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Rethinking New Media and Mediterranean Publics

Simon Holdermann, Christoph Lange, Michaela Schäuble, Martin Zillinger

The section "Rethinking New Media and Mediterranean Publics" is the third and final part of the special issue *Rethinking the Mediterranean: Extending the Anthropological Laboratory across Nested Mediterranean Zones*, with the previous two parts having been published in the *ZfE / JSCA*, Vol. 145 – 2020, 2. Its contributions take up and further elaborate on recent anthropological work on new media and (counter-)publics that has been developed in/on the Mediterranean and the MENA region as much as elsewhere (see for example Eickelman and Salvatore 2004; El-Ariss 2018; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003; Ginsburg 2012; Hirschkind 2006; Hirschkind, de Abreu, and Caduff 2017; Jurkiewicz 2018; Meyer and Moors 2006; Morris 2012; Spadola 2013) and resituate these debates in specific Mediterranean settings. The starting point is the radical change in global media ecologies and this section acknowledges the centrality of the everyday media use and media production of our interlocutors and ourselves as anthropologists.

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Please 'Like' Me: Reconfiguring Reputation and Shame in Southeast Turkey

Elisabetta Costa
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Abstract: This article draws on long-term ethnographic research on the uses of social media and their consequences for people's everyday lives to shed light on how young men's long-standing concerns over reputation and shame have been rearticulated through the use of social media. In Mardin, a medium-sized city in southeast Turkey, reputation and shame are key concerns in social media usage and affect different domains of people's everyday lives, such as politics, love and friendships. In this article, reputation is conceived as the value an individual has in other's people eyes, on social media being granted by displaying the desired qualities and by receiving expressions of social approbation in a context of constant surveillance. This has been extensively described in terms of the logic of honour across different cultures and at different times. Shame is viewed as an emotional experience generated by social practices that openly transgress social norms. Viewing reputation and shame as bound to mediated practices opens up new opportunities to investigate the transformation of long-standing concerns that continue to have great significance in people's lives in southeast Turkey. It sheds light on processes of continuity and transformation that are entangled with the diffusion of digital communication technologies.
[honour; reputation; shame; social media; Turkey]

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Digital Hospitality: Trail Running and Technology in the Moroccan High Atlas

Simon Holdermann
Universität zu Köln

Abstract: In the mountainous region of the Central High Atlas in Morocco, tourism has emerged as a promising economic prospect among a number of profound changes recently. However, the implications of digital media technology *in situ* and as part of this wider transformation have rather been neglected by scholarship. Hence, in this paper I propose the notion of *digital hospitality* to map out and articulate the interplay of digital media, tourism and 'Mediterranean themes' like hospitality, topography and connectivity, and to make it tangible how processes of sociotechnical restructuring are challenging the interactions and possible relationships between guests and hosts in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Drawing on extended ethnographic fieldwork in the High Atlas, I analyse the ultramarathon sports event 'Zaouiat Ahansal Ultra Trail' as a mediated, circulated and digitised phenomenon. It is the readjusted focus on (digital) media technology, which foregrounds social practices and cooperation, that allows this trail-running event to be understood as an achievement of the organizers' scaling work, which in turn feeds into and interacts with the scalar characteristics of hospitality itself.
[Morocco; High Atlas; hospitality; digital media; tourism; ultramarathon]

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Performing and Re-enacting Southern Italian Lament: Ritual Mourning and the Migration of Images in the Mediterranean

Michaela Schäuble
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Abstract: Funerary lament and ritual weeping are multi-sensorial public expressions of grief that are often referred to as examples of cultural continuity in and across the Mediterranean. In the 1950s, anthropologist Ernesto de Martino and his team assembled a unique set of photos and sound and film recordings on lament in Southern Italy in an attempt to verify that contemporary forms of mourning did not just resemble ancient funerary laments but were actual relics thereof. Departing from these audio-visual materials, this essay traces recurring patterns and sequences of images and sounds related to lament in Southern Italy, arguing that the (female) body of the performers becomes the main medium of iconographic and choreographic reproduction by way of re-enacting and imitating lament in staged settings. Rather than studying the phenomenon of lament in itself (or its decline) or commenting on the continuity thesis, I focus on the mediatised transmission of corporeal expressions of lamenters by drawing on Aby Warburg's concept of the "migration of images" (*Bilderwanderung*). I include artistic approaches and modes such as re-enactment, performance, and montage in my ethnographic study of ritual mourning and show that there is a repertory of ecstatic gestures transferred through command performances that is not concerned with "authentic" documentation. Instead, these gestures are there to be performed, individually reappropriated, and revived in situations of crisis to the present day.
[funeral lamentation in the Mediterranean; ritual and grief techniques; visual ethnographic documentation; sound recordings; De Martino studies; re-enactment; visual culture; Bilderwanderung]

