions, and solidarities tied to sexual and gender diversity.

In Ghana, since 2019, numerous watershed moments, including the forced closure of an LGBT* office and the arrest of 21 queer human rights advocates provoked a dramatic uptick in visibility, intolerance, and violence towards sexual and gender minorities. LGBT* advocates, activists and ally human rights NGOs attribute this uptick to sexual moral panics masterfully executed by an international network of ‘pro-family’ (anti-LGBT*) advocates. All watershed moments were accompanied by a coordinated media blitz that controlled what could be said and therefore known about sexual and gender minorities. For over 5 years, ‘pro-family’ activists breathlessly circulated knowledge of sexual and gender minorities almost exclusively in the frames of criminality, disease and social chaos.

In light of this, I take up the panel convenors’ call to examine "modes of resistance," and "aspirations of change." Drawing from previously published work on “sexual moral panics” and “heteronationalism” (2023), I use the heavily mediatized controversy surrounding a billboard campaign mobilized by LGBT+ Rights Ghana as a pretext to investigate the following:

The first is how activists resist the 'overwhelming consensus' that 'pro-family' advocates try to produce in Ghana. This consensus attempts to use framing techniques to make passing legislation that criminalizes LGBT persons, identities, advocacy and solidarity an irrefutable proposition. Second is how competing actors try to structure the discursive field to gain narrative legitimacy. Finally, I explore the unintended effects of these competing structuring practices, to shed light on local activism that aligns (and/or might be at odds) with international solidarity efforts.

Que(e)ring the Backlash: Gender Trouble in Development

Dankwa O. Serena, University of Basel

This paper zooms in on the gender development discourse in which, the “backlash” against women’s reproductive rights tends to be more easily than the pressures faced by queer and gender-non-conforming persons. Funded by religious fundamentalists, anti-gender movements are promoting the “traditional family” and fighting what they call “gender ideology.” While both women’s and trans/queer rights are under attack, attempts to oppose these neo-conservative forces are fractured along the lines of queer versus women’s issues.

Based on my own experiences in the world of gender development that is structured around heteronormative realities, the paper examines a concrete attempt to make the realities of queer Senegalese women visible at a global health conference in Switzerland. Making the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) my starting point, it will focus on the challenges of building queer and feminist alliances against anti-genderism not only in West Africa. As I will argue resistance to the backlash is premised on the gender trouble within feminism and development, and the post/colonial “crisis” experienced by the LGBT+ acronym itself.

The epistemic and ethical labor of queer and trans ‘futuraity’

Binder Stefan, University of Zurich

This paper examines the current focus on notions of «emergence» and «futuraity» in scholarship on queer and trans sex/gender formations in South Asia. It critically revisits important postcolonial approaches, which critique processes and devices of ‘temporal distancing’ in queer anthropology and ethnographic scholarship more generally. Drawing on my ongoing ethnographic research with queer and trans communities in Hyderabad, the paper seeks to complicate the role of temporal regimes in the ways those communities engage with changing conceptual frameworks of gender and sexuality. I build on recent critical approaches to temporality and futurity in Trans and Intersex Studies to interrogate how certain queer and trans people are made to perform unacknowledged forms of epistemic and ethical labor by being cast as crises for dominant and supposedly ‘Western’ conceptual frameworks of sex, gender, and sexuality.

CITY TOUR “KOLONIALE VERFLECHTUNGEN LUZERNS”

Organisiert von Zethno (Ethnologischer Verein Zürich) und Luzern Postkolonial

Bestehend aus einem Kollektiv von Sozialanthropolog:innen, bringt Zethno Wissen aus der Sozialanthropologie und verwandten empirischen Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften in einen Dialog mit der breiteren Öffentlichkeit. An der diesjährigen SEG-Konferenz organisiert Zethno einen Stadtrundgang in Kooperation mit dem Verein «Luzern Postkolonial».

In diesem Stadtrundgang erhalten die Teilnehmenden der SEG-Konferenz einen exklusiven ersten Einblick in die durch «Luzern Postkolonial» angestossene aktuelle Aufarbeitung kolonialer Verflechtungsgeschichten der Stadt Luzern. Anhand verschiedener Stationen (z.B. Löwendenkmal, Jesuitenkirche) wird aufgezeigt, wie «die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Postkolonialen einen Beitrag zur Entwicklung einer aufgeklärten Erinnerungskultur und solidarischen Gesellschaft leisten kann».

Der Verein «Luzern Postkolonial» ist im Jahr 2023 aus einem journalistischen und zivilgesellschaftlichen Umfeld hervorgegangen. Da dies die erste Führung des Vereins sein wird, ist der Austausch mit den Konferenzteilnehmenden als Teil des laufenden Aufarbeitungsprozesses explizit erwünscht.

Wann: 8.6. / 13.30-15 Uhr

Wo: Start beim Löwendenkmal (gemeinsame Abreise ab Konferenzort 13:00)

Sprache: Deutsch

Max. 25 Personen

Anmeldung unter info@zethno.ch bis 6.6.2024

Kostenbeteiligung: 20,- CHF/ 15,- CHF (für Studierende/ PhD/ AHV usw.)

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