

Newsletter 1

January 2019



Centre for the Study of Nationalism at Copenhagen University

Formal opening October 26, 2018

The formal opening of CSN on October 26, 2018, went extremely well. Julie Sommerlund, Associate Dean, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Faculty; Ulf Hedetoft, Professor and CSN Director, addressed the reasons, objectives and concrete plans of the Centre; and Michael Herzfeld, Harvard Professor, delivered the Inaugural Lecture on *Global Populism and the Dangerous Echo of European Nation-Building* (see the CSN website for the abstract).

Herzfeld managed to address a number of the topics currently being heatedly discussed, and the eloquent lecture was followed by an enlightening interchange with the audience (of about 100 +), who raised a number of relevant points and received lengthy, clarifying and reflective responses. The afternoon program ended with a well-attended reception. Reactions have been enthusiastic and supportive. There is little doubt that the opening was a success, and, most importantly, that the Centre fulfills a function and responds to a widespread need for collectively engaging with questions of nationalism and national identities at the present juncture.

Ulf Hedetoft, Director

Roundtables – Spring 2019

The first roundtable will take place in February as follows:

Friday, February 8, 10:15-11:45

Ulf Hedetoft, *Nationalism and the Political Theology of Populism*. Discussant: Catharina Raudvere.

Venue: 27.0.47

Abstract:

Populism should be approached as a variant of nationalism. It shares with mainstream nationalism the insistence on the pivotal role of 'the people', on the centrality of cultural and historical homogeneity, and on the division between 'us' as laudable and 'them' as potentially threatening. And nearly all its manifestations are based on or devoted to some form of political theology. They represent specific instances of affective nationalism as civil religion. I will reflect on the nationalism-populism link, on the relationship between populism and democracy, on the theological question, and on three concrete manifestations: the East European, the North European, and the American.

Other roundtables in the spring

March 15, 10:15-11:45. Lisa Villadsen, *'All we need is emotion'. Dichotomizing rhetoric in populist political discourse*. Discussant: Tine Damsholt.

April 12, 10:15-11:45: Mogens Pelt, *Before the Nation: Cilicia as a battle ground for competing forms of communality 1908-1922*. Discussant: Morten Heiberg.

May 24, 13-15: Video conference with Professor Pippa Norris (Harvard University) on the topic of *Cultural Backlash*. Discussants: Ulf Hedetoft and Marie Sandberg.

June 7, 10:15-11:45: Nils Holtug, *Does Nationhood Promote Egalitarian Justice? Challenging the National Identity Argument*. Discussant: Jes Fabricius

Further notice on each of these roundtables will be forthcoming.

As regards the fall semester of 2019, we are planning for a number of roundtables hosted by local associates as well as international guests. The latter will comprise an event on Indian nationalism as well as most likely a visit and one or two lectures by Professor Craig Calhoun.

New projects

The following new project is about to be launched:

Foreign Fighters: Past, Present and Future

For two centuries, between the French Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the model for military mobilization was closely intertwined with the nation-state and conscription. But, as the distinguished Israeli historian Nir Arielli writes, non-state mobilization did not disappear from the scene. In fact, the phenomenon of western foreign fighters is once again on the increase, as the wars in

Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine and Syria remind us. To what extent, then, is it possible to conceptualize a global history of transnational war volunteering?

Historiography rarely concerns itself with investigating the capacity that war volunteering has to endure and persist across time. We intend to examine the continuation not only of memories and ideals passed down from one generation of fighters to another, but also the ability of foreign fighters and their networks to reactivate themselves as soon as a new conflict begins. In that direction volunteering during the Spanish Civil War and the European resistance movements formed part of a longer tradition, dating back to the 19th century.

Foreign Fighters: Past, Present and Future carefully examines the time-span from the antifascist struggles of the 1930s to the present. Crucially, this project is not only about history. It wants to engage with the present as well as the future. Thus, the project's ambition is also to offer key conceptual registers to better comprehend the rapid emergence of foreign fighters in contemporary conflicts.

The research project has been funded by the Carlsberg Foundation to the tune of DKK 2,6 million and will be carried out by board member Professor Morten Heiberg and Dr. Enrico Acciai.

People interested in further information are welcome to contact Professor Heiberg at dmg853@hum.ku.dk

The following PhD project, carried out by Ahmed Abou El Zalaf, has been affiliated with CSN. Ahmed is enrolled at the University of Southern Denmark, Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies, and has Dietrich Jung as his main supervisor, while Mogens Pelt from the Saxo Institute acts as his secondary supervisor. Ahmed will be at CSN for the remainder of this year and can be contacted at his office, 16.2.22, or by email at zalaf@sdu.dk

Title:

Continuity and Change: The Muslim Brotherhood as an Underground Movement during the Nasserist Years (1954-70)

On 26 October 1954, an alleged attempt on Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser's life, at al-Manshiyya square in Alexandria, by Mahmoud Abdel Latif a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and its notorious Special apparatus. This incident marked a watershed in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood: thousands of its members were arrested, and the rest were forced either underground or in exile. This incident is described as the worst event in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood, due to the repercussion that occurred subsequently in the period of 1954-70.

This project posits that the Muslim Brotherhood, even after the suppression in 1954, continued to exist as an underground social movement, challenging the new social and political order of the nationalist Nasserite military-regime, and offering visions that differed from that of the state. This thesis will examine the way in which the organizational structures of the Muslim Brotherhood and the internal socialization of the Brotherhood members provided the movement with mechanisms to survive state persecution. Furthermore, the project looks into the ways in which the Brotherhood developed an ideology to resist the hegemonic discourse of the Nasserists.