Mediterranean Mediations

Sarah Green
University of Helsinki

From the perspective of the global north, the Mediterranean is definitely back on the agenda in a range of disciplines, and not only in anthropology (Ben-Yehoyada 2017:10). The Mediterranean has also been in the news rather a lot, perhaps not coincidentally: the ongoing emergency concerning refugees and other kinds of spontaneous migration along with related geopolitical tensions have been the main topics, though there have also been climate-related, environmental and fiscal issues that regularly draw attention to the region. The place has the feel of there being a *there* there again, after a period during which the Mediterranean languished in a corner of anthropology that debated what kinds of ethnocentricities were being imposed on the place by researchers who were accused of not been quite reflexive enough (e.g. Herzfeld 1984, Pina-Cabral 1989, Knudsen 1992, Mitchell 2002).

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Dark Ethnography? Encountering the 'Uncomfortable' Other in Anthropological Research: Introduction to this Special Section

Lene Faust
University of Bern

Simone Pfeifer
University of Cologne

Abstract: Our aim with this issue is to provide a starting point for an intensive conversation about the flexibility and systematization of the methodology of research and its specific challenges in highly contested fields like far-right and militant Islamist movements. The contributions to this special section discuss issues related to the moral, emotional and ethical challenges, that anthropologists have faced in conducting research in such highly contested fields. They offer more textured views of dilemmas and challenges in highly contested fields through careful reflection on their ethnographic encounters. They all deem it necessary to position their work within recent debates, in webs of the production of knowledge, embedded in the power relations and complexities in their respective fields and within the discipline, albeit in very different ways.
[dark ethnography, contested fields, far-right movements, militant Islamist movements, ethical dilemmas, methodological challenges]

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'Who Are They?' – The Ethics and Politics of Complicity in Ethnographic Research with Dutch Muslim Militant Activists

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Abstract: In this contribution, I reflect on a number of the ethical, methodological and political issues which arose during a research project on Muslim militant activists in the Netherlands, many of whom had migrated to Syria between 2012 and 2014 to join IS(IS) and other factions. This research, which formed part of a larger project including German and Belgian networks, illustrates how the ethnographer, rather than being merely an observer of specific developments and forms of activism, becomes embedded in, and interpellated from, different and often competing sides. By focusing on my presence during what my interlocutors thought of as a friendly game of football between brothers, but which the police dubbed a political manifestation, and the reactions this presence engendered in my interlocutors and various state institutions, I show how the researcher becomes complicit in the views held by different groups which are informed and shaped by the dynamics of the securitisation of Islam and racialisation of danger in the Netherlands.
[activism, Jihadi, complicity, securitisation, racialisation, the Netherlands]

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Under a Different Name: Secrecy, Complicity, Ethnography

Nitzan Shoshan

Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México, Mexico

Abstract: How have recent political developments impacted the practice and ethics of ethnographic research, especially given the growing anthropological interest in studying the far right? Drawing on my own experience as a researcher under a false name, in this article I reconsider the ethical imperatives of full disclosure and informed consent in the context of ethnographic fieldwork. I argue that such ethical standards presume an untenable notion of the speaking subject by granting the ethnographer a fixity and objectivity that, furthermore, we ordinarily deny our interlocutors. Instead, I ask, how do we draw our interlocutors into webs of complicity as we withhold or obfuscate information in our transactions with them? How, in turn, do they call upon us to reciprocate by upholding their own dissimulations? In particular, I look at four problems of identity and transparency in ethnographic fieldwork, which I call coherence, performativity, secrecy, and complicity. While conducting ethnographic research under a pseudonym brings into exceptionally sharp relief the intensive metapragmatic labor entailed in positioning oneself in the field, I argue that the questions it raises are of a more general nature for ethnographic research. Indeed, such questions saturate social life at large and hence, necessarily, ethnographic approaches to its study.
[dark ethnography, complicity, secrecy/deception in research, research ethics, informed consent, far right research]

Darkness Unbound. Insights from Ethnographic Research with Nationalist Groups in Contemporary Turkey

Erol Saglam
Istanbul Medeniyet University
Berlin Graduate School of Muslim Cultures and Societies, FU Berlin

