

**EASA AGM Seminar**  
**“On Politics and Precarities in Academia: Anthropological Perspectives”**

*Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Bern, Switzerland*  
*November 16-17, 2017*

The 2017 EASA Annual General Meeting Seminar brings together debates on different strands of precarity, analyse sites of disempowerment at the intersection of precarity and politics and discuss potentials of collaboration, solidarity and unionization.

**Thursday November 16**

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*10:00-13:00 (Room S221, Institute of Social Anthropology, Lerchenweg 36)*  
**EASA Executive Meeting**

*10:00-13:00 (Seminar Room IZFG, Vereinsweg 23)*  
**Pre-Workshop Meeting** organised by the AnthroCollective Bern:  
*Between Precarious Norms and Empowering Alternatives. Strategies and Tactics of Labour Organisation Between National and International Academic Contexts.*  
*with Carie Benjamin (SOAS), Sabine Kradolfer (Université de Lausanne), PrecAnthro Group*

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**MAIN PROGRAM**

*14:00-16:00 (Room 205/203, Hallerstrasse 4)*

**WORKSHOP 1: POLITICS AND PRECARIOUS LIVES**

**Chair:** Sarah Green (University of Helsinki)

**Introduction:** Ester Gallo (University of Trento)

—**An Ordinary Story from Turkey: An Autoethnography of a Dismissed Junior Academic** Esra Dabağcı (Ankara University)

—**Questions of political strategy: weighing a politics of voice, of connectivity, and of knowledge** Katharina Bodirsky (Universität Konstanz)

—**Between Neoliberalism and Competitive authoritarianism: Academic life in the Eastern Mediterranean** Aimilia Voulvouli (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

—**The Politics and Precarities in Being a Pakistani Anthropologist!** Inayat Ali (Universität Wien)

—**Colored in Germany: Racialized and Gendered Encounters in Academic Exile** Deniz Yonucu (Humboldt-Fellow, Berlin)

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*16:30-17:30 (Room 205/203, Hallerstrasse 4)*

**Annual General Meeting (open to all EASA members)**

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*18:00-19:30 (Room F021, Lerchenweg 36)*

*Welcome note from EASA President – Valeria Siniscalchi, (EHESS Marseille)*

*Welcome note from Vice Rector of University of Bern, Silvia Schroer*

**Keynote: Production of 'Dangerous Knowledge', Violation of Academic Freedom and Precarious Solidarities in the Age of Authoritarianism** Özlem Biner (LSE)

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Drinks Reception at the Department (Lerchenweg 36, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

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Friday November 17

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09:00-11:00 (Room F-121, Lerchenweg 36)

**Workshop 2: Structural Precarity in Anthropology**

Chair: Georgeta Stoica (IRD France / University of Perugia)

**Introduction:** PrecAnthro Group, represented by Mariya Ivancheva (University of Leeds) Dan Vesalainen Hirslund (University of Copenhagen) and Martin Fotta (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt a.M.)

- Mobility as precarity in contemporary academia: notes on South Asian social scientists building an academic career in Europe.** Vinicius Kauê Ferreira (EHESS Paris)
  - Politics of academic and migrant precarity: experiences of international doctoral candidates in present-day Finland** Sonja Trifuljesko (University of Helsinki)
  - On Pioneers, Academic Nomadism and European Funding. Structural Precarity in Post-communist European Anthropology** Lorena Anton (University of Bucharest)
  - Beyond the Contract: The Precarization of Scholars' Lives** Marta Pérez and Ainhoa Montoya (University of London)
  - Combating Isolation and invisibility.** Dan Vesalainen Hirslund (University of Copenhagen)
  - Precarity, gender and care in the neoliberal academy** Mariya Ivancheva (University of Leeds)
  - "Can't your parents help?" Experience of everyday cultures and practices of precarity in an Anthropology department.** Lavinia Bertini (University of Sussex)
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11:30-13:30 (Room F-121, Lerchenweg 36)

**Workshop 3: Transnational Collaborations Against Political and Structural Precarity**

Chair: Thomas Hylland Eriksen (University of Oslo), Sabine Strasser (Universität Bern)

- Report from the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA):** presentation of the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice and the WCAA-IUAES initiative on "Anthropological fieldwork and risk in a violent world", by Chandana Mathur (WCAA Chair)
- Scholars at Risk:** a brief introduction by Ester Gallo (University of Trento)
- Presentation of the Survey on Precarity in Academia,** PrecAnthro Group (Martin Fotta Goethe-Universität Frankfurt a.M. )
- Reports from the Workshops

