



**ABSTRACTS FOR THE CONFERENCE “MOBILIZING
AFFECT – AFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION”
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE CRC 1171
“AFFECTIVE SOCIETIES”
21– 23 MAY 2025**

The conference is organized by the Collaborative Research Center 1171 “Affective Societies”, FU Berlin, in cooperation with the TU Dresden research project “Image Protests on Social Media” and ICI Berlin.

Keynote lecture:

Clare Hemmings (London)

From ‘Affective Dissonance’ to ‘Affective Solidarity’: The Politics of Affect and the Rise of the Far Right

While one knows that part of right-wing populist appeal relies on its mobilization of affect – what Judith Butler describes as ‘fascist passions’ (2024) – people often struggle to delineate or harness affect for alternative, progressive projects. This talk asks how to generate solidarity and alternative affective investment for our times, drawing on Hemmings work on ‘affective dissonance’. She introduced this concept in 2012 as a way of thinking about affect and political attachments beyond identity and social movements. In this talk, she wants to return to ‘affective dissonance’ to propose it as a more *universal methodology* for underpinning ‘affective solidarity’ based in difference. Hemmings explores two mobilizations of ‘affective dissonance’, the first is as a methodology for universalizing affiliation through re-reading late 1980s and early 1990s queer theory (particular Eve Sedgwick and Gloria Anzaldúa) as *consistently concerned* with sexual violence, homophobia and space. The second proposes ‘affective dissonance’ as a methodology starting from grief and loss, through re-reading Amal Treacher Kabesh’s work on history and ambivalence. In both cases animating ‘affective dissonance’ towards ‘affective solidarity’ requires reading practices that sit with yearning and discomfort yet refuse to cede ‘affective belonging’ to the right.

Presentations:

Michal Givoni (Be'er Sheva/Berlin)

Protest of the Captive Heart: Mobilizing Desperation

Since January 2023, the liberal public in Israel has been engaged in a desperate protest against what it perceives as the imminent collapse of Jewish-Israeli democracy. Initially directed against the right-wing government's plans for a judicial overhaul, following Hamas' massacre of October 7th, the focus of the protests shifted to the plight of the Israeli hostages in Gaza and the refusal of the Israeli government to reach a deal for their release. In my presentation, I examine one particularly puzzling aspect of this ongoing mobilization: its general ignorance of and silence about the predicament of Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank. How could liberal affects and feelings of dissidence, care, commitment, and struggle, which these anti-governmental protests enhanced and so effectively mobilized, foster acquiescence to mass killing, domicile, ethnic cleansing, and famine? While the "dehumanization through ignorance" (Levi 2023) that characterizes Jewish-Israeli attitudes towards Gaza has many different sources, I argue that the rise of a liberal politics of hope since the 2010s, in which public protests have been pivotal, has facilitated and legitimized this disavowal. The desperate quest for hope laid the foundations for protests that traded elevated political feelings and a temporary relief from despair, frustration, and helplessness for real structural change. Their psycho-political rewards have steadily overridden moral sentiments and practices of critique that were seen as too negative and enervating. As I will show, the desire for hope has a close affinity with the moral polarities of the melodrama. Both currently provide anxious liberal publics with an affective reassurance, a feeling of belonging, and a sense of sovereignty.

Ana Makhashvili (Berlin)

Affect and Counterpublicity in Far-Right Mobilization on X

This presentation integrates affect theory (Seigworth & Pedwell, 2023) with recent developments in public sphere theory (Jackson & Kreiss, 2023; Tischauser & Musgrave, 2020) to conceptualize far-right mobilization on X as an "imitative counterpublic". Using mixed-methods approach, three case studies of migration-related events in Germany were conducted, combining hashtag co-occurrence analysis with qualitative text analysis on selected samples. The findings highlight two key dimensions of far-right discourse: (1) hashtag networks reveal recurring far-right populist themes such as "anti-elitism", "(anti-Muslim) racism", and "nativism"; whereas (2) qualitative analysis uncovers the interplay between far-right ideology and affects. Through these analyses, three primary affective strategies are identified as central to the far-right's construction of an imitative counterpublic: the "weaponization of emotions", the "construction of emotional antagonisms", and the "strategic claim to victimhood". These strategies are explored as foundational elements shaping far-right discourse and its mobilization on social media.

