



WORKSHOP AND SPECIAL ISSUE

***'Committed to Religion's Other:
The Anthropology of Secularism, Atheism and Non-Religion'***

University of Zurich, 14–16 December 2020

Thematic scope:

While Anthropology focused traditionally on the study of the 'religious', be it in form of ritual, mysticism, or organised forms of piety, there have recently been a number of interesting advances in the study of non-religion, secularism, atheism, humanism, and secularity. We believe that ethnographic approaches can contribute fresh perspectives and hitherto neglected aspects to debates on secularism, secularity, and non-religiosity. The field has so far been dominated by sociology, history, and other social sciences and has been shaped by Eurocentric perspectives and categories.

The Special Issue is intended as a timely intervention into the debate by offering an overview of the current state of anthropological perspectives and bringing together ethnographic scholarship that addresses one or more of the following issues:

1. What are the specific contributions or characteristics of anthropological approaches to rapidly growing scholarship on secularism and non-religion?
2. We are particularly interested in gauging the potential of ethnography and a focus on "lived", "embodied," or "everyday" forms of secularity and non-religiosity to refine, challenge, or move beyond established paradigms that currently structure the field.
3. How do anthropological/ethnographic approaches engage with and offer novel takes on the controversial issue of "Eurocentric categories" and various processes of their translation, contestation, or transformation both within and outside of academic discourses?
4. In what ways does a focus on "lived secularism" offer an opportunity to not only deconstruct dichotomies (secular / religious, West / Rest, lived / not-lived etc.) but also to retrace the conditions, social dynamics, and effects of their de facto deployments in varying contexts?

We are, of course, welcoming any further suggestions of themes that may add to or expand these areas of interest.

Format:

As the intended outcome of the workshop is the publication of a Special Issue, we will base our discussion on pre-circulated papers that are more or less ready for publication. Thus, there will be no oral paper presentations but instead, we will set off the discussion by two comments on each paper prepared by other participants. The workshop shall thus serve as a forum for intense and productive collaboration, a sort of internal peer review, and a means to ensure the coherence of the special issue as a whole. As possible venue and audience for a publication, we aim at general anthropological journals and will be approaching one (or more) of the following journals: JRAI, Current Anthropology, Social Analysis, The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology.

In light of the limited number of contributions to a Special Issue and the funds we have available for covering your travel to and accommodation in Zurich during the workshop, we can plan for around 10 participants.

Confirmed participants to date are: Jacob Copeman, Johannes Quack, Mascha Schulz, Stefan Binder.

Timeline:

Given the protracted process of publishing and long waiting lists for Special Issues we propose the following timeline to enable our work to be published as “speedily” as possible, ideally sometime in 2022:

- July 1, 2020: Submissions of short abstracts by contributors.
- July 15, 2020: Finalization of workshop timings and list of participants.
- November 20, 2020: Submission of papers for circulation among workshop participants.
- December 14–16, 2020: Workshop in Zürich.
- End of 2020: Submission of the proposal for the SI by the editors.
- Spring 2021: Submission of the manuscripts.
- 2022 (at the latest 2023): Publication of the SI

Despite the uncertainties around the COVID 19 pandemic, we are hopeful that the workshop can take place in person. However, if further developments in this regard make travelling or conducting the workshop impossible or impractical, we will work on a remote solution on a digital platform.

If you are interested in joining us in Zurich and able to commit to the above timeframe, please **send a short abstract of your contribution by July 1.**

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