Programme

Sixth Annual Anthropology Research Day

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

Institut für Ethnologie

Session 1

13:30-14:10 **Annika Baucher** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

Inhabiting flammable lifeworlds in California's Wildland Urban Interface

14:10-14:50 **Franka Marquardt** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

"A Journey for Life": Global Solidarity Between the Zapatistas and European Transition Movements

14:50-15:30 **Hynek Bečka** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

Chronic Healing: Long-term Engagements with Alternative Therapies in Czech Republic

Coffee Break

Session 2

16:00-16:40 **Oscar Dunn** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

Tafel-Gesellschaft?: Precarity and Humanitarianism in a Leipzig Food Bank

16:40-17:20 **Nina Ruth König** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

Incels - Rejected and Depressed Virgins?

17:20-18:00 **Paul Müntnich** (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

How German Neo-Nazis deal with COVID-19: An Analysis of Fascist Responses to the Pandemic

18:00-20:00 Get Together

Please join us for a discussion of the research presentations by students of the Master in Anthropology.

Time: 17 December 2021, 1:30 – 6 pm

Place: Schillerstraße 6, Room S 102

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17.12.2021

Sixth Annual Anthropology Research Day

Inhabiting flammable lifeworlds in California's Wildland Urban Interface

Annika Baucher (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

In the state of California and much of the Western United States, conflicts arise when wildfires cross property lines, making fire hazard reduction work difficult to accomplish. While rashes of fire are largely attributed to climate change (decades of devastating drought and rare lightning storms), wildfires are exacerbated by forces of increasing human development in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Wildland Urban Interface zones—the lines where human development meets with unoccupied and undeveloped vegetation posit two main risks of fires: (1) they constitute a likelihood of human ignitions and, (2) wildfires occurring in Wildland Urban Interface zones are extremely difficult to fight, posing a mass threat to lives and property, and are nearly impossible to let naturally burn (Radeloff et al., 2018). This ongoing ethnographic study surfaces how landowners of the Wildland Urban Interface grapple with the tenuous categories of land and property in the context of wildfire mitigation. As wildfires blaze across private property lines into unincorporated Californian wildland, residents must collectively confront arbitrary borders of legal ownership in environmental space—through fires that impede these boundaries from one to the other. Following preliminary ethnographic research this Autumn, in two remote California Wildland Urban Interface zones with rural residents, fire and forest experts, I present some preliminary findings of the experiences of locals working along with wildfire hazards during the months of the fire season in real-time.

"A Journey for Life": Global Solidarity Between the Zapatistas and European Transition Movements

Franca Marquardt (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

The thesis explores how through the Zapatistas' visit to Europe and their meetings with local activists, actors engage and communicate in emancipatory and political socio-ecological transformations. In this context, it discusses the significance of a global solidarity between social movements world-wide through a horizontal, de-colonial space of interaction. This is based on the assumption that solidarity between social actors and communities is needed in order to create a global agenda for change that is able to respond to the challenges of our times such as climate change and social injustice. A formulation of a decolonial transition includes re-situating approaches such as degrowth relative to global south, Indigenous and other resistance movements. The visit of the Zapatistas to Europe will be crucial to enable radical solidarity and mutual understanding, while triggering a more inclusive discussion on possible decolonial practices and futures. Taken together, this project will explore how the encounter between plural and localised perspectives on the effects of colonial capitalism and alternative visions of the world helps us proceed in this project of decoloniality and a just transition.

Chronic Healing: Long-term Engagements with Alternative Therapies in Czech Republic

Hynek Bečka (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

This presentation introduces notion of chronic healing. It describes people, who engage with alternative therapies frequently and intensively even though they are seemingly completely healthy and do not require any cures or healing. Similarly to patients who live with chronic disease, chronic health-seekers base their lives around regimes of health, which became integral part of their identities. They always try reach better, healthier, and happier lives, through holotropic breathwork, rituals with Amazonian frogs, ayahuasca, neo-shamanic drumming, or by taking sustenance only from the pure energy, prana. Maintenance and improvement of health is central for their lives. I follow stories of four research interlocutors from Czech Republic, who all engage with alternative therapeutical practices long-term, and highlight several important aspects of chronic healing which emerge from their experiences. Firstly, I focus on the role and valorization of suffering in narratives of personal growth and improvement, and on the way moments of crisis (both personal and collective) are re-interpreted as opportunities for personal growth and improvement. I follow by describing how is condition of chronic healing produced, and how people know that they are on the right path towards wellbeing and health. They rely on their own intuition, but also on help of like-minded others, and on more-than-human authority of plant intelligences such as iboga or ayahuasca. Finally, I turn to the way such notions and experiences may influence understanding of the covid-19 pandemic and enable suspicions and doubts towards the normative interpretation of the pandemic (often called "covid-denying,") which many health-seekers share and subscribe to.

