

Engaged Anthropology Collective

What is known as *Anthropology* in the English-speaking world refers to two equivalent, yet distinct designations of the discipline in Germany. First, the more prevalent term *Ethnologie*, and second the more recent term *Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie*. These two designations of the discipline imply different histories, concerns and politics. The Engaged Anthropology Collective prefers to mobilize the term ‘*anthropology*’ as it refers to the *anthropos* (the human/*der Mensch*) as its central concern and not *Ethnologie*, which refers to *ethnos* (ethnic group/*Volk*) and has other kinds of analytical, (post-)colonial and political connotations.

As social and cultural anthropologists we are trained to do research about people’s everyday lives and practices in the context of wider historical, political and socio-economic frameworks. We also teach and train undergraduate and graduate students who then work as anthropologists in academic settings and/or outside academia in diverse fields of action (for example, NGOs, education, pedagogy, media, counseling etc.). As anthropologists we do fieldwork, which entails spending extended periods of time with the people we study to achieve in-depth and holistic understandings of their everyday life worlds. Our institute, for instance, focuses on different themes and concerns such as the Body, Disaster, Education, Emotions, Healing, Health, Medicine, Media, Migration, Politics and Law, Refugee Work, Religious Diversity and Secularism. The scholars of our institute cover a wide range of geographical and cultural regions where they conduct research and teach, which include, but are not limited to: Bangladesh, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, the larger Middle East, the Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Turkey, Uganda, the USA, etc.

With deep concern, we are watching our ‘common world’ atomizing on global, regional and national scales. Crisis seems to be the new everyday (*Alltag*). We advocate that the university is not an ivory tower. Academic disciplines cannot stay immune to everyday events and the profound crises that affect us in different ways and degrees. We, anthropologists like other social scientists, are more than researchers or academics. We are human and social beings in direct contact with grass-root problems and social, political and economic inequalities and injustices. Doing Anthropology is deeply entangled with its own époque with regards to the contemporary world’s challenges, catastrophes, anxieties and hopes. Therefore, the question of engagement (*Engagement*) is incumbent upon us.

From our diverse experiences, that originate from our immediate encounters with different kinds of people, languages and practices in our research sites and beyond, we believe that anthropology has something to offer in our crisis-ridden times. We engage with current

political and social events and challenges on a national and local level, in Germany and Berlin, as well as in the (other) places where we study, teach, research, work and live. Since we live in a medially, technologically and otherwise interconnected world, we further participate in global solidarity actions with the fraternity/sorority of anthropologists worldwide.

In current times, we look forward towards creating a common future in which our discipline can play its part. Not only in doing research *about the other* and educating students, but in concrete engagements with both imminent and long term challenges that require not only urgent attention but also intervention. As ‘private’ and ‘public-political’ individuals our roles may vary. But as anthropologists we can contribute to the issues that confront us with various skills. The emerging ‘Engaged Anthropology’ (*Engagierte Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie*) collective coordinates six action teams in collaboration with the members of other research areas and colleagues at the Institute (<http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/ethnologie/forschung/index.html>).

1. Publication and Research Action Team

The team develops a collaborative magazine (print and digital) together with the newcomer refugees, and coordinates and facilitates publications in various blogs and newspapers.

Contact: Judith Albrecht (judithalbrecht@hotmail.com); Kristina Dohrn (kristina.dohrn@fu-berlin.de)

Some members of the collective are co-moderators of the blog *Medizinethnologie* which has published, among others, a series of texts on the current refugee ‘crisis’: www.medizinethnologie.net

Contact: Hansjörg Dilger (hansjoerg.dilger@berlin.de); Dominik Mattes (domattes@gmx.de)

2. Translation Action Team

This collaboration with the Berlin Graduate School for Muslim Cultures and Societies facilitates translations of written and actual encounters (Arabic and other languages). Mohammed Halli, an Arabic teacher with English language skills, and an inhabitant of the refugee camp in Dahlem translates for us when we visit the Dahlem Sprachcafé.

Contact: Bettina Graef (bettina.graef@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de); Miriam Ovadia (mirio253@gmail.com); Dina El-Sharnouby (dinaelsharnouby@gmail.com); Mohammed Halli (end-of-the-world@live.com)

3. Field Action Team

We occasionally visit the Dahlem Sprachcafé (St. Annenkirche; Thielallee 1-3; Fridays 3 p.m.) where the newcomer refugees and neighbors meet to initiate person-centered collaborations. The team will organize and host more regular events from January 2016 onwards. (If you plan to visit the Sprachcafé in small self-organized groups, please bring something to share, e.g. cakes, biscuits, fruits etc.).

Contact: Nasima Selim (nasimaselim@gmail.com); Thomas Stodulka (thomas.stodulka@fu-berlin.de)

4. Collaborative Teaching

The team collects information from those who teach at our institute and facilitates the integration of the newcomer refugees in selected courses. We promote the incorporation of topics that are relevant to the institute's diverse activities in regard of its anthropological engagements. In the ongoing winter semester, for instance, one BA seminar explores the specific situation of women in refugee camps in Berlin, thereby including an empirical study component in the course. The seminar has been planned and organized by students in cooperation with a women refugee initiative and is taught in collaboration with two faculty members of the institute.

Contact: Eric Heuser (Eric.Anton.Heuser@fu-berlin.de); Britta Rutert (britta.rutert@gmail.com)

5. Public Event Action Team

The team will organize cultural events, movie screenings and public discussions that foster public encounters with the newcomer refugees in collaboration with the other action teams.

Contact: Mustafa Abdalla (mustafa.abdalla@gmail.com); Kristina Dohrn (kristina.dohrn@fu-berlin.de)

6. Tandem Team

This primarily student-organized team facilitates person-centered engagements to form tandem pairs, and guide the newcomer refugees through bureaucratic, medical and other challenges.

Contact: FSI-Fachschaftsinitiative (lai_fsi@lists.spline.inf.fu-berlin.de)

Who can join?

Students and staff at the Institute are welcome to join any of the action teams as well as

engaged persons from outside. Please contact the team facilitators directly if you want to join one of the action teams.

Open meeting dates

This semester (WS15/16) we are meeting on Thursdays 2-4 p.m. on December 10, January 7, January 21, and February 4 at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Landoltweg 9-11, Seminar Room 014. The last meeting of the semester will take place on February 18 at the basement seminar room in Thielallee 52.