

WS 44
'Common sense' and the end of negotiations?
Exploring contemporary Europe through and beyond Ideology
RG Europa

01.10.2019, Teil 1: 16:00-17:30 Uhr / Teil 2: 18:00-19:30 Uhr, Raum A704

Organisiert von / organized by:

Jelena Tošić (University of St.Gallen/Universität Wien)

This workshop takes up Gramsci's notion of "common sense" as the entry point to explore differences and intersections of ideologies in contemporary Europe. Of particular interest for the workshop is the way different ideologies (which in other ways seem conflicted, such as e.g. radical right and social democracy) can imply similar views on certain issues by representing those as "common sense" beyond the need for negotiations. Claims such as e.g. the imminent threat posed by "political Islam", (forced) migrants "preying" on social/ health benefits or certain criteria for being "deserving" of aid (as a person, a group, a state etc.), often are presented as taken for granted "common sense" arguments for restrictive migration policies and social welfare reforms. The idea of the workshop is thus to go beyond manifest ideological-political negotiations and battles and explore which (implicit) realm of non-negotiability they rest upon. Furthermore, the workshop aims at exploring when and to what extent "common sense" arguments secure ideological stability and when do they spark new rounds of political and every-day negotiations and battles.

The open character of Gramsci's "common sense" ("a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions, and one can find there anything that one likes", Gramsci 1971: 422) as well as its productive tension with the notion of ideology (common sense as "spontaneous philosophy of the multitude (...) which has to be made ideologically coherent", Gramsci 1971: 421), opens up fruitful avenues for discussing transformations, intersections and actual implementations of contemporary ideologies.

The workshop thus invites ethnographic-theoretical contributions by colleagues across different subfields (economic anthropology, anthropology of migration, political anthropology, anthropology of religion, legal anthropology etc.) working on different dimensions of current socio-economic and political transformations in Europe to use the notion of "common sense" for reflecting on their completed/on-going research.

Vortragende Teil 1 / Speakers part 1:

Judith Beyer (University of Konstanz)

Legal activism between common sense and practice. Debating the end of statelessness in Europe

When it comes to statelessness, NGOs, the United Nations, advocacy institutions as well as activists and engaged scholars share the standpoint that statelessness needs to be eradicated. Their argument is that individuals need to be granted "the right to have rights" (Arendt), which allows them to officially belong and to exist as individuals in the first place. While this demand appears commonsensical and does unite a wide range of actors, some critical scholars have studied the very ways nation states are in need of "keeping around" non-citizens at their very edges in order to reassure and discipline the populace. In this presentation I discuss workshops, conferences and policy briefings in various European settings which are on the one hand based on the commonsensical, humanistic/humanitarian and non-negotiable call to end statelessness while attendees continuously debate whether this goal is feasible at all. This particular type of conflicted legal

activism can best be understood with Gramsci's notion of *senso commune* as an "ambiguous, contradictory and multiform" endeavour (SPN, 423) that tries to turn "incoherent common sense into coherent political narratives" (Crehan 2016, 31).

Moritz Engel (Universität zu Köln) und

Christian Schirmer (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)

Organic Enjoyment –

Europe's politico-ideological structure and the subject position of being non-racist

Contrary to ideas that state that we perceive a shift in Europe's societal recognition of tolerance and acceptance of diversity, we argue that the truth in our common sense always was that Europe's societies are still deeply racist and not interested in negotiating difference. We argue that the common sense is not built by rational arguments but by affect and enjoyment. In Europe's case this entails the enjoyment of being racist or nationalist. The shift we perceive nowadays, is therefore not a shift in the common sense but a shift in the perceived or no longer perceived necessity to construct one's own subject position as being non-racist. We therefore argue that in order to understand the possible end of negotiations it is necessary to understand our current politico-ideological structure as indicated for example by Hilary Pilkington. There is a strong force in Europe's societies that makes possible a shift, not in the common sense per se, but in our renewed and unchained enjoyment of inhibiting a reactionary ideology.

