

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

***ONLINE* PhD Proposal Presentation**

Prefigurative relationality and anarchist collective process: Engagements with three activist-organizer milieus

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In the wake of the alter-globalization movement, political organizing in the radical left has tended to advocate egalitarian process and sought to generate the means of collective self-organization through horizontal structures and decision-making. Many activists and organizers—especially those influenced by a proliferation of anarchist ideas in recent decades—believe transformation will not follow from reform, or mediation with the existing political and economic orders but rather, must be built in the spaces of unequal interpersonal relationships and reconstituted collective social organization. The methods and goals of these movements testify to “another politics” Dixon (2014)—a politics which sees power as dispersed, and political action as grounded in the ever-day activities and relationships that people engage in themselves. My research is rooted in anarchist understandings and theories of praxis in political transformation and considers processes such as consensus-building as centered on the ‘prefigurative politics’ of reproducing desired social relations in the here and now. I consider the complexities of collective organizing in the radical left, and in particular, how emotions, feelings, sensations, and desires (affect) operate to enhance or hinder radical transformation. Through an approach which relies on a multi-methodological toolbox, my research investigates anarchist sociality across a number of activist milieus, including: the Industrial Workers of the World or IWW (North American and international), Grassroots to Global (Scotland, UK and international), and the Kommuja network of political communes (Germany).

This research is thus multi-sited, and employs multiple methods, including interviews and discussions, participant observation, auto-ethnography, and the collaborative creation of workshops and/or training materials. My approach is concerned with the everyday lives of activist-organizers—how they are able to activate emergent sensibilities, such as curiosity, care, and creativity. I wish to explore some of these capacities alongside the ways that people are transforming their own situations outside of hierarchical institutions and through collective and iterative processes of (re)organizing ways of acting, being, and therefore relating.

Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., TEAMS Link to follow

All Welcome!