



NEWSMAIL | JUNE 2020

Research projects, publications and events

Dear Members and Friends,

This is our second newsletter in difficult times, and the world does not seem the same as when we launched this network at the beginning of the year.

In academic life, circumstances have caused (among other things) many cancellations and postponements, not only of events but also publications. While it might feel a bit odd to distribute good news, some members are still productive and organising events taking place in digital forms. Their efforts deserve attention – please find them below.

If you have your own announcements to share, please send them to:
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NEWS



[Lukas Milo Strauss](#) will soon change his institutional affiliation to the Department of Cultural Analyses (Empirical Cultural Analysis / Cultural Anthropology Unit) at Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt. Employed as a PhD candidate he will pursue research on the project "Brokering the care gap: the institutional trajectory of European care migration". Congratulations!

PUBLICATIONS

Caring for Equality?
Administering Ambivalence in Kindergarten

By Anna Ellmer*

Abstract

In recent years, kindergartens in Austria have increasingly become the target of an ambivalent politics of belonging and difference. Looking at institutional childcare practices as processes of doing and undoing differences, this article explores how kindergarten staff translate societal missions of promoting both 'integration' and 'diversity' into practice by reflecting particularly on the role of bureaucratic practices within this dynamic. Ethnographic studies on the organisational dimensions of institutional childcare have mostly focused on their normalising effects. Based on ethnographic material from two Viennese kindergartens, I show that universalist claims to childcare as a vehicle for belonging are important. Yet, care and administration in kindergarten hardly proceed in clear-cut ways. Pedagogical/bureaucratic practices unfold at the nexus of 'formal' and 'informal', as well as 'private' and 'public' spheres, mediated by an ambivalent normative universe and within limited institutional resources. Using a case of staff negotiating kinship practices in one family, the article traces their interplay and shows how bureaucratic practices become entangled with gendered constructions of cultural difference.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, childcare, kinship, doing difference, gender

1. Introduction

While childcare in Austria was for a long time mostly relegated to the 'private' domain, in recent years it has increasingly been defined as a joint task for both families and mainly state-financed and -regulated institutions (Seyo-Inguart 2016). As the most important childcare institution for children before school age (6 years) in Austria, kindergarten has thus become a focal point of political debates and reform projects. The introduction of a mandatory kindergarten year in 2010, for example, was strongly promoted as a warrant of 'equal opportunities' and a potent means for 'integrating' children of immigrants, stressing the poten-

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Anna Ellmer: Caring for Equality? Administering Ambivalence in Kindergarten.

In: Sociologos 70 (1): 39–55.

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Larissa Vettters: Prozesse des State Building in Bosnien-Herzegowina.

Combining theoretical debates in sociocultural anthropology and public administration scholarship, this study advances a novel heuristic framework for understanding state-building processes in fragmented, post-conflict societies and proposes a new, ethnographically informed methodology.

Focusing on interactions between citizens, civil servants and members of international organisations in the city of Mostar, the study reveals how notions of community, the articulation of interests, as well as ideas and practices of statehood emerge, which neither correspond to consociational democratic statehood, as envisioned by the international community, nor to ideas of exclusive ethno-national communities, as propagated by political leaders.

Using this ethnography, the author argues for abandoning the state-building paradigm of academic description or policy prescription and identifies new




avenues for a reflexive, transdisciplinary approach to studying public administration in contemporary glocal contexts.

Special Section Article | [Open Access](#) | 

Mutating states

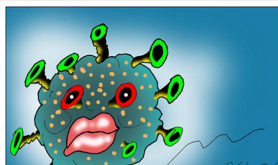
Ivan Rajković

First published 14 June 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12905>

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A joke is that a Koronavirus has possessed the Serbian state. A wordplay on his initials, AV, the pun suggests that the Serbian president is the real pathogen to whom the epidemics gave a free reign. I gave up listening to [Aleksandar] Vučić's speeches; an actor claimed, 'It's not good for health'. Caricaturists displayed him with a viral crown, basking in the omnipotence of the state of emergency (Figures 1 and 2).

As national lockdowns spread across Europe, Serbian authorities followed suit with their own style of authoritarian populism. Declaring a war for our elderly, they banned those above 65 from leaving their homes. The rest have been subjected to 12-hour curfews and lockdowns for entire weekends, as proposed by the epidemiologists. All who tested positive were put into public quarantines. The borders were closed, even for Serbian expats, with heavy criticism falling on those who, unlike me, had managed to return. By the time of writing this (23 May), such strategy was relatively successful: 237 deaths per 7 million inhabitants, despite the chronically underfunded healthcare system. But policies of quarantine produced a lot of backlash: from the urban middle classes complaining about dictatorial home arrest; ageing citizens sick of being talked down as 'irresponsible children'; and many others who, seeing others as spoiled brats, yearned for even stricter regulation. Civil disobedience against the curfew – sounding pots and pans from the balconies – eventually met its rival: the pro-regime tug-of-war firing torches on the roof tops. Lifting of measures almost spilled into an open conflict.



Ivan Rajković: Mutating States.

A short essay on state control and authoritarian populism in Serbia during the coronavirus pandemic, published on June 14th as an EASA Special Section Article.

EVENTS

2.–4. July 2020

5th Vienna Ethnography Laboratory

Mobilities and Care. Transformations of belonging and inequalities with Angela Garcia (Stanford University) and Laura Merla (UC Louvain). This year's lab will (primarily) take place online – we're looking forward to inspiring contributions and lively discussions!

Have a look at the [program](#)!

13.–14. July 2020

Care: Reproducing Inequalities and shaping political transformation.

Keynote to be held by [Tatjana Thelen](#) at the Workshop *Care and Volunteering in Transformation* at the Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung (TU Dresden).

In light of neoliberal and austerity policies that decreased public spending in diverse care infrastructures such as hospitals, nursing homes, or kindergartens care has been used increasingly as a concept for critique during the last decades. In this situation, most researchers attribute care a positive value and use it for arguing for a seemingly more inclusive or impartial ethics of care. What gets often lost are the exclusionary and productive aspects of care. In my talk I aim at reversing the perspective: Care presents not only a reaction to reforms and not only mirrors inequalities but is contributes to the (re)producing of partiality, power and marginalisation. Ultimately, care is not only shaped by politics, but shapes political transformations.

20.-24. July 2020

16th EASA Biennial Conference

Three of our CaSt-members are hosting panels at this year's EASA conference *New anthropological horizons in and beyond Europe*, which will take place virtually.

- [Christof Lammer](#) (Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt) & [André Thiemann](#) (Riga Stradiņš University): "Infrastructures of Value: Uniqueness and Genericness in Agri-Food Chains." Value has often been discussed with examples from agriculture. On this old terrain, this panel opens new views on valuation through the lens of infrastructure. This directs attention to material creations of uniqueness and genericness and challenges persistent binaries in economic anthropology: artisan versus industrial production, gift versus commodity exchange, capitalism versus socialism, civil society versus state, community versus market.
- [Ivan Rajković](#) & Larisa Kurtović: "Water Will Rise: New Political Lives of a Life-giving Substance." This panel asks how this "turn to water" reshapes collective life and the political itself, by simultaneously making it naturalised, popularised, and sacralised.

14. December 2020

Save the date: Wednesday Seminar with Katherine Verdery

Was the anthropologist a spy? Evidence from a secret police file.

More info to be announced.

Hope you are all well and healthy, best wishes from Vienna,

Tatjana Thelen



CaSt - Care and State

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