



Plenary session IV

Engagement on whose terms? Anthropology, media, and public debates

Hauke Dorsch

Debates on multicultural or transnational realities abound in the German media. Recent debates focused on issues like the supposed challenges presented by the integration of immigrants, the meanings associated with headscarves, honour killings, or the reconciliation of bodily integrity, the freedom of speech or artistic expression with religious rules and sentiments. Anthropologists are virtually absent from these debates – at least in Germany. Of course, they discuss these issues and offer explanations, interpretations or analyses that could contribute new insights to these debates. However, their perspectives are rarely reflected in the media, possibly because many anthropologists today are rather skeptical about speaking for the people they work with. Furthermore, some anthropologists seem disappointed by journalists' representations of their findings.

In countries such as the US, the UK, France, and Norway, however, anthropological voices are being heard more often in debates on current issues like the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, immigration, etc. In this context, anthropologists' abilities to use inspirations from one context and productively translate them to another may prove helpful. Because of their interest for seemingly insignificant issues that other scholars tend to overlook, anthropologists are able to see problems in a new light that might influence public debates in a meaningful way.

In this plenary session anthropologists who have actively participated in public debates and have "gotten their message across" will discuss and reflect on their experiences with different media.

Saturday, October, 5th, 11:30 am until 1:00 pm, building „Philosophicum“, room P1

Participants:

Thomas Hylland Eriksen (Oslo, Norway), Anthony Shelton (Vancouver, Canada), Chandana Mathur (Maynooth, Ireland)