

**CONFERENCE “ANTHROPOLOGY OF STATE PERFORMANCE,
KINSHIP AND RELATEDNESS”**

November 5th-6th, 2020

Rīga Stradiņš University | Zoom

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH

14:00 OPENING REMARKS

Aigars Pētersons (Rector of the Rīga Stradiņš University)

Klāvs Sedlenieks (Relate.lv project leader, Rīga Stradiņš University)

14:15-15:45 SESSION I “KINSHIP AND POLITICS I”

**EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF LGBTQ PARENTING IN RUSSIA: INVISIBLE ACTIVISM
AND THE OTHER SIDE OF PUTIN'S WAR ON QUEERNESS**

Olga Doletskaya (University of Edinburgh)

A significant number of Russian parents are LGBTQ. They adopt and foster children, use assisted reproduction or raise children from previous heterosexual relationships. However, Queer families in Russia are forced to navigate their lives in a deeply hostile state. While state propaganda has made queer people and queer families targets for the Constitution campaign this summer, homophobic policies have been chosen as a trajectory of Putin’s ‘traditional family values’ complain since the early 2000s. In this paper I will discuss how Putin’s rule affects Russian LGBTQ families and their parenting strategies. I will argue that the state-enforced homophobia is intertwined with Putin’s claim to power as the formal laws come precede societal homophobic attitudes. Despite this, queer people manage to build families and thrive with the support of their communities and through rigorous identity management. LGBTQ families separate their public and private lives ‘covering’ their queerness and self-censorship. I will further discuss how the self-imposed invisibility in some areas of life, particularly while interacting with state-run institutions, allows queer families to be more open in other areas. Safe online spaces allow queer families to thrive in online communities, on social media and in their ‘queer bubbles’ becoming parents activists. Queerness and queer kinship in Russia are embedded in the post-Soviet gender contract as queer parents are forced to navigate gendered expectations. However, they find a balance between adhering to the gender contract to claim societal recognition and full citizenship and creating alternative family formations based on queer communality. Thus, queer parenthood is entangled in reproductive policies of the autocratic state and the post-Soviet gender contract.

REGULATING FAMILY LIFE AT THE INTERSECTION OF KINSHIP AND STATE (TANZANIA)

Nina Haberland (University of Vienna)

"Families and individuals who did not reach the established expectations of how to live a successful life make up the majority of cases in a social welfare office in Northern Tanzania. Parents who 'failed' to take care of their children, women who claim alimony from the father of their children or divorcees fighting about land present the daily business of the agents of the state (Fassin 2015), four social workers who decide on each case on an individual basis.

Drawing on several cases I collected during 12 months of ethnographic research in the department of health in a district in Northern Tanzania, I explore the various forms of state interventions into the lives of mainly poor families. Living at the margins of society they are not only thought to need advice and assistance - sometimes starting with instructions on breastfeeding – but often seek for the intervention of the state.

Based on recent calls for a relational state anthropology (Thelen/Vetteres/Benda-Beckmann 2018), the social welfare office thus presents an interesting intersection that shows the mediation between different realms such as public/private or state/kinship. By reading across social domains, I explore political, economic and social processes in the Tanzanian society and pay attention to questions of care responsibilities, moralities and (political) belonging."

ENACTING FAMILY IN THE LABOUR MARKET: THE STATE, THE FAMILY, ITS STRUCTURES AND THEIR DATA

Adrienne Hawley (Waterford Institute of Technology)

Taking Paul Dourish's injunction to anthropologists to go 'where the action is' (2001); an underexplored area of state-family interaction is in social welfare forms. In these curious places, the state negotiates with individuals around their family status, relatedness and accounts are offered, negotiated and accepted. As such they are remarkable sites where the performance of family is rendered concrete and laid bare to bureaucratic administration.