Simon Koschut/Jonas Harbke (Friedrichshafen)

Hijacking Marginalization: How the Identitarian Movement Mobilizes for Affect

This presentation examines the concept of affective mobilization with a focus on the Identitarian Movement, analyzing how affect, understood as a relational and open-ended force, shapes far-right mobilization and societal responses. Affective mobilization highlights the dynamics through which collective actions emerge, evolve and potentially disrupt socio-political structures. Focusing on activist actions by the Identitarian Movement, this presentation illustrates how far-right actors strategically deploy affective symbols, mediated narratives, and discursive practices to mobilize support for their political demands and push the boundaries of acceptable discourse to the political right. In doing so, the Identitarian Movement establishes its own emotional norms and narratives, such as the perceived necessity to combat “foreign infiltration”. Positioning itself as a marginalized entity, the group deliberately appropriates the concept of “affects from below”, traditionally associated with emancipatory struggles. Typically, the concept refers to the influence exerted by grassroots movements, marginalized groups, or individuals with less power or status on larger social, political, or organizational structures. It explains how bottom-up forces can shape, change, or impact the decisions, policies, and actions of those in positions of authority. Consequently, the expression of such “affects from below”, especially when they occupy radical and extreme political positions, can have a deterrent effect and mobilize counter-demonstrations, illustrating the polarizing potential of such strategies.

Walking Sessions with Lara Baladi (Cairo), Fadia Elgharib (Berlin/Cairo), and Tanja-Bianca Schmidt (Dresden)

Invisible Monument

Invisible Monument is a series of contributory and geolocated audioscapes situated in cities around the globe. Following the successful first iteration by Lara Baladi and Hasley Burgund at Boston's Dewey Square – the historic site of the 2011 #Occupy Boston protests – this second iteration, crafted by Lara Baladi, Fadia Elgharib, and Tanja-Bianca Schmidt, will unfold in the vibrant city of Berlin through an engaging walk. Participants will be invited to embark on a two-hour journey along a carefully planned route, guided by three thought-provoking prompts: walls/borders, resistance, and police. As we walk together, participants will have the opportunity to engage with Lara Baladi, Fadia Elgharib, Tanja-Bianca Schmidt, and each other, sharing reflections and personal testimonies related to these important themes, all of which will be captured in a sound mapping app. Throughout our journey, we will pause at three key locations to rest, reflect, and discuss, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences. Ultimately, the sound contributions gathered will form the foundation of a small publication, celebrating our collective responses to these themes and the profound emotional connections we share. Join us in this exploration of memory, resilience, and transformation as we create an audible tribute to our interconnected stories.

Podium Discussion

“Mobilizing Affect. Entanglements across Academia, Arts and Activism”

Chair: Verena Straub (Dresden)

In recent years, the intersections between academia, arts, and activism have become more dynamic, as collaborations across these fields challenge traditional boundaries and hierarchies of knowledge production. Many individuals navigate multiple roles – as artistic researchers, ‘artists’ or engaged scholars – integrating critical inquiry, creative expression, and political intervention. What tensions and possibilities emerge when academic discourse meets artistic practice and grassroots activism? What role does affect play – and how is it mobilized differently in these domains? How to reflect on one's own affective engagement when researching, making art or protesting? We want to discuss these questions with our three guests: **Billy Holzberg**, who is a researcher and lecturer in Social Justice at King's College London and the author of “Affective Bordering: Race, Deservingness and the Emotional Politics of Migration Control”, **Cesy Leonard**, action artist and founder of the collective “Radikale Töchter” which fosters new forms of political participation, and **Sinthujan Varatharajah**, who is an essayist and political geographer, and the author of “Hierarchies of Solidarity” (with Moshtari Hilal).

