

Workshop 36

Facing War – and After

Convenors:

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This proposed panel hopes to explicitly deal with the link between two bodies of relatively differentiated scholarly activities within anthropology. The first has taken as its focus war and the perpetuation of violence. Within this perspective scholars have tended to ask questions about the sources of wars, the ways in which they are waged, and the place of violent conflict in human societies. The second has centred on the social, cultural, and psychological effects of armed struggles. Here the major effort has been devoted to investigating the individual and collective consequences of war whether in terms of disruption and crisis or transformation and adjustment. Our contention is that there has usually been a “division of scholarly labour” between anthropologists that have examined the various causes, dynamics and reasonings related to war and those researchers who have been investigating the wider and longer-range implications of such struggles. In this workshop we propose to try and examine in a systematic manner the kinds of connections and relations that exist between the two fields. The areas covered by war are intentionally left open but address in a broad sense human “faceto-face” experiences of confrontation, conflict, compassion, and empathy. The panel thus invites discussion on perpetrators and victims, settlement and reconciliation, gendered and racialised violence, memories and memorialisation, human rights and globalisation, or the methodological problems attendant upon such research.

‘Of Arms, and the Man’ – Changing Concepts of Military Intervention and the Soldier in the New World Order

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The demise of the Iron Curtain created an opportunity in the direction of ending a number of long-term conflicts which had been fuelled by the Cold War. Out of a sudden, in the beginning of the 1990s, a more peaceful world seemed feasible. Pretty soon, however, a new wave of armed conflicts ruined such optimistic perspectives. The New World Order which has taken shape since has meant not less war but new kinds of military intervention; The events of the 11th September 2001 triggered off further dynamics in this respect. The so-called war against terror, the rationale of humanitarian or likewise of preemptive interventions render the ways obsolete in which enemies in war were defined

conventionally. In effect, the language and the image of warfare have changed fundamentally, and the technological revolution in military affairs has amplified the very process of redefining the conditions under which use of military power is accepted as being legitimate. One striking observation is the fact that democratic states are involved increasingly in waging the new wars. It contradicts the theory of the “democratic peace” which argues that calculations of interest and value orientations of the citizens reduce the readiness of democratic states to use military force in conflict resolution. Does the new democratic engagement in warfare indicate shifts in the respective value systems? Have estimations of the wars’ costs changed? How do democratic societies relate to their armed forces at present, and what does their apparent redefinition of the common goals imply for soldiers? – The paper aims to address these questions with particular consideration of what ethnographic research is able to contribute.

Techniques of War and Their Afterlife in Kosovo

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This paper explores ethnographically particular war techniques and their specific long-term effects on both local social patterns and the political culture in post-war Kosovo. It will argue that the specificity of violence experienced (such as rape; gendered, religious or ethnically selective atrocities and lootings) and performed (police killings, suicidal provocations) has not only destroyed patterns of social cohesion, divided families and led to the expulsion of, initially, Albanians during the war and, subsequently, of Albanians of ambiguous identities and of members of other ethnic communities after the war, as well as to the international intervention. It has also, both beyond consolidating the ethnic boundaries and in conjunction with intraethnic processes of democratization, consolidated a nationalist, mono-ethnic culture in the new post-war arenas of power that has challenged both local and international democratization initiatives in Kosovo. In following this plot, the radical interest groups behind these processes will be identified; their relation to victims, perpetrators and, not least, to the international presences discussed, and lastly, the scope of contending voices and alternative Kosovar trajectories explored. Research material underpinning the argument derives from fieldwork in post-war Kosovo directed by a special interest in memory, commemoration and the construction of public war memorials; from various consultancy activities, for instance as an anthropological expert witness to numerous court cases of long-term war refugees to the UK; and from research conducted for the on-going trials on alleged Kosovar war criminals in Den Hague.