Here, I explore anthropologically, the experience of the UP1 application form for Irish unemployment benefit. Across 20 pages, in question after question individuals pour themselves into administrative categories manageable by the state. In this way, the mundane act of filling out a form is a deeper negotiation between the family and the State, where as the author of this dialog gently governmentalizes the family. Categories of family and the social are rendered anew across the form, a lover becomes a partner, home becomes a habitual residence, unthinkingly or perhaps worse thinkingly asking unemployed people for their occupation, line by line, check box by check box, the form performs the State's vision and concept of the family. As such, it represents the sublime embodiment of state performance, kinship and relatedness.

The parsing of questions, language, category, data and their engagement across the form reveal the conflict, complexity, ambivalences and agnostics that surround the State as it attempts to wrestle the problem of family and care administratively in the forms rich social drama (Turner, 1974). In this I eschew considering this as another manifestation of Foucauldian technology and power, rather, I explore this terrain for its micropolitics with empathy for the author and applicant. Unpicking the two language games (Wittgenstein, 1953) the bureaucracy and its concerns; as well as the needy with their hunger, reveals the form as a site in which state care unfolds.

THE SCHOOL AS A MEDIATOR OF KINSHIP RELATIONS AND MEMORY TRANSMISSION WITHIN FAMILIES

Agita Lūse (Riga Stradiņš University)

"Such concepts as kin, lineage, family tree, and genealogical chart were mostly absent from the school curricula in post-WW2 Latvia. Since the late 1990s, however, these concepts have steadily found a firm place in the state-approved educational standards, the primary school textbooks in History and Social Science, and the secondary school Biology program.

This paper aims to explore this particular aspect of interaction between the state and kinship, namely, the ways in which the public school curricula as well as academic contests organized by teachers' associations in Latvia, promote the youth's sense of a connection to the social and political history of their country. Drawing a genealogical chart or compiling a family history outline is a feat requiring at least some degree of collaboration within a kin group. More or less willingly, parents, grandparents, or guardians become co-authors on their offspring's school projects. The school projects both appeal to the memories, transmitted within families, and actively construct these memories.

The impact of the school curricula on the kinship networks and forms of memory transmission will be explored drawing on a number of students' projects as well as the interviews that the author conducted between February and September 2020 with the supervisors of those projects. The latter (most often the History or Biology but at times also Language and Literature teachers) represent schools in the capital city as well as in four smaller towns (in the western as well as the eastern and central part of Latvia, with Russian as well as Latvian as language of instruction). "

16:00-17:15 KEYNOTE SPEECH BY JESSICA ROBBINS (Wayne State University)

AGING NATIONALLY IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND: MEMORY, KINSHIP, AND PERSONHOOD

Jessica Robbins is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Gerontology and Department of Anthropology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, USA. She received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Michigan, and her B.A. in Anthropology and Music from Williams College. Her research explores aging, memory, kinship, and personhood in historical political-economic perspective, in both Poland and Michigan. Her research has been published in journals such as *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Ageing & Society*, *Etnografia Polska*, and *East European Politics, Societies & Cultures*. Her first book, *Aging Nationally in Contemporary Poland: Memory, Kinship, and Personhood*, is forthcoming later this year with Rutgers University Press.

17:30-19:00 SESSION II “KINSHIP AND CARE”

FATHERS, MOTHERS AND CHILDREN: VISITATION RIGHTS FOR THE NON-RESIDENT PARENTS IN LATVIA

Andris Saulītis (Rīga Stradiņš University)

Visitation rights of children for the non-resident parent are considered a family issue. When divorced parents cannot come to an agreement, this is one of the rare occasions where the state has fully delegated the decision to the courts. In other words, it is the court system that regulates the care of children among divorced couples. How many hours, days and holidays the non-resident parent is spending with the children? Is it equal for men and women? This study looks at the court decisions for the period 2017-2019 to explore how judicial system frames family and care after divorce.