Workshops

Lara Baladi (Cairo)

Anatomy of Revolution

In this workshop we will engage with “Anatomy of Revolution: An ABC and Archive of Revolting”. This ongoing multimedia art project is not just an exploration of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution; it is a powerful testament to the spirit of change ignited by global protests that resonate with our collective yearning for justice and freedom. Participants will explore a dynamic website that serves both as an ABC and a comprehensive archive, showcasing the iconography of protest and the impactful texts related to past and present revolts. Additionally, a series of artworks derived from this archive will guide our creative discussions. We invite you to bring your knowledge and experiences

related to mobilization into this collaborative space. As we explore in small groups, we will delve into a selection of powerful words from the Anatomy of Revolution lexicon: archive, human being, love, life, death, hope, abuse, testosterone, no, fire, migration, police, hashish, paradise, nostalgia, wall, fear, memory, censorship, cloud, and silence. Together, we will reflect on these significant themes and contribute fresh perspectives that will enrich the project, further developing a living archive that embodies our collective struggles for dignity and liberation.

Marina Guzzo (São Paulo)

Performative Rest Assembly

In *Exhausting dance*, André Lepecki (2017) reminds us that the kinetic project driving modernity is intrinsically linked to the colonial project. Here, we relate this to the climate crisis and the ongoing destruction of the planet in an “infinite mobilization”, deeply intertwined with racism, capitalism, and the extractivism. How can we intensify our intervention given the climate crisis? How do we reflect on the relentless cycle of production and “agitation” that artists, activists, and social practitioners endure in their attempts to confront this challenge? How can we resist catastrophe by creating spaces for rest? And how can we meaningfully pause amidst such constant activity? This workshop explores the body and its practices, drawing on insights from the humanities and arts to reimagine rest as a way of engaging with affect, mobilization, and modes of existence in capitalist society – all within the context of the ongoing climate emergency. “Rest is seen as a resistance” (Hersey, 2023) – an act of defiance against the unrelenting demands for productivity that shape contemporary life. Using a cartographic methodology that blends artistic and educational experimentation, the workshop invites participants to explore bodily, gestural, aesthetic, and sensory research as political acts. It challenges the culture of acceleration that dominates the modern world. As we approach the brink of environmental collapse, we turn to the wisdom of Ailton Krenak, who reminds us that “life is not useful”. Instead, we are called to embrace more-than-human ways of being, cultivating small gestures that open up

vast spaces for contemplation and enchantment in the face of life itself. Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and bring a mat for floor- based practices.

Gesa Jessen/Aletta Diefenbach/Stefanie de Velasco (Berlin)

„Komm in den Garten“ –

Eine kurze Schreibpraxis zu feministischen Liebes- und Lebensmodellen mit Stefanie de Velasco

Welche Beziehungen, welche Lieben und welche Intimitäten werden in literarischen Texten in den Mittelpunkt gerückt, welche bewohnen die Fußnoten? Wie lassen sich schreibend eingerostete Liebeskonzepte auf den Kopf stellen? Was für feministische Widerstandskräfte stecken darin, über „Hunde und Freundinnen“ zu schreiben, so wie es die Schriftstellerin Grit in Stefanie de Velascos Roman *Das Gras auf unserer Seite* tut? In dieser kurzen Schreibpraxis wollen wir es ausprobieren. Wir werden nicht nur gemeinsam Textstellen lesen und uns darüber austauschen, wie Liebesskripte literarisch funktionieren und wie sie gesellschaftlich eingebettet sind, sondern auch selbst zum Schreiben kommen. Egal ob ihr erfahrene Autor*innen seid oder noch nie einen literarischen Text verfasst habt, ob es euch eher zum Gedicht, Essay oder Dialog hinzieht – im Schreiben steckt subversives Potential. Gefühlsnormen zu unterwandern, Affekte zu modulieren, Emotionen symbolisch, verfremdet, irritierend oder überraschend zur Sprache zu bringen, ist dabei Teil einer feministischen Praxis, die beim sprachlichen Ausdruck als einer grundlegenden Struktur unserer sozialen Wirklichkeit ansetzt und die wir euch einladen, mit uns im Rahmen dieses Workshops zu erkunden.

