

Authoritarian Publics

Plenary session II

Authoritarian Publics. Anthropological Perspectives on the New Right in Germany

Chair: Dr. Simone Pfeifer (Universität zu Köln)

In recent years, right-wing politics and discourses have gained substantial traction in Germany, mirroring broader trends across Europe and globally. While anthropological research has focused on far-right movements and the production of an “uncomfortable other,” studies on more every day, centre-right forms of political mobilization and sense-making remain underdeveloped. The Plenary Authoritarian Publics: Anthropological Perspectives on the New Right in Germany brings together leading scholars in the field to explore how authoritarian and right-wing ideologies permeate public and private spheres, reshaping the dynamics of political inclusion and exclusion.

The panel will examine how the New Right in Germany has expanded its reach and normalized authoritarian ideals within mainstream spaces, fostering what can be termed “authoritarian publics.” Participants will discuss the nuanced and often insidious processes of political Un/Commoning – or the creation and disruption of shared spaces and values—as well as the violent effects of such discourses on social cohesion, public trust, and marginalized communities. By interrogating how ordinary, centre-right forms of belonging and mobilization contribute to these shifts, the panel aims to uncover the mechanisms through which authoritarianism becomes embedded in everyday life.

Grounded in ethnographic case studies focusing on different geographic and media locations within German-speaking contexts, this panel seeks to provide a nuanced

understanding of authoritarianism's spread and its complex intersections with race, gender, class, and historical memory. By examining how the New Right navigates and shapes German-speaking publics, this discussion will contribute to broader anthropological debates on nationalism, political identity, and the evolving nature of "common" spaces within democratic societies.

Plenary Speakers:

Nitzan Shoshan is Professor at the Colegio de México in Mexico City. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and is the author of "The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany", published with Princeton University Press. This study was awarded the "William A. Douglass Prize in Europeanist Anthropology, Society for the Anthropology of Europe of the American Anthropological Association" in 2017, as well as Honorable Mentions for the 2017 Gregory Bateson Prize and APLA Book Price. His book was one of the first studies to look closely at milieus of radical Right youth cultures in Berlin. Since, he has increasingly shifted his attention from the 'far right' to right-wing politics as part of the political mainstream (Shoshan 2020) and to anti-muslim Racism in Germany (Kalmar and Shoshan 2024).

Mario Krämer is Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne and a principal investigator of the DFG-funded Research Unit "Transborder Mobility and Institutional Dynamics" (FOR 5183). His main fields of research are political and environmental anthropology and he has conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Southern Africa and Europe. The power and legitimacy of chieftaincy and dynamics of political violence are the foci of his research in Southern Africa. One of his current research projects deals with the nexus of environmentalism, traditionalism and rural-urban relations in contemporary Germany and he examines the relationship between nature conservation and opposition to wind power in particular (see his recent publication in the Special Issue 'Justice in the Anthropocene' in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* / *Journal of Social*

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Konstanze N'Guessan is a Senior Researcher at the Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies in Mainz. Her research interests encompass a diverse range of topics, including nationalism, state ritual, historiography, memory studies, parenting and child development theory, performativity and play, transgressive humor, and the far right. Until 2024, she was part of the interdisciplinary BMBF research project MISRIK (Memes, Ideas, Strategies of Far-Right Digital Communication), which focused on memes, trolling, and other forms of „ludic fascism“ in and through participatory social media. Research insights from this project were disseminated into primary prevention tools, experimenting with different modes of knowledge transfer, such as the game “Mem-ori,” which playfully explores how memes promote far-right narratives and conspiracy theories. Beyond her research on ludic fascism, Konstanze has incorporated games and playfulness into anthropological teaching and public anthropology.