WAITING FOR THE PARENT STATE: SUFFERING, SOCIALITY, AND CITIZENSHIP STRUGGLES AMONG FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES IN CHINA

Zhiying Ma (University of Chicago)

In recent years, the Chinese state has been using a paternalistic discourse to legitimize its mental health interventions, which seek to not only care for seriously mentally ill patients but also manage them as sources of security risks; meanwhile, it displaces the actual responsibilities of being paternal onto the family, especially women and elderly parents. This paper draws on my fieldwork with family caregivers' social life and organization to examine their affective experiences, collective actions, and citizenship claims. I show that, by asking caregivers to fend for themselves and their mentally ill loved ones, neoliberal social policies neglect people's need for dependency and exacerbate their vulnerability. Many caregivers were also former socialist workers to whom the state has broken its promise of paternalistic protection. Despite state agents' attempts to depoliticize their feelings, caregivers construct narratives of suffering together, which allow them to make sense of their systemic marginalization and the hypocrisy of the state. Based on this common experience of suffering, caregivers teach each other to make the most of welfare and leisure resources, which they insist have been secretly withheld from them by the state. Moreover, some caregivers have begun to mobilize and demand political recognition of their intimate labor and contribution to the security state agenda; they also ask the state to be a proper parent and nurture both its vulnerable children. I call such historically-situated, relationally-oriented politics and practice “paternalistic citizenship.” This article concludes by interrogating the promises and perils of this “paternalistic citizenship” as exemplified by caregivers, and by considering the affective transformations it needs to open new political horizons.

PERFORMING EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SAFETY MEASURES: ETHICAL CITIZENSHIP DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

Kārlis Lakševics (University of Latvia)

Epidemiological safety measures set and negotiated by state institutions in Latvia have produced a variety of modes of state performance. In this paper, I juxtapose the data from a qualitative research project remotely conducted during the state of emergency in March/April with recent forms of Covid-19 denial to argue that both Covid-19 denial and full compliance with epidemiological safety measures are performances of the state whose center stage is one's kin and household. From the one side, people's tactics emerge from the state responsabilisation (Trnka & Trundle, 2014) of individual citizens towards preventing the spread of the virus. Here distancing, disinfecting, wearing a mask, and ability to hold a conversation on the count of recently infected citizens are foundational to one's moral personhood and contribute to one's sense of being an ethical citizen. In combination with developing

a biopolitical and necropolitical awareness of 'counting deaths' (Wernimont, 2019) at the national level, key performances are related to whom one perceives as the most vulnerable among one's household and kin, thus, by them taking the role of 'ethical substance' (Povinelli, 2011) in their interactions of care that often contest who is the caretaker. From the other side, Covid-19 deniers in Latvia base their performance of denying the validity of epidemiological safety measures and Covid-19 itself as first and foremost a critique of the state as corrupt, punitive, and carceral. Here the narrative often bases their argument on the vulnerability of the precarious worker who has been denied their rights through politics of containment. Both of these positions, however, are found upon neoliberal imaginaries of the threats towards either immunocompromised or precarious individuals and come up against critique towards one another without recognizing that both approaches lament a certain loss of a relatedness and moral community and downplay multiple types of vulnerability.

STATE, CARE, KINSHIP (AND THE PANDEMIC) AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN LATVIAN NURSING HOME

Anna Žabicka (University of Vienna)

"I don't think that virus is real. I haven't seen it... maybe our government came up with it, you know, to return our people home... otherwise, it is not good that they don't take care of their elders" – this short vignette was repeatedly told to me by a 93 years old woman living in a rural nursing home whose children and grandchildren all live in Latvia. Although the idea of Covid-19 being a government tool to repatriate home its "long lost" citizens and to bind them of taking care of older parents was not widely shared among older adults in a small rural nursing home I have spent the last months in, it represents a couple of circulating ideas blending state to care and kinship. First, the idea that adult children do not take enough care of their elderly parents is shared among some nursing home residents, however, most of them do not ascribe that situation directly to themselves. Mostly it is seen as something that happens to others, although assumptions that the nursing home is just a temporary place to stay before they return home or tacit sadness of not seeing their relatives enough permeates some stories. Second, assumptions among residents and staff that "those who travel and bring viruses" are morally loose/detached is also in place. Third, the idea that the political system should support (economic and social development) or organize (political regime) its citizens to stay and live in Latvia and thus also be present for their older adults is present.