Closing lecture

Carolyn Pedwell (Lancaster)

Affect Theory for Uncertain Futures

In this talk, Pedwell explores the particular modalities, moods, and mobilizations affect theory offers for grappling with emergent socio-political, technological, and ecological crises and challenges amid growing uncertainty and upheaval. From the dynamics of global reactionary politics to the risks of generative AI to the ravages of climate emergency, affective relations are central to the political intensities and infrastructures of the present. But what resources and techniques might affect studies also offer for intuiting, speculating, experimenting with, composing, re-making, refusing and/or surviving the future – wherein ‘the future’ is understood to be multiple, differentiated, unpredictable, and under threat? Focusing on the transnational history of weather forecasting and atmospheric prediction and control as an orienting case which entangles climate change, global inequalities, post-truth politics, chaos, and machine learning-generated models of the future, she asks: What could an affect theory and praxis for uncertain futures look like? What does it feel like? What can it do?

Short Bios

Lara Baladi is an Egyptian Lebanese artist, archivist, writer and educator, recognized internationally for her multidisciplinary works. Her artistic practice spans from photography, video, sculpture, architecture to multi-media installations. Informed by critical investigations into historical archives and the study of popular visual culture, Baladi's work questions the theoretical divide between myth, memory, socio-political narratives and the cycles inherent to History. Baladi's work has been published and exhibited internationally. For two decades, Baladi was a pivotal member of the boards of the Arab Image Foundation in Lebanon and the Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art in Egypt, influencing the landscape of contemporary art in the Arab world. From 2016 to 2022, Lara Baladi has been a Lecturer in MIT's Program Art, Culture, and Technology (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). She currently serves as a member of the Artistic Board of Directors for the Marrakesh-based Art Space, Malhoun. Since the Fall 2024, she has been an Associate Professor of Practice in the Department of Arts' Visual Arts Program, at the American University in Cairo.

Stefanie de Velasco, born in Oberhausen in 1978, grew up in the Rhineland as the child of Spanish immigrants. She studied European ethnology in Bonn, Berlin and Warsaw. Her novel *Tigermilch* was published in 2013 and has been translated into numerous languages and made into a film. This was followed in 2019 by *Kein Teil der Welt*, which tells the story of a childhood and youth among Jehovah's Witnesses and was nominated for the 2020 German Youth Literature Prize. She lives as a freelance author with her dog in Berlin.

Aletta Diefenbach is a sociologist at the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies" at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research areas include political sociology, cultural sociology, the sociology of emotions, social inequality and qualitative methods.

Fadia Elgharib is a dynamic digital media activist and corporate lawyer from Cairo, Egypt, currently residing in Berlin, Germany. Since 2018, she has been an active member of the Global Innovation Gathering (GIG) Network, where she currently serves as the Community Manager. Alongside her role at GIG, Fadia has collaborated with the re:publica team since 2020, curating and creating the program for the Makerspace at Berlin's renowned re:publica festival.

Michal Givoni is a senior lecturer at the Department of Politics and Government at Ben Gurion University. Since February 2025 she is a Humboldt fellow at the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies" at the Freie Universität, Berlin. Her first book, *The Care of the Witness: A Contemporary History of Testimony in Crises*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2016. Her second book, *Future Past: A Theoretical Guide for Living the Impasse* was published in Hebrew in 2023. Givoni is also the co-

editor of *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Zone Books, 2009).