Abstract: Drawing on anthropological research conducted with nationalist communities in northeast Turkey, this article reflects on methodological, analytical, and ethical questions arising out of ethnographic engagements with communities that support anti-democratic and authoritarian policies, circulate xenophobic or racist discourses and conspiracy theories, and participate in vigilante violence against minorities and political dissenters. Focusing on how I managed to gain access and establish rapport with my interlocutors despite our different ethico-political ideals and goals, the article aims to underline how the frank acknowledgement of this irreconcilability allows us to get a better grasp of the violent nationalisms we live by and how they can generate new methodological, theoretical and ethical pathways for future research.
[nationalism, radical right, violence, ethnography, subjectivity, ethics]

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Breaking Silence: Ambivalent Subjects and the Ethics of Suffering in Pakistan

Salman Hussain
York University, Toronto

Abstract: Drawing on research with human rights activists and families of 'missing persons' – suspected Islamic militants, nationalist separatists and their sympathizers, extrajudicially abducted and detained by state military and intelligence services — in Pakistan, this paper reflects on ethnographic engagement with 'ambivalent subjects' — persons who do not neatly fit the categories of victim or perpetrator. While the ethnography of ambivalent subjects humanizes the lives of those silent in the state and media's discourses on 'terrorism', it also gives insights into non-normative ethics of grief and sacrifice that help people make sense of violence stemming from larger political economic structures of power. The ethnography of ambivalent subjects moreover adds to dark theory in anthropology by reflecting to us our assumptions regarding suffering as a common, apolitical ground for all humanity and our own politics of solidarity built upon others' suffering. I suggest that ethnography's task is not simply to unmask this unevenness — in the categorization and definition of suffering subject — but also to reflect on the moral and political ambiguities of those subjects who defy easy identification of a victim, perpetrator and/or an agent of violence.
[terror, suffering, ethnography, Pakistan, missing persons, enforced disappearances]

Moral Challenges in Anthropological Research among Italian Neo-Fascists: The Significance of the Body

Lene Faust
University of Bern

Abstract: This paper examines moral challenges that arise when conducting anthropological research with Italian neo-fascists, and more particularly when observing a neo-fascist commemoration ceremony. Drawing on the ongoing debates about the importance of dealing with affect and emotions within anthropology, it emphasises the importance of considering moral and emotional challenges as an important source of data within research in such politically highly contested fields. A particular focus lies on related moral implications and unique insights through (bodily) co-presence for the production of anthropological knowledge. Against this background, the paper discusses the 'double' meaning of corporeality: on the one hand, the crucial role of corporeality within the neo-fascist subculture, especially with regard to neo-fascist rituals; on the other, the bodily dimension as an epistemological tool not only with regard to the experience of this corporeality, but also to emotions in the context of a (morally) challenging research situation. The paper makes a case against limiting the methodological repertoire of anthropological fieldwork in highly contested research fields.
[Italian neo-fascism, methodology, moral challenges, affect, co-presence, corporeality]

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Afterword
Putting Down the Conjurer's Wand:
Toward an Anthropology of the Full Spectrum

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In this afterword, I want to take up the editors' provocation, which, as they explain in the introduction to this special issue, is crystallized by the title of the collection itself: "dark ethnography?" The question mark is meant to signal a series of doubts and questions: about the way the anthropological literature has traditionally analyzed research on the "disagreeable" other (Shoshan 2015); about the ways in which what the editors describe as "highly contested research fields" create (or, perhaps not) specific and unique methodological and ethical challenges for anthropologists; and, more generally, about the ways in which the entire category of "dark ethnography / anthropology" depends upon a number of orientalizing assumptions that tend to reduce or distort the actual complexities of social, political, and ethical life, even those lived by interlocuters whose worldviews are repugnant to the anthropologist's own.

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The Spectrum of Mistrust

Florian Mühlfried
Ilia State University (Georgia)

Abstract: This article attempts to open up pathways for ethnographic investigations of social practices based on mistrust. Such practices have only recently come to be taken seriously in the wake of the emergence of a 'dark anthropology' that pays particular attention to the social life of the alleged opposites of virtues such as knowledge, connectivity, or trust. Analytically, I distinguish between open and hidden as well as centripetal and centrifugal forms of mistrust. My examples mostly come from the Caucasus, a region said to be saturated by mistrust. In addition to current performances of mistrust, I highlight the history of such performances and their genealogies. This also means countering the prevailing approaches to (mis)trust, which mostly foreground mental dispositions (psychology) or rational strategies (economy, political science) and often neglect historical embeddedness.
[trust, mistrust, dark anthropology, transition, post-socialism, Caucasus]

