CALL FOR PAPERS

Diversity, Threat and Morality in Urban Spaces. An International Conference

Tuebingen (Germany), 11th - 12th of October 2018

The recent turn to urban ethnography in migration and diversity studies has provided multiple insights into questions of conviviality and boundary-making processes in diversified urban settings. However, less emphasis has been put on the effects of morality and threat dynamics as facilitators of local divide or cohesion. With the aim of filling that gap, this conference aims to examine the interconnections between discourses of threat, power and morality in contexts where urban diversity meets inequality.

The guiding questions for the conference emerged in the research project *'Threat and Diversity in Urban Contexts'*, which is part of the *Collaborative Research Centre 923 'Threatened Orders – Societies under Stress'*, at the University of Tuebingen (Germany). In this project, diversity is *not* conceived as ethnic heterogeneity but as configuration of multiple social differences. Threat is understood as a social and emotional dynamic affecting broader social spheres and changing how individuals or groups move in urban spaces, which aspects of urban conviviality they focus on, and how they create ethnic, social, or moral boundaries.

Threat often operates by means of moralization, understood as an emotionalizing idiom referring to the inherent vulnerability of human co-existence. Threat discourses build on s*ocial imaginaries* such as ideas of 'the good life', community, public order, security, or prosperity. Seeing these normative and imaginary aspects of conviviality endangered may evoke emotions of fear, contempt, or anger. When (moral) threat dynamics intensify, it becomes more difficult for social actors to remain in a neutral position, to keep up cross-cutting ties, to focus on positive or neutral aspects of urban conviviality and to pretend to be sympathetic for those they consider as 'others'. Moral problematization can reinforce, but also contest boundaries based on other categories like class, ethnicity, gender, life-style, sexual orientation, residency, or political opinion.

Although some moral views are shared across groups, places and times, moralities are at the same time fragmented and contested. It is of special empirical interest to understand how heterogeneous moralities play out within and/or across diverse settings. Often, established and powerful groups control the ideas of what being a 'good member' of a local community means. In contrast, newcomers tend to be constructed as (moral) outsiders. However, the hegemony of established groups can be challenged and alternative ideas of a 'good life' and 'good social relationships' can be introduced. But who is and who isn't in the position to challenge established moralities remains an empirical question.

Within this framework of ideas, we invite scholars of different disciplinary backgrounds (e.g. sociology, anthropology, philosophy, geography, political science, etc.) for presentations concerned with the links and interconnections among threat, morality, urban spaces and diversity. Aiming at empirical comparison and theoretical synergies, we especially welcome ethnographic research — but do not exclude other kinds —

addressing social boundary-making and the relational aspects of urban life. We are particularly interested in proposals around — but not limited to — the following topics:

- How does morality affect urban everyday life?
- How can threat influence the way people perceive urban spaces?
- How can the links between power, threat, morality and space be understood? How does moral problematization affect relations between persons and places? How does threat influence local and social boundary-making? How do more specific threats (e.g. violence) relate to more general and abstract threats (e.g. the restructuring of capitalism)?
- How does threat affect modes of conviviality in diverse and unequal settings? What role does it play for the understanding of everyday moralities?
- How does morality challenge or connect to ideas of local community and communitarianism?
- How do conflicting moralities become interlinked, contested, negotiated etc.?
- Can threat be understood as a productive or destructive social force? And if so: What does it produce or destroy?

Interested scholars, please send abstracts (250-300 words) including the title of the paper, name, institutional affiliation and full contact details of the speaker, **before the 31st of January**, to the following email address: threat-morality-conference@sfb923.uni-tuebingen.de

NOTE: Travel and accommodation costs for selected speakers will be covered by the *Collaborative Research Centre 923 'Threatened Orders'.*