My insights are based on ongoing fieldwork in a small rural nursing home for older adults in Latvia. I will be thankful for any insights and fruitful discussions surrounding this topic. "

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH

15:00-16:30 SESSION III “KINSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP”

STATE OF PRECARIETY? EXPLORING THE EVERYDAY TOPOLOGY OF YOUNG ADULTS' KINSHIP NETWORKS FOR SUPPORT IN PRECARIOUS TIMES

Jenny Hewitt (University of Sussex)

The proposal draws upon field research for my PhD conducted in 2018, consisting of narrative interviews with young people aged between 18-25. The research invited the participants, using methods such as photo voice / walking interviews, to share narratives about their close relationships and the ways in which these connected to their concepts / experiences of state regulation and ‘politics’.

There is a sizeable body of evidence which seems to point to the significance of family / kin, mentoring relationships and friendships in formulating an individual’s complex sense of citizenship and civic engagement (McIntosh, Hart, Youniss, 2007, amongst others). In contrast to this, the much media popularised and reductive ‘youth in crisis’ debate cites the folk devil of ‘the destruction of the nuclear family’ / ‘failure’ of familial supervision and increased leniency as being directly related to struggles in youth transitions and youth civic participation (Acland, 2018). My research contributes to qualitative evidence contesting the taken-for-granted relational nature of these debates, and aims to re-centre the debate in the complexity of young people’s everyday life interactions and decision-making. The analysis expanded upon some of the following themes:

What are the conceptions of state within state-kinship interfaces when centring the home, family and friendships as domestic sites of geopolitics, impacting on and co-constituting emotional and political life (Brickell, 2012; Harker, 2012; Pain, 2009)? To what extent can understanding the participants’ relationships as a site for socio-political (in)security, factoring in the precarity of their economic affairs and employment, connect individual aspirations with the communal discourses (Botterill, Hopkins, Sanghera: 2018) of intimacy and heritage? Does the state prove central and yet “[reside] separately from state life” (Yurchak, 2006), furthermore, how can this be re-examined in the context of the current Covid-19 crisis?

THE RAPANUI AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF CHILE: PERFORMING KINSHIP, AUTOCHTHONY AND CITIZENSHIP IN RAPA NUI (EASTER ISLAND)

Diego Muñoz (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität)

Being considered as ‘Indigenous people’ implies a cultural identity oriented to historical origins and a legal category of citizenship. In 1993, Chile enacted law 19.253 to recognize the existence of eight “Indigenous ethnic groups” (Mapuche, Aymara, Quechua, Colla, Likan Antai, Kaweskar, Yagan and Rapanui). This law, also named ley indígena, ostensibly aimed at protecting the “Indigenous cultures” and “Indigenous lands”, and at implementing a policy of positive discrimination. During the negotiation process, the key issue was the definition of criteria for the acquisition of an “Indigenous status”. The senators and some Indigenous leaders proposed a mix of principles, taking into consideration different notions of kinship, defined (1) through descentance from an Indigenous population, (2) through being the spouse of an Indigenous person and/or (3) through self-identification with an Indigenous group. However, the participating Rapanui leaders opposed the last two criteria and succeeded in imposing that the criterion of descentance was the only one applicable to them. In this paper, I focus on the Rapanui arguments used for this modification in which haka’ara (autochthonous genealogy) played a fundamental role. First, I present the Rapanui principles of kinship organized around a deep genealogical memory of haka’ara (literally meaning “to go up the road”). Then, I analyze how the

Rapanui applied this genealogical notion towards its application to the law. Ultimately, I highlight the impact of this process on both cultural identity and legal category, showing who can be considered as “Indigenous” in Rapa Nui and Chile. I argue that the Rapanui case is an example of how the local conceptualization and performance of kinship transforms the category of citizenship, while this legal category is simultaneously and dialectically incorporated into the autochthonous principles of kinship.