Final Debate

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14:00-14:45 (Room F-121, Lerchenweg 36)

**Press Conference: "Let's Give Voice to Precarious Research and Scholars at Risk"**

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## ABSTRACTS

### WORKSHOP 1 “POLITICS AND PRECARIOUS LIVES”

#### **Questions of political strategy: weighing a politics of voice, of connectivity, and of knowledge**

Katharina Bodirsky, Universität Konstanz  
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Based on a discussion of the Turkish case, the presentation explores the potentials and limits of responses from within the national and international academia to the precariousness produced for academics by increasingly authoritarian politics. It examines here, first, an oppositional “politics of voice” that is directed at the state elite in forms such as petitions and protests in view of its role in a context where there is no political will for compromise and negotiation; second, a “politics of connectivity” that seeks to set up networks of solidarity both within and across state borders within contexts, however, that are characterized by structures of precarity of different sorts; and third, a “politics of knowledge” that operates within an increasingly anti-intellectual and illiberal climate. The presentation aims primarily at opening up informed questions for comparative discussion of political strategy rather than presenting conclusive results.

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#### **Colored in Germany: Racialized and Gendered Encounters in Academic Exile**

Deniz Yonucu  
Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation, Post-Doctoral Fellow  
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Within the space opened up by feminist critique and critical race studies, today more and more scholars, reflecting on their own experiences, elaborate on various forms of structural racism, gender and class bias (re)produced in an ever-precarious academia. Building on the literature on the experiences of women of color, who are in the most precarious condition in academia, and focusing on the experiences of the female academics of peace from Turkey, who found a temporary refuge in German universities, this paper elaborates on the racialized and gendered encounters between German academics and academics of peace from Turkey. Questioning the feelings triggered in the context of this uneasy encounter and pointing out possible forms of exclusionary practices these feelings may give rise to, the paper sheds light into the interpellative force of German academia that bestows the female academics from Turkey a new identity—being women of color. To put it differently, by elaborating on the power relations that manifest itself in the encounters between German academia’s new female refugee seekers and German academics, this paper attempts to shed light into the racialized and gendered relations reproduced in German academia.

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#### **Between Neoliberalism and Competitive authoritarianism: Academic life in the Eastern Mediterranean**

Aimilia Voulvouli  
Post-doctoral Fellow  
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During the last 7 years, Greek Academia has been subjected to severe austerity measures, as a result of the austerity packages also known as MOUs (Memoranda of Understanding) between Greece and its creditors. As a result a big percentage of adjunct faculty were laid off, salaries in academia were cut by almost 40% and research funding was minimized. The harsh reality, forced many of the country’s academics, researchers and aspiring Ph.D holders to migrate abroad in search for a job within academia. One of the receiving countries was Turkey which, despite its competitive authoritarian system, with its until recently booming higher education sector and the incentives to foreign faculty, attracted not only Greek but many international faculty. This came to a halt last year after the attempted coup when political insecurity discouraged foreign faculty to apply but also forced many academics out of the country. The proposed presentation attempts to shed light to an often-overlooked group of academics affected by policies such as the ones addressed by the seminar: that of foreign faculty who even though they are considered expats in reality they are economic immigrants living in precarity. To support this claim, the presentation will discuss the trajectory of three Greek scholars who sought academic refuge in Turkey escaping the precarity that neoliberal policies created in their own country and who after July 15 2016, were forced off their jobs and consequently Turkey, due to their alleged ties to the Gülen Movement (GM) because they had been working to so called Gülenist Universities; that is Universities established by followers of GM.

## **The politics and precarities in being a Pakistani Anthropologist!**

Inayat Ali

PhD Student, University of Vienna, Austria

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Although, the global and geo politics affects, every, individual, but differently. It intensifies the precarity, according to the identity the individual belongs to, such as geographical, national, religious, academic, economic, and so forth. Here, I would like to present myself as a case to share the experiences of and exposures to. My visa was deferred to attend the anthropological conferences by the United Kingdom in 2015, and Canada in 2017. The deferment raised various questions into my mind, that despite doing a PhD in Vienna, and having EASA travel grant for UK, what are the responsible reasons, perhaps because my national identity is Pakistani.

Moreover, the situation at home country is also challenging to be an 'anthropologist'. During my graduation in anthropology, most of fellow colleagues from other departments used to say that 'anthropologists are atheists' and 'anthropological research is like farming and cutting the grass'. In this regard, one professor of anthropology was 'forced' to resign and end the contract from two universities. The 'blasphemy' sword in Pakistan always hangs over your head, especially if you are an anthropologist and 'label of Pakistani' hampers you in abroad. Both perspectives push you in the precarious situations.