Marina Guzzo is an artist and researcher, focuses her creations at the intersection of body and landscape, blending dance, performance, and circus arts to explore the limits of subjectivity within urban and natural environments. Since 2011, her work has centered on the climate crisis and the role of the artist in shaping imagery to navigate a world in ruins during the Anthropocene. Collaborating with institutions in health, culture, and social services, she envisions art as a form of political action – one that weaves a complex network of people, institutions, objects, and nature. Marina holds a postdoctoral degree from the Department of Performing Arts at ECA-USP and a master's and doctorate in Social Psychology from PUC-SP. She is an Associate Professor at Unifesp's Baixada Santista Campus and a researcher at the Corpo e Arte Laboratory within the Society and Health Institute. Currently, she is a fellow at the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies" at Freie Universität Berlin.

Jonas Harbke is a PhD candidate and research fellow at the Chair of International Security Policy at Zeppelin University Friedrichshafen. He is part of the project "Affective Contestation: Dynamics of a Contested Emotional Politics in European Migration Policy" within the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies" at Freie Universität Berlin. His research on emotions in International Relations focuses particularly on social movements and the European Union in the context of European migration discourses.

Clare Hemmings is Professor of Feminist Theory at the Department of Gender Studies at the London School of Economics since 1999. She has two main areas of research focus – feminist and queer studies – and is particularly interested in thinking through the relationship between these, as well as the ways in which both fields have been institutionalized at national and international levels. This interest has led her to think about how participants in these fields tell stories about their history as well as current form, and to explore how such stories resonate with (rather than against) more conservative agendas. Throughout her work she has been concerned with the relationship between nationalism, feminism, and sexuality, and with form as well as theory.

Billy Holzberg is Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Social Justice at King's College London and holds a PhD from the Department of Gender Studies at the London School of Economics. His work grapples with the role that affective attachments and sexual desire play in fuelling contemporary nationalisms, border regimes and late fascist politics and how such dynamics might be counteracted. In exploring these questions, he draws on and contributes to work in queer studies, transnational feminism, affect theory, postcolonial critique, and critical migration and border studies. He is the author

of *Affective Bordering: Race, Deservingness and the Emotional Politics of Migration Control* and the co-editor of *Transnational Anti-Gender Politics: Feminist Solidarity in Times of Global Attacks*.

Gesa Jessen is a literary scholar and works at the Collaborative Research Center “Affective Societies” at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests include politics of reading, the relationship between literature and nature since the 18th century, and semantics of love.

Simon Koschut is Professor of International Security Policy at Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen. His research focuses on international relations, particularly regional security governance, norms, and emotions in world politics. Previously, he was a DFG Heisenberg Fellow, Visiting Professor at Freie Universität Berlin, and Fellow at Harvard University. He received the Ernst Otto Czempel Prize for the best postdoctoral monograph in peace and conflict research. Currently, he leads a research project on “Affective Contestation”, examining emotions in transnational protest against EU migration policies.

Cesy Leonard is an action artist, speaker, and founder of the “Radikale Töchter” - inspiring people through political art to act and stand up for democracy, freedom, equality, brotherhood, and sisterhood. She studied acting in Berlin and worked in film, television, and theater. Often experiencing what it meant to have to conform to a clichéd image of a woman led her to start directing her own films. Her 2012 film *Guilt - The Barbarism of Europe* awarded her various prizes, such as the *Web Video Award*. In 2012, she joined the artistic staff of the collective “Center for Political Beauty”, which promotes pressing political issues through their art. Seeing how art, in particular, has the power to mobilize people to act is the inspiration behind the “Radikale Töchter.”

Margreth Lünenborg is Professor of Media and Communication Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on journalism and its current transformation, gender media studies, and the role of affect and emotion in public communication. She has been a Principal Investigator at the Collaborative Research Center “Affective Societies” since its inception in 2015 and is currently leading the project “Contested order of emotions: Feminist and anti-feminist discourse in social media”. Most recently, she co-edited with Birgitt Röttger-Rössler *Affective formation of publics: places - networks - media* (Routledge, 2024).