PROVIDING SUPPORT, CREATING INSECURITY: STATE POLICIES AND ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN LATVIA

Dīāna Kiščenko (Rīga Stradiņš University)

Since the middle of the 1990s, private clinics in Latvia offer services of assisted reproductive technologies. In 2012, a state-financed infertility treatment programme was launched and has been evaluated as successful by both clients and clinics. At the same time, the state has not been able to set up a national gamete donor register in Latvia. In this paper, the role of the state in the infertility treatment process will be discussed by presenting data from research (semi-structured interviews, secondary data and policy document analysis) carried out in the period from July till September 2020 in Latvia.

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Law currently stipulates that medical fertilization cannot result in more than three children being born from a single donor's germ cells in the country, and only the genetic and anthropometric data of the gamete donor may be disclosed to potential parents. In order to obey the law, clinics maintain their own donor registers, but no national gamete donor register has been established. The lack of state-run register and anonymous donation policy can create issues related to genetic malformation and inadvertent incest, which can lead to incestuous marriage - an illegal practice in Latvia.

Accordingly, the state plays an ambiguous role in infertility treatment in Latvia. While it supports its desired kinship forms by financing infertility treatment procedures, it can also create undesirable forms of kinship in the future by not maintaining national gamete donor register.

STATE, PERFORMANCE AND KINSHIP: CONNECTING THE DOTS

Klāvs Sedlenieks (Rīga Stradiņš University)

In this presentation I want to explore the concept of state performance and its relation to kinship. My interpretation of the state as a result of performance draws inspiration in Judith Butler's interpretation of gender. Butler writes that the gendered body 'has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'. In contrast to Alexei Yurchak, who seems to downplay the performative aspects of human expression in relation to the state, I emphasise the performative aspect as integral to the state. This allows me to avoid the methodological trap where one needs to define what the correct state is and on the contrast of this ideal describe certain activities as state or non-state. The concept of state performance, just like the concept of gender performance, allows including all different kinds of activities into the state – for instance, tax legislation, discussions about it, compliance with this legislation as well as avoidance all work together. One cannot have a complete picture of the state unless all aspects are taken into account. Moreover, it is not only the actants but also the observers and interpreters that participate in this process. In contrast to the normative approach, when the state is taken as a result of a performance, there are, for instance, no failed states.

Kinship is an important constitutive part of the state performance. At times on the basis of kinship one draws the mental boundaries of the state, thus restricting certain, at times it influences how the state is performed, e.g., through nepotism or through metaphors of the nation as a family or through motivation of a person to engage or avoid engagement with the political processes of the state. As large

portion of the state activities are linked to manipulating kinship and relatedness, state cannot be understood without analysing kinship.

16:45-18:15 SESSION IV “KINSHIP AND POLITICS II”

RESTORING LATVIA’S INDEPENDENCE: THE ROLE OF MATERIALITY, TRANSCENDENCE AND KINSHIP IN THE THEORY OF STATE

Andris Šuvajevs (Riga Stradiņš University)

I engage with the notion of the state in Latvia through reflections and memories of the people who advocated the restoration of independence during the tumultuous early 1990s when the Soviet Union was collapsing. The dreams of an independent state were fostered within close family settings complicating the conceptual dichotomy between kinship and the state and illustrating their mutual embeddedness. Moreover, by demonstrating the personal nature of political activities, I argue for a way toward resolving the theoretical puzzle at the centre of anthropological scholarship on the state which often goes in contrary directions. David Graeber’s theory of value helps reconcile perspectives that see the state as something real and thing-like with those that insist on state’s performative dimension. Thus, I contribute to the latest trends in anthropology of the state by showing how the notion of performance may account for political transformations and may help reconsider to what extent certain regimes actually ‘fall’.