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*(Intervention via Skype)*

### **An Ordinary Story from Turkey: An Autoethnography of a Dismissed Junior Academic**

Esra Dabağcı, Ankara Academy of Solidarity. Department of Sociology, Ankara University, Turkey

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This presentation aims to connect an autobiographical account as a dismissed junior academic to wider political environment in Turkey. The coup attempt on July 15, 2016 was seen as an "opportunity" by Erdoğan to declare state of emergency and to expel many left-wing academics against the human right violations in Kurdish cities. The academics were purged by statutory decrees, forced to resign/to retire and their contacts were terminated. Although "academic", as an umbrella term, is perhaps capable of defining many forms of positions within universities; it also overshadows the inequalities within the academy and among the academics, and how AKP government appropriate and recreate these inequalities. Besides endangering autonomy of universities, the state of emergency also functions directly as a machine of precarity and neoliberalization by reorganizing the working conditions and contracts through decrees and oppressing the opposition arising against them. As one of the people lost her job by a decree, which became an ordinary incident in Turkey, I intend to depict what being a junior academic, namely a research assistant, means within Turkish academia before and after the coup attempt, through my own experience.

## WORKSHOP 2 “STRUCTURAL PRECARIY IN ANTHROPOLOGY”

### **Mobility as precarity in contemporary academia: notes on South Asian social scientists building an academic career in Europe.**

Vinicius Kauê Ferreira

PhD Student at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris, France)

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As “academic mobility” becomes one of the watchwords of contemporary scientific policies, universities and research institutions in the global North adopt new strategies to attract “talented” foreign scholars. In this context, in which historical intellectual circulations between Europe and its ancient colonies are strengthened and resiginified, a growing number of South Asian researchers are recruited as postdoctoral fellows at European institutions. At the same time, European institutions are reshaped by pervasive managerial practices based on the notions of “flexibility” and “accountability”, which are translated into the proliferation of short-term contracts as the dominant model for the recruiting of their academic staff. Those “academic workers” are often postdoctoral fellows. Drawing on an ongoing PhD research on South Asian social scientists trying to build an academic career in Europe, with a special focus on the German context career, this paper explores the experience of continuous and indefinite mobility amongst South Asian social scientists who seeks to build not only a career, but also a life on the road. We ask how lives can be lived in a context of proliferation of short-term contracts engendering indefinite mobility. In sum, it argues that the growing precarization of academic jobs in conjugation with contemporary scientific policies of mobility has meant a particular kind of precarization of life to these scholars who are part of historical circulations between Europe and South Asia.

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### **Precarity, gender and care in the neoliberal academy**

Mariya Ivancheva, University of Leeds

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This paper, co-authored with Prof Kathleen Lynch and Kathryn Keating(UCD) examines the rise in precarious academic employment in Ireland as an outcome of the higher education restructuring following OECD (2004) and government initiatives (HEA, 2011a), and post-crisis austerity. Presenting the narratives of academic women at different career stages, we claim that a focus on care sheds new light on the debate on precarity. A more complete understanding of precarity should take into account not only the contractual security but also the affective lives of employees.

The intersectionality of work and care lives was a dominant theme in our interviews among academic women. In a globalised academic market, premised on the care-free masculinised ideals of competitive performance, 24/7 work and geographical mobility, women who opt out of these norms, suffer labour-led contractual precarity and are over-represented in part-time and fixed-term positions. Women who comply with these organisational commands need to peripheralise their relational lives and experience care-led affective precarity.

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### **On Pioneers, Academic Nomadism and European Funding**

#### **Structural Precarity in Post-communist European Anthropology**

Lorena Anton, Marie Curie CIG Fellow in Social Anthropology (2013-2017)

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Drawing on my own experience for ‘becoming an anthropologist’, as a PhD candidate in cotutelle (2005-2010, University of Bucharest – University of Bordeaux), and the ups and downs of my involvement with anthropological research ever since, in this paper I show how the history of European anthropology/ethnology during communism created a ‘boomerang effect’ for all researchers involved in this field. Still in place in some post-communist countries, this effect can dramatically affect early career scholars who have to battle yearly with the constraints of ‘academic excellence’ vs. ‘academic nomadism’, imposed by availability of jobs, funding and even fieldwork. This helps creating and reinforcing precarity as normalcy in academia.