Ana Makhashvili is a doctoral researcher in media and communication studies. Since 2019, she has been working as a research associate at the Collaborative Research Center “Affective Societies”, at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on the role of affect and emotion in far-right mobilization as well as feminist and antifeminist mobilizations on social media. Her methodological expertise lies in mixed methods including social network analysis, automated methods of text analysis, and discourse analysis.

Dominik Mattes is Guest Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin with a long-standing interest in critical medical anthropology and global health, religious diversity, migration and belonging, and the anthropology of affect and emotion. His current research project focuses on the affective registers of political mobilization in the field of secular and religious climate activism in Berlin.

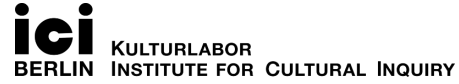
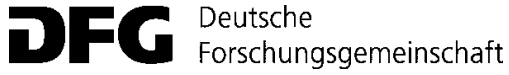
Carolyn Pedwell is Professor in Digital Media in the Sociology Department at Lancaster University (UK) and the author of three monographs: *Revolutionary Routines: The Habits of Social Transformation* (McGill-Queens UP, 2021); *Affective Relations: The Transnational Politics of Empathy* (Palgrave, 2014); and *Feminism, Culture and Embodied Practice: The Rhetorics of Comparison* (Routledge, 2010). She is also the co-editor (with Gregory J. Seigworth) of *The Affect Theory Reader 2: Worldings, Tensions, Futures* (Duke UP, 2023). Carolyn's current research is focused on socio-political, cultural, and affective histories of AI and digital computing. Her British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (2024-2025), "Speculative Machines and Us: Intuition, AI and the Making of Computational Cultures", is developing a post-war genealogy of human-machine relations in Britain and North America oriented around shifting conceptualisations of intuition, with reference to 'artificial intuition'.

Kerstin Schankweiler is an art historian and professor of Visual Studies in the Global Context at TUD Dresden University of Technology. Her research interests include digital image cultures, art history in a global context, contemporary art from Africa, and art in the GDR. She is the author of "Bildproteste" (2019) and co-edited a special issue of *Parallax* on "Affective Witnessing" (2020) with Michael Richardson. She is PI of the research projects "Image Protests on Social Media" and "Affective Archives - Artists' Travels Abroad during the GDR" at TUD. In 2024/25 she was a fellow at the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies".

Tanja-Bianca Schmidt studied art history in a global context. Her work engages with aesthetics of migration, racism, power critique and black identity. As a mediator in civic education, she works for several museums in Berlin and organizes workshops on discrimination-sensitive approaches in art history. She is currently doing her PhD in the DFG-funded project "Image Protests on Social Media" at the TU Dresden.

Verena Straub is an art and image historian at Technical University Dresden. Her research focuses on contemporary art, images in the context of political agitation and popular visual culture on social media. Since 2022, she is Principal Investigator of the research project "Image Protests on Social Media" at TU Dresden, working on her postdoc project on memes as political image practice. From 2015 to 2021 she worked at the Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies"- where she cofounded the *Affect and Colonialism Web Lab* (aac-weblab.net).

சிந்துஜன் வரதராஜா (Sinthujan Varatharajah) is a Eelam Tamil writer and political geographer. Their writing focuses on issues of statelessness, displacement and colonial modernity, viewed from the angle of infrastructure, logistics and built environments. Following years of political work in the field of protection of asylum seekers as well as prosecution of state crimes, வரதராஜா first book *an alle Orte, die hinter uns liegen* (to all the places we have left behind) was published in German by Hanser Verlag in 2022. Their second volume of conversations with the artist Moshtari Hilal, *Hierarchies of Solidarity*, was published by Wirklichkeit Books in November 2024. Their forthcoming book is to be released next spring.



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