Tafel-Gesellschaft?: Precarity and Humanitarianism in a Leipzig Food Bank

Oscar Dunn (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

This project will attempt to bridge anthropological approaches to precarity and humanitarianism, and insert these into a European ethnographic context. The project will take the form of an ethnographic study of a Leipzig branch of the Tafel, Germany's umbrella organization of food banks. The Tafel has grown rapidly in size and scope since its founding in the 1990s, in response to the fallout of welfare reform and an increasing marginalization of impoverished populations, leading some to dub contemporary Germany a 'Tafel-gesellschaft'- a food bank society. Such assessments, while offering a damning critique of the rise of food charity, offer little to help theorize this conjuncture. The ethnography will focus on the perspectives of the Tafel volunteers towards their work for the organization and the role of food charity within contemporary Germany. Ethnographic methods will be combined with historical analysis of the role of food charity within the German welfare state, the recent growth of humanitarianism in contexts in the Global North, and the forms of precarity shaping these contexts. The project will help to illuminate the practices of charitable and voluntary distribution shaping contemporary welfare provision in Germany, and will contribute to growing bodies of scholarship on issues of distribution in post-industrial societies, and the ethnography of organizations. The project will also contribute to anthropological literature on the overlapping conditions of different forms of precarity, and will draw attention to their complex entanglement with humanitarianism in hitherto under-explored European contexts.

Incels - Rejected and Depressed Virgins?

Nina Ruth König (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

This digital ethnography focuses on the relationality of gender and race by exploring the Blackpill theory and practices of social stratification. Therefore, the aim of this project is to analyze the ideological configuration of the Blackpill theory as a re-worlding practice from below that guides the reinterpretation and recalibration of gender, racial, and social hierarchies, in which Incels embrace the lowest positions to feel empowered. Incel is the abbreviation for involuntary celibate, and refers to the members of online platforms, which center around the feelings of loneliness, frustration, resentment, and misogyny due to the inability to form relationships. The Blackpill theory is a prescriptive ideology, according to which Incels are genetically inferior. Drawing from biological / genetic determinism and behavioural psychology, the Blackpill theory essentializes genetic factors, such as height, facial features, and race, as determining factors to form a relationship. I will report from my ongoing ethnographic research and how I adjusted my approach to negotiate access to the field. Furthermore, we will explore how informants experience being involuntary celibate and recurring themes, such as mental health, the fear of being rejected, and how informants situate themselves in the complex web of the Red- and Blackpill theories. Looking at the intersections of masculinity and race will provide a better understanding of the incelosphere and how Incels remap power relations from below than gender-only explanations. The research will contribute to academic debates about the construction of masculinities, intersectionality as an analytical tool, and 'worlding' approaches.

How German Neo-Nazis deal with COVID-19: An Analysis of Fascist Responses to the Pandemic

Paul Müntnich (MA Anthropology, Leipzig)

This paper is a comparative empirical analysis of the political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by various radical right-wing and neo-Nazi groups and should enable a better understanding of the political actions of these groups in Germany. Specifically, their political actions and agitations will be examined with reference to the Covid-19 pandemic on the basis of their presence in digital media, and more general conclusions will be drawn about the constitution of the fascist movement in Germany and its strategies. The reference to a crisis situation such as the current pandemic is particularly suitable for this purpose, since in such a historical context of social polarization, political positions and strategies emerge particularly clearly. The research will be placed in the context of the subdiscipline of anthropology of fascism that has emerged in the last years. Recently, many debates have arisen and been conducted within the discipline, which deal with the means and goals of a social anthropological study of fascism. Through my research I intend to make a practical and theoretical contribution to these debates. The main content of the research will be a qualitative empirical analysis based on methods of digital ethnography as well as an analysis of the diverse data material available online. Thus, the aim of the work is, on the one hand, to contribute to the scientific reappraisal of the pandemic and the resulting social conflicts and divisions, and, on the other hand, to research the current constitution of the fascist movement and its political strategies.