I argue that even if these mix of causes and effects can be nation-based, they become more and more transnational. Sometimes they are supported by research and funding policies, as I have noticed during my recent Marie Curie Career Integration Grant. Unfortunately the consequences of precarity, even those related to physical and mental health, are generally silenced down, even if better work and research practices can exist.

## **Combating Isolation and invisibility**

Dan Vesalainen Hirslund

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Academic careers are increasingly punctuated by experiences of insecurity relating to the larger neoliberal framework which seeks to transform academic institutions into markets for commodified knowledge. This has rendered new generations of academics particularly vulnerable as 'superfluous populations' that must struggle precariously and compete intensely - and late into their life - for the scarcity of jobs. I contend here that the problematic of academic precarity can be expanded by reflecting on the isolation and invisibility that academic specialisation and a punitive system of expulsion together effect. Based on experiences from Denmark, which with its history of welfare provisions provides a slightly different case of academic precarity, the contribution sketches a three-pronged strategy to strengthen work conditions and liberate academic careers from the tight snare of university institutions: a standardisation/formalisation of non-tenured academic contracts; strengthening of non-tenured academic networks through existing union structures; and the creation of new academic collectives that transgress institutional and disciplinary boundaries and which can serve as 'homes' for non-tenured academics.

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## **"Can't your parents help?" Experience of everyday cultures and practices of precarity in an Anthropology department.**

Lavinia Bertini, Doctoral Researcher, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

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"Can't your parents help?". This is the response, either explicit or implicit, I often receive when expressing my difficulties as a self-funded, PhD student and Associate Tutor in Anthropology at an English university.

Drawing on my experience, I reflect on how elitist cultures of academia entangled with neoliberal politics and conditions of precarity are detrimental to the career development of early researchers as well as to the very idea of research as a career.

I identify three main issues: first, the self-funded doctorate concept is problematic and belittles the essence of doctoral research, dismissing its practical and financial aspects.

Second, implying that PhD researchers should use family rather than University or research funds as their main, economic resource, reveals an elitist culture of access to academia.

Finally, the silent but daily reproduction of neoliberal cultures and politics is particularly problematic in anthropology where a lack of funding, sharpens the effects of precarity. Moreover, it shows how anthropology has failed so far to critically reflect on the modes of production of anthropological knowledge in everyday contexts. Therefore, I express the need for organised and informed spaces to contrast the many inequalities produced by precarity.

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## **Beyond the Contract: The Precarization of Scholars' Lives**

Marta Pérez and Ainhoa Montoya, University of London

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Our presentation will address the lived experiences of increasing precarious conditions among scholars and the kind of responses they are offering to them. In so doing, we will discuss one way in which we consider scholars' precarization can become visible and facilitate more collective responses. Drawing from research among early career anthropologists from a variety of backgrounds within Europe and beyond, we will seek to bring into the discussion how, in addition to deteriorating contracts within academia, many aspects of life—from the strictly material to the affective—are becoming ever more precarious. Imposed transnational lives; the difficulties in balancing professional and personal life; the inability to make a decent living with part-time, by the hour or occasional contracts; the demand that scholars become multifaceted individuals excelling at a greater number of tasks; the uncertainties and anxieties attached to deteriorating working conditions and increasing work demands are just a few examples of what we mean by the increasing precarization of life. Ultimately, we will argue that autoethnography rather than an individualizing method has allowed those participating in our research and ourselves to reflect critically on the issue of precarity beyond our own experience.

## **Politics of academic and migrant precarity: experiences of international doctoral candidates in present-day Finland**

Sonja Trifuljesko, PhD student, University of Helsinki

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Doctoral candidates in Finland are ambiguous figures: they are students and/or researchers, depending on their source of funding. If they are employed by a university, they tend to be considered as researchers. Those PhD candidates who do not receive funding for their dissertation work are regarded as students by the university administration, even if they work full-time on their PhD research. Finally, if a PhD candidate's work is financed via grants, an in-between situation gets created. The stratification of doctoral candidates is reflected in many aspects of their lives, but for those among them who are foreigners, it gets additional significance. While the intertwining of academia and (inter-)national politics at times becomes very conspicuous, its daily consequences are usually less visible, but equally powerful.

The paper focuses on the interplay between precarities generated by border regimes and by the contingent academic work through experiences of international doctoral candidates in present-day Finland. Drawing on my long-term ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2014 and 2016 at the University of Helsinki, I show that stratification of PhD candidates and stratification of migrants reinforce each other, creating experiences of a less or more certain (both academic and migrant) futures.