GESTIÓN: TEMPORALITIES AND INTERFACES BETWEEN KINSHIP AND POLITICS IN THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON

Cristian Erazo

In the city of Mocoa in Amazon-Andean foothills of Colombia, indigenous leaders capture resources for communitarian activities through skilful navigation and engagements with a diverse institutional landscape of this administrative and bureaucratic centre of the Putumayo region. Such interactions between indigenous leaders and multiple institutional actors are locally known as doing *gestión*. In this paper, I focus on the ways in which *gestión* connects political leadership practices with intimate worlds of kin and kith relations and temporalities. Following the *gestión* in the life of an Inga woman who leads a local indigenous community, I argue that it entails the making of kinship with institutional and political agents. Yet, in everyday life, *gestión* is not only a matter of kinship and politics, but also of time. Leaders need time to do *gestión* in a highly institutionalized landscape of a city, which has experienced a growing number of state and non-state humanitarian interventions characterized by complex entanglements of bureaucratic schemes of different organisations (state and non-state; international, national, local; slow state bureaucracies and short-cum-quick limited project-based interventions). By focusing on the relation between *gestión*, kinship and time, I analyse the incorporation of institutional temporalities of *gestión* as a process in which leaders became state-like actors while carving out certain autonomies and negotiated brokerage.

AFGHAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS: TRANSNATIONAL JIHAD AND (UN)DOING OF KINSHIP IN IRAN

Ahmad Moradi (École des hautes études en sciences sociales)

This paper examines efforts to forge intimate relations with state in context of transnational movement, focusing particularly on Afghan foreign fighters in Iran. The Afghans I worked with in 2015–2016 and summer of 2019 were refugees, undocumented and asylum seekers, who returned to Iranian soil after fighting and getting injured in regional conflicts. Struggles of Afghan ex-combatants and their families to claim disability benefits constitute the core of my ethnography. By paying attention to the

language of kinship (brotherhood) that underwrote the appeal of disabled Afghans to state care, I ask the following question: how could transnational jihad 'rewrite kinship' (Rapp & Ginsburg 2001); resulting in emergent kin strategies but also eroding strong family ties? To provide answer to this question, I show how Afghan fighters and their families engaged in processes of 'kinning the state' (Thelen et al. 2017), by actively inviting, and demanding, state actors and Iranian military cadres to play an intimate and significant role in their lives. These kinship expectations and demands ranged from sharing annual events such as children's birthdays and religious gatherings, to being present in times of hardship, as well as sorting out family disputes. Despite achieving some form of state intimacy, Afghans' demand on the state to perform as kin occurred against a backdrop of national public hostility. A public sphere in which relating intimately with state denoted 'siding with the authoritarian oppressor'. In this political register, intimate identification of Afghans with state was received by neighbours and close communities with mistrust and derision, and in many cases severed the already existing kinship ties. Bringing these every day and conflictual encounters into ethnographic focus, this paper sheds new light on techniques and practices of relatedness in transitional spaces where language of kinship and kinning practices continue to define, shape and disrupt family ties and state and non-citizen relations.

'A STATE WITH AN ARMY': HOPE, ANXIETY AND STATE-MAKING IN KOSOVO

Rozafa Berisha (University of Manchester)

Focusing on young Kosovars' response to the formation of the army in December 2018, this paper ethnographically explores how this event articulated hope and anxiety for the state. The formation of the army came ten years after Kosovo's independence, in a period of growing anxiety about state's international legitimacy. These concerns were especially exacerbated by the shrinking statehood recognition and debates about territorial exchange between Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovo institutions, on the other hand, struggle to exercise full authority 'in a field of hypergovernance' (Kivland 2012). International actors and the peacekeeping mission retain military and judiciary powers that exceed local governance responsibilities, diminishing state sovereignty. Yet, as the acknowledgement of sovereign statehood was considered to depend on a full military force, this event was publically staged as a moment of 'state-making' (Reeves et al 2014). Moreover, it was vested with a sense of national achievement by expanding on discourses about national kinship that have long informed Kosovar nation-state building project. The formation of the army offered one of the few occasions for 'the state' appear as an autonomous, unitary and sovereign entity. Thus, its significance lied in the symbolic production of 'the state' than in its real effects. Based on the accounts of young Kosovars, this paper shows that the army became an object of affective investment which evoked 'a normal, not-yet state', needed to deliver political and economic stability (Jansen 2015). By ethnographically attending to the anxiety and hope in a context of disputed statehood, this paper sheds light on the ways 'the state' can be an aspired rather than an evaded or resisted political order.

18:15 FINAL REMARKS