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Revisiting Marilyn Strathern's *Relations*: A Relational Reading

Claudia Liebelt, Erdmute Alber, Tabea Häberlein, Jeannett Martin, Sabrina Maurus, Tatjana Thelen and Tyler Zoanni

Notions like 'relations' and 'relationality' have become key terms and common parlance in anthropology, closely linked to Marilyn Strathern's project of making 'a topic from one of anthropology's principal means and objects of study' (Strathern 2018). In this contribution, we reflect on our joint discussion of the British social anthropologist's book *Relations: An Anthropological Account* (Strathern 2020). The book consists of a collection of essays in which she simultaneously reflects on and contributes to the centrality of the term within anthropological debates. It offers a historical account of 'relations' as an often-valorized epistemological device in the natural and social sciences, notably in Anglophone anthropology. Arguing that 'comparison,' which presumes similarities and differences, has become a kind of central relation in modern thinking, she examines how the notion is applied to particular sets of persons by comparing 'friends' and 'kin,' for example. She also shows how both the 'art of comparison' (Strathern 2020: 19) and a certain 'compulsion of relations', have shaped anthropology in relation to Anglophone thinking more generally. In the final part of the book, Strathern returns to the early modern period to describe the occlusion of alternative ways of European enlightenment thinking as a 'drama', with decisive effects for modern knowledge-making, kin-making and, of course, anthropology.

Nachruf für Peter Fuchs

Georg Klute

Am 17. November 2020 ist Peter Fuchs, fast 92-jährig, in seiner Wahlheimat Göttingen verstorben. Die Nachricht von seinem Tod erreichte mich in der südlichen Sahara, dem Gebiet also, dem Peter Fuchs ein langes Leben als Reisender, Sammler, Filmethnologe, Forscher und Lehrender an der Universität Göttingen gewidmet hat.

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Nachruf für Georg Friedrich Pfeffer

Gabriele Alex, mit Kurzbeiträgen von Frank Heidemann, Dieter Haller, Shahnaz Nadjmabadi und Christian Strümpell.

Noch bis kurz vor seinem Tode wissenschaftlich aktiv, starb am 20.Mai 2020 Georg Pfeffer im Alter von 77 Jahren nach langer und schwerer Krankheit in seiner Geburtsstadt Berlin.

Sein Interesse an ethnologischen und ethnographischen Themenfeldern bildete sich schon in der Kindheit und Jugend heraus. Die Turbulenzen und am eigenen Leib erfahrenen Nöte der deutschen Nachkriegszeit hinterließen tiefe Spuren und sensibilisierten ihn für unterschiedliche Lebenswelten. Als gerade Sechzehnjähriger begleitete seine Familie den Vater nach Pakistan und so lebte Georg Pfeffer für mehrere Jahre in Lahore. Das Leben im Pakistan der späten 1950er frühen 1960er Jahre beeindruckte ihn zutiefst und legte den Grundstein für seine Liebe zu Südasien. Gleichzeitig erlebte er intensiv die Nachwehen der indisch-pakistanischen Partition, auch diese Erlebnisse hinterließen Spuren – er wusste wie fragil die alltägliche Sicherheit, insbesondere Rechtssicherheit ist.

Nachruf für Meinhard Schuster (1930-2021)

Markus Schindlbeck

Meinhard Schuster wurde am 17. Mai 1930 in Offenbach als Sohn des Gymnasiallehrers für Lateinisch, Griechisch und Deutsch Ludwig Schuster und der Paula Bach geboren, besuchte dort die Volksschule bis 1939 und anschließend eine Oberschule (Horst-Wessel-Gymnasium), um später am Rudolph-Koch-Realgymnasium im Juni 1948 die Reifeprüfung abzulegen. Im Herbst 1948 begann er sein Studium in Frankfurt a.M. in den Fächern Völkerkunde, Kunstgeschichte und Klassische Archäologie, später Vorgeschichte. Seine Lehrer in der Ethnologie waren vor allem Adolf Ellegard Jensen, Adolf Friedrich und Helmut Petri. In Bonn besuchte er einen Quechua-Sprachkurs bei Hermann Trimborn. In seinen Nebenfächern waren seine wichtigen Lehrer vor allem Harald Keller in der Kunstgeschichte (1903–89), Guido Kaschnitz von Weinberg (1890-1958) und Ernst Homann-Wedeking (1908–2002) in der Klassischen Archäologie und Johannes A. H. Potratz (1906–?) in der Vor-und Frühgeschichte Asiens. Weitere wichtige Anregungen erhielt er bei dem Philosophen Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002).