Agnieszka Pasieka (University of Vienna)

Gramsci and the far right

In my presentation, I would like to highlight a few ways in which Gramsci's theory lends itself to the investigations of the current moment, using as an example the activities of two youth far-right movements, an Italian and a Polish one. In discussing their ideologies and activism, I am going to focus on two aspects. First, I would like to link the idea of common sense with Gramsci's understanding of inequalities and to illustrate some resemblances in the far-right discourse on societal injustices. Second, I am going to focus on the commonsense in reference to Gramscian idea of organic intellectuals, demonstrating the ways in which far-right activists position themselves as educators, as people taking responsibility, as representatives of the excluded, disenfranchised members of their own national communities. In so doing, I would also like to show the emphasis put on "cultural work" which, again in a very Gramscian way, accompanies a variety of far-right undertakings. In concluding, I would like to reflect on whether a recognition of these aspects of far-right activism should prompt us to rethink the ways in which we conceive of the new European right.

Zorica Mršević (Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade)

Common sense and gender based violence

While affirmative readings of Gramsci's common sense can refer to moral and political arguments encouraging people to fight for an egalitarian society, common sense-claims in the domain of gender based violence potentially comprise stereotypes and prejudices. This refers to the habitual common sense beliefs (and justifications) of why «men are violent» and why women suffer violence. A tacit affirmation of these common sense based stereotypes strengthens the status quo of imbalanced social power distribution between women and men and consequently of a stereotypical understanding of gender-based violence as something that men, because of their nature, "naturally" do to women. Media accounts – drawing on this mode of common sense – often report on gender based violence as the product of "strong love," "strong passion," of a private "Shakespearean drama", but not as social product of patriarchal gender relations, easily transferrable from the

private to domain of public policies, even international relations. Based on long-term research in Serbia this paper will offer insights into the interplay of common sense arguments and the domain of gender-based violence.

Vortragende Teil 2 / Speakers part 2:

Annika Lems (MPI Halle/Saale)

From common sense to divided sociality:

Understanding everyday exclusionary processes in Europe

In my presentation I aim to investigate the role of the “sense” part of the notion of common sense in current European processes of exclusion and fragmentation. When traced back to its etymological origin in the 14th century, common sense describes a sensual faculty like all other human senses – an internal feeling forming an important basis for understanding and engaging with the world. By looking at the ways people in rural areas in Austria’s southernmost state of Kärnten formulate a commonly shared sense that they need to take measures to protect their hometowns from “foreign infiltration”, I aim to show the explosive potential of intersubjective affective sensing and “sense”-making. While Gramsci used the term “common sense” to investigate creative, non-bourgeois thought-processes deployed by subaltern, working-class groups, I will pose the question of what happens when these creative means are used to exclude and marginalise others.

Daniele Karasz (Universität Wien)

The struggle for the common sense and the changing scale of housing in Central Europe.

Feeling at Home in a Viennese Neighborhood – 2011-2018

The paper focusses on the Monte Laa neighborhood in Vienna, mostly composed by subsidized estates; many families originating from Eastern, Southeastern Europe and Turkey live in the buildings. The paper builds on narrative interviews I first conducted with residents in 2011 and repeated with the very same persons in 2018. In drawing from Said’s notion of imagined geographies, I discuss which spaces of the extended residential environment are considered to be “familiar” in the interviews and which ones to be “foreign”. I debate how this understanding changed between 2011 and 2018. The question is linked to the broader issue of who is commonsensically understood to be “we” and who to be the “others”. I will show how these understandings changed in influencing the residents’ spatial perception and appropriation: Since 2011, vast parts of Vienna transformed into an imagined “foreign area”. The space perceived as “ours” was, at the contrary, shifted to locations lying outside the city, in some cases even outside Austria. The public debate on the so-called “refugee crisis” appears as key moment of such shift. The example shows how ideological debates and changing hegemonic understandings concerning migration dramatically affect identities and spatial practices in the transnational Central Eastern European area, as well as the living together at the micro level of a Viennese neighborhood.

Discussant: Andreas Streinzer (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt/Main):

Closing and comparative contribution

Andreas Streinzer is researcher at the Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt, and the University of St. Gallen. Working on reconfigurations of provisioning in Greece during austerity, he investigates the interdependence of modes of living, forms of recognition, and economic orders. His research project, with Jelena Tomic, develops a Gramscian perspective on inequality through the notion of “deservingness”.