

WS 45
Ethics and Digital Media in highly contested anthropological fields
AG Medien(anthropologie)

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Organisiert von / organized by:

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Data scandals like the 'Facebook-Cambridge Analytica files' made users drastically aware of social media companies' dealings with personally identifiable information. While a call for ethics standards for these companies was widely debated, little attention has been paid to the ethical dimensions of anthropological research in, with and about digital media. Against this background there is a need for discussion if there are 'non-negotiable' standards of the discipline regarding digital media and their impact on anthropological research.

Fieldwork understood as processes of negotiation between anthropologists and the ethnographic interlocutors may include 'non-negotiable' interactions posing limitations to social negotiation in the research process, especially in highly contested research fields like political extremism or militant Islamism. Recently there has been increasing attention to moral and ethical questions in fieldwork with people anthropologists 'don't necessarily like' (Bangstad 2017) where access to the field, building trust, and dealing with security of data play a vital role (Hemmingsen 2011; de Koning 2018).

This panel focuses on ethical implications and challenges of working ethnographically about and with media, especially digital media. We invite papers that deal with (but are not limited to) the following questions: Are there 'non-negotiable' standards regarding anthropological research with digital media? What challenges follow from using digital media as an area of research or research tool in highly contested research fields like political extremism or militant movements? How do anthropologists protect their informants' privacy and anonymity, particularly when doing research about visual practices? How do anthropologists deal with misinformation, hate speech, violent or propagandistic material?

Keynote:

Sindre Bangstad (KIFO – Institute for Church, Religion and Worldview Research, Oslo)

**Doing fieldwork among people we don't necessarily like –
and what that means for digital media ethnography**

Teitelbaum (2019) has on the basis of his long-standing ethnographic research on Swedish far-right activists on- and offline argued that doing so in a successful manner requires suspending standard and established ethical codes in anthropology, such as those outlined in the American Anthropological Association (AAA)'s Statement on Ethics. But though digital ethnography on all facets of so-called 'social media' – including its 'anti-social' features such as hate or extreme speech and the online distribution of conspiracy theories, white supremacist ideas, racism, anti-semitism and Islamophobia - is a relatively new anthropological field, these phenomena are by no means new. Nor are the methodological and ethical challenges posed by ethnographic research on people we as anthropologists may not necessarily like (Bangstad 2018) in any sense of the world new or unprecedented. In this presentation, I present findings from my own research on

digital Islamophobia in Norway, and my argument for why standard and established ethical codes in anthropology can and should be upheld even by the new digital ethnography.

Vortragende / Speakers:

K. Zeynep Sariaslan (ZMO – Leibniz-Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin)

Information negotiated:

reflections on researching transnational politics and making online news

Being confronted with political vulnerability and financial insecurity, countless journalists in Turkey moved or were forced to move abroad. They have established new media networks and communities by mobilising social and historical ties with Europe, particularly Germany. Transnational online news making offers more freedom of expression for those who cannot take part in journalistic practices in their country anymore but want to continue doing their job at a distance. Due to their ability to produce and circulate cultural products that intercept transnational political discourses, journalists abroad represent a peculiar case among migrants. Moreover, journalists have become political instruments to regulate international relations - sometimes unwillingly. In this context, research on migrant journalists might increase their vulnerability and/or researchers can put themselves in risk. In this paper, I aim to introduce initial findings of my ongoing research that combines ethnographic fieldwork with text analysis of online news to discuss anonymity and surveillance as significant methodological challenges.

Max Kramer (LMU München)

Online ethics and the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

In this presentation, I will discuss the media-ethics of online communication of the Indian reformist Islamic organization Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. Online politics has too often been captured in global abstractions such as vertical vs. horizontal or connective vs. collective action. Nick Couldry has rightfully criticized these generalizations and stressed the need for a more in-depth understanding of nation-state politics and culturally specific institutionalized practices. My anthropological approach towards the media ethics of the Jamaat can be placed within the conceptual frame of moral economies (Didier Fassin): I look at the production and distribution of moral value within nation-state politics and historical traditions of ethical thinking. The material of this presentation will be moral-advice literature on online politics and interviews with media practitioners of the Jamaat concerning questions of online da'wah (the Arabic term denoting the proselytizing and preaching of Islam).

I will extend an argument of Irfan Ahmad (2009) on the importance of contextualizing reformist Islami in the institutionalized settings of nation-states. I will also suggest that the emergent discourse on online-ethics is very much a continuation of more global discourses on Islamic media ethics - especially journalist ethics.

Discussant: Cora Bender (University of Bremen/University of Siegen/University of Vienna)

Cora Bender ist Medien- und Medizinethnologin mit einem besonderen Interesse an indigenen Kulturen Nordamerikas. Als Mitantragstellerin des Siegener Graduiertenkollegs „Locating Media“ lehrt und forscht sie an der Universität Siegen und hat in der Vergangenheit Gastprofessuren in Heidelberg, München, Wien, Bremen und Austin (Texas) bekleidet. 2011 veröffentlichte sie ihre

auf langjährigen ethnographischen Forschungen beruhende Monographie *Die Entdeckung der indigenen Moderne* (transcript), 2015 gab sie zusammen mit Martin Zillinger das *Handbuch der Medienethnologie* (Reimer) heraus. Aktuell beendet sie das Manuskript ihrer medizinethnologischen Studie „Precarious Sovereignty in Indian Country: Medicine, Media and the Positioning of Anthropology“.