

Legal Proceedings against Right-Wing Terrorism

Perspectives from Political Sociology and the Sociology of Law

4-5 December 2015

University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf / Hochschule Düsseldorf (HSD)
Germany

Several countries have witnessed severe acts of right-wing terrorism in the past decades. Be it the bank robberies and murder of Alan Berg by 'The Order' in the U.S., the mass killing by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway, the racist murders by John Ausonius who became known as the 'Laserman' in Sweden, or the racist crimes perpetrated by a group of neo-Nazis in Hungary – not to forget the bombing of Bologna railway station in 1980 and the assassination of Jitzchak Rabin by Jigal Amir. In all these cases, suspects were tried and eventually sentenced. Also, many observers expect a conviction of the defendants in the present proceedings against the NSU in Germany.

Although these crimes have hit the respective societies deeply and created a huge amount of attention, so far there is little sociological research on the impact of these crimes. There is even less academic knowledge about the subsequent court proceedings although those are considered an important contribution to the elucidation of the crimes and the circumstances that made them possible. For some, the trial is also a contribution to justice.

The conference offers the opportunity to discuss questions such as

- What had been the expectations of the wider public or particular groups regarding the course and the outcome of the legal proceedings. Did they materialize? If not what had been the cause?
- How did the media cover the trials and those participating in it?
- How was the balance of power between the actors involved in the criminal procedure? Has it changed over the course of the process? If so, in which way and for what reason(s)?
- What kind of reactions did the legal proceeding provoke from racist/neo-Nazi groups? Did the trial or its outcome influence the political strategy and/or the choice of arms?
- Did the state authorities react to these severe crimes by discussing or adopting new penal codes? Did the society or particular groups find the trial adequate according to their particular understanding of justice?
- How did the behaviour of the accused look like, not least in comparison with other criminal proceedings?
- Have the trials been influenced by the particular political and legal culture? If so, in which way?
- Which aspects of the crimes had been addressed in the course of the trials, which had not been made a topic? For what reasons?
- What are the broader contexts of state responses to the extreme right?

Preliminary Programme

4th December 2015 (Friday)

- 10:30 am** **Registration & Coffee**
- 12:15 pm** **Welcome & Introduction**
Fabian Virchow
University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf (Germany)
Faculty of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies
- 1:00 pm **A Performative Perspective on Terrorism Trials**
Beatrice de Graaf
University of Utrecht (Netherlands)
Department of History and Art History
- 2:00 pm **Prosecuting Sediton: Comparing Ft. Smith and the Hutaree**
Pete Simi
University of Nebraska-Omaha (U.S.A.)
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
- 3:00 pm Coffee break
- 3:30 pm **Performing Justice, Coping with Trauma: The trial against Anders Breivik, 2012**
Tore Bjørgo
Norwegian Police University College (Norway)
- 4:30 pm **The Italian Cases**
N.N.
- 5:30 pm End of Day 1
- 6:00 pm Dinner
- 8:00 pm **Judgement in Hungary (Film screening)**
Eszter Hajdú
Film Screening (Hungarian with English Subtitles)
Followed by a discussion with the director Eszter Hajdú

“This film traces the fate of three Roma families who trust the judicial system to give them closure. They believe that the murderers - who killed their child, their grandchild, their spouse, their sibling - will be punished. They trust that the Hungarian state will protect them. Will these families achieve what they seek? What will be the outcome of the marathon trial? "I spent 167 days in the company of accused murderers; an extensive group of Roma mourning the deaths of children, spouses and siblings; and an extraordinarily charismatic and passionate judge. Three years spent in this claustrophobic situation eventually enabled me to retell the dramatic story of a few individuals, and therefore the Roma community, through the documentary film that became known as Judgement in Hungary.”- Eszter Hajdu, the film's director.

5th December 2015 (Saturday)

- 8:30 am Coffee
- 9:00 am **Neo-Nazi terrorism: from text to trial**
Matthew Feldman
University of Teesside (UK)
- 9:50 am **The relevance of co-plaintiff. The NSU trial before the Higher Regional Court of Munich as an example of current deficits in Germany's political and legal culture**
Samuel Salzborn & Marc Schwietring
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany)
Institute of Political Science
- 10:40 am Coffee Break
- 11:00 am **Defending or Damaging Democracy? Legal Action against Anti-immigrant Parties in Europe and its Effects on their Electoral Support**
Joost van Spanje LL.M.
University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- 11:50 am **From Covert Collusion to Overt Sponsorship? Reflections on Law, Politics and Right-Wing Terrorism in India**
Badrinath Rao
Kettering University, Flint (MI) (USA)
- 12:40 pm **Comments on presentations**
Massimiliano Livi
(Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany)
Hartmut Aden
(Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin/Berlin School of Economics and Law)
- 1:45 pm End of Conference

Organizers

Section *Political Sociology* of the German Sociological Association (DGS)
Section *Sociology of Law* of the German Sociological Association (DGS)
FORENA – Research Unit on Right-Wing Extremism at the University of Applied Sciences
Düsseldorf

Co-funded by the Faculty of Social Science and Culture Studies at the University of Applied
Sciences Düsseldorf (HSD)

Local organizer

FORENA – Research Unit on Right-Wing Extremism at the University of Applied Sciences
Düsseldorf
Prof. Dr. Fabian Virchow
fabian.virchow@hs-duesseldorf.de

Place

The conference will take place at the University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf/Hochschule Düsseldorf.

Registration

If you wish to participate in the international workshop, please contact us via e-mail by contacting the local organizer. Unfortunately, only a limited number of places are available. Your registration is valid if you receive a confirmation of the organizer.

Fee

Participation fee is € 30. Dinner not included.

Language

The conference language is English.

Contributors (alphabetical order)

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