“Forget the Past and Look Toward the Future”: Rural Vietnamese Understandings of Post-War Vietnam—US Relations

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This paper draws on two periods of anthropological fieldwork (1994-1995, 2000-2001) conducted in a rural commune in northern Vietnam and examines how, whether, and the extent to which people can forgive and/ or forget a past of war when the social and individual body are pervaded by the painful consequences of a history of horror. From 1965 to 1975, Vietnam and the USA were involved in a bloody war that caused tremendous 'pain', 'suffering', 'sorrow', and 'sacrifices' for the Vietnamese population and hence for local rural inhabitants. Since the late 1980s, Vietnam and the USA increasingly have attempted to balance their relationship and/ or reach reconciliation thereby acknowledging a shared future in spite of previous enmity. Improving nation state relations often involve that people are requested to forgive, and may be even forget, the past. In accordance with official Vietnamese policy, local inhabitants thus frequently referred to the necessity of "forgetting the past and look toward the future" in order to 'close the past', 'cooperate', and 'forgive' the wrongdoings. While a balanced relationship and/ or reconciliation are related to the nation state, forgiving and forgetting refer to a personal process that does not remove the event or fact of injustice nor the pain. Forgiveness and forgetting then are tied to that which appears as most unforgivable (Arendt 1996; Derrida 2002; Rigby 2001). This paper asks how inhabitants in rural Vietnam come to terms with a past of war, pain, violence, and loss when encouraged to forget?

From Chiefs to Silenced People; A Family History Through the Period of Civil War in Chad, Central Africa

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Family histories internalize dynamics and changes of the sociopolitical environment in which the members of these families live. Detailed reconstruction of these histories or pathways reveals a linkage between personal experiences and the specific history of the region concerned. The families own reconstruction of their history also reflects the interpretation of these events and as such play a role in their ideas about the future. In these family histories various locations, perceptions of the environment are united. The story of Fottor, the son of the former chief (at independence 1960ies) of a village in Central Chad, and his family as they lived through the period of civil war (1965-1990) and after shows how the war affected the course of life of the family members, changes in power relations in the village, processes of impoverishment, and how the rural and urban areas got entangled, etc. The actual life of Fottor in the capital city and his sister and cousins in the village in Central Chad are a reflection of long-term effects of war and a reflection of the interaction between personal lives and war history.

Memories and Memory Troubles: About the War of Algeria

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This presentation concerns the Independence war of Algeria and how it affects the Algerian and French communities—especially the ‘pieds-noirs’ and harkis. Discourses on this conflict, often described by actors as a response to violence from the others, do not only attest to social relations disruption emerging from the war. They also show how the conflict destroyed the symbolic resources of violence metaphorisation, breaking the social link and identical references. This can be observed through suspicion, partition of populations living together, in which the look from the other can’t be understood anymore by our own look that became paranoid. In the presentation, I will focus on memories of this conflict, on its consequences on the contemporary life of these groups. I will also focus on the lack of traces of this event and the destruction of rituals resources that turned all a generation to a past that doesn’t seem to be an identical reference anymore.

Escapism, Endurance and Displacement: an Analysis of Coping with Political Violence at Home

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In this paper, I wish to challenge traditional ideas about displacement and the making of home. In particular, I challenge the confinement of the concept to the analysis of people who are physically divorced from their “homestead”.

My ethnographic material is from Israel, and concerns daily coping with the fear of terror attacks in Tel Aviv. I focus on people’s spatial practices and establishment of daily routines. On the face of it, these people are not displaced, in the traditional sense of the word. Not only do they continue to actually live in their city, but also, they seem to defy the danger of getting injured in terror attacks, and continue to move around in potentially dangerous places.

However, their actions and movements are frequently interpreted within national discourses, as either acts of *escapism* or acts of *endurance*.

As the analysis in this paper suggests, a juxtaposition of the concepts of “displacement” with the concepts of “escapism” and “endurance”, may offer a different viewpoint on the relation between political violence and the making of home.