conspiracies emerge, their fundamental truth is revealed: conspiracies are not about ideas but identities.

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Placing anthropology at the forefront: studying far-right transformism

When we examine the global political landscape, the far-right is clearly in a less favourable situation than it was prior to the pandemic. Trump lost the presidency, and it is difficult to see Bolsonaro being re-elected. Key far-right parties in Europe – such as the Lega and AfD – have dipped in the polls and establishment parties have reclaimed some lost ground. Putin is facing increasing discontent and Erdoğan has been battling a series of crises. And yet it would be premature to talk of the far-right as such being in crisis. The pandemic is not over, and mainstream politicians may yet face public anger and scrutiny, as demonstrated by the CDU's terrible results at the latest regional elections in Southwest Germany. While bankers and investors may stomach an increase in public debt, most states' finances do not allow for a return to Keynesianism or debt-financed consumerism. It is on the whole unclear how the establishment could hold the ground against the far-right in the longer term.

At the same time, if we scrutinise the record of far-right governments, we do not only see 'blundering, uncoordinated and poorly run series of initiatives, policies and programmes' (see Appadurai's essay). While we certainly see chaos and struggle (for control of key institutions and levers), we also find efforts to innovate: if not to resolve, then to at least address the contradictions of neoliberal globalisation. And if Italian Fascism and German Nazism offered models for authoritarian rulers in Europe (during the Second World War) and South America (after the war), we should expect to see contemporary and future far-right organisations drawing on (if not emulating) governmental strategies being pioneered in front of our eyes. Putin's and Erdoğan's military ventures and

symbolic efforts to tap into colonial forms of nostalgia are obviously important in this regard, as highlighted by Modi's recent military venture in Kashmir.

But as important as the appeal of militarism may be, the contemporary global conjuncture is also powerfully shaped by economic rivalry between countries as well as between emergent regional blocs under hyper-neoliberalised conditions. In such an environment far-right governments have spent considerable energy on mobilising economic reserves, while decreasing expenditure on social welfare, health and education – and this without losing substantial support or seeing the fracturing of the alliances that brought them to power. If we examine the core of Trump's, Johnson's or Orbán's economic strategy, these converge on entrenching cut-throat competition as the new norm by enforcing a strict work ethic and reconfiguring the polity around notions of deservingness and citizens' obligations. To make this palatable, they offer protections and certain privileges for those willing to work hard, while reserving shame and punishment for 'free-riders' who live off taxes paid by 'good' compatriots. There are other alternatives (such as recourse to racism and homophobia), but the undoing of egalitarian citizenship has been one of the key innovations of contemporary far-right politics.

Just as anthropologists had been at the forefront of examining *in situ* the rise of far-right movements (see Kalb's essay), we should also study what they do when they ascend to power (and manage to stay there) and how people respond to their signature undertakings. Although the study of far-right governance has thus far been the privileged domain of political science, the latter is on a path of reproducing earlier mistakes that led it to miss the great political story of the 21st century: the collapse of the global liberal settlement. The discipline remains largely wedded to the study of institutions, leaving aside the study of people's daily lives (including their efforts to secure a livelihood, a future, a home and community) and the strategic deployment of state power to create solid social foundations for right-wing authoritarian rule. This presents anthropology with the opportunity to study far-right rulers' strategic efforts to engineer deep-seated social transformations in a way as to keep diverse constituencies on its side – efforts that, borrowing from Gramsci, we could call 'transformism'.

Far-right transformism does not always point in trivial directions, and this opens new vistas for the analysis of contemporary authoritarianism. To give an example, let me briefly allude to the Hungarian government's workfare programme, which has become the cornerstone of rural poverty governance. The regime's social policy is commonly inscribed within a broader authoritarian neoliberal trend. Ethnographically informed studies of Hungary's workfare scheme, however, reveal the need to nuance this interpretation. Hungary's authoritarian rulers have stripped the poor of their social rights, but at the same time they have redrawn the boundaries of citizenship in such a way as to preserve a degree of material protection and symbolic recognition – the 'luxury' of combining low-paid work and family life, together with a modicum of social recognition – for those willing to perform community work. At least as far as the countryside is concerned, the government's answer to the dislocations caused by neoliberalisation has not been to mould the rural poor into productive citizens through techniques of neoliberal governmentality, but rather to insert them into patron–client relationships with local father figures who have the authority to supervise and direct their behaviour. This 'illiberal paternalism' (my term) constitutes an innovation that has allowed the far-right to simultaneously achieve several key goals: to re-establish control over 'workshy' surplus populations; to keep others in 'normal' employment by stigmatising welfare; and to recruit welfare claimants as political clients.

Empirically informed analyses of far-right transformism could allow anthropology to highlight not only how the far-right emerges from a global, scaled, social and historical field of forces (see Kalb), but also how it acts on this field, labouring to create new social relations (or even social formations) that advance its economic goals, legitimise its rule and cement its advances by transforming key socio-geographic spaces into its political heartland. Such strategic efforts are, of course, not destined to succeed – but that only makes their study all the more urgent and exciting.

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Reactionary education in the USA

Are the American right free-speech warriors battling the 'woke armies' of 'cancel culture' as they claim? Are they leveraging attacks on 'political correctness' to destabilise and undermine truth? We might look not just at what these right-wing claims are but at what they *do*. In my research I explore how the digital right sees itself as 'speaking post-truth to power', borrowing the language of critical pedagogy in the service of reaction. The right engages in playful post-truth to support post-war capitalist values – to make suburban living edgy, to make misogyny into rebellion. As the National Rifle Association spokeswoman Dana Loesh explains, conservatism is the new punk rock – and traditionalism is the new postmodernism. As the term 'civil war II electric boogaloo' suggests, this is a metapolitical project not just a truth claim. Russian traditionalist Aleksandr Dugin describes the project as a fascist embrace of postmodernism, in the service of attacking liberal modernism but also with the aim of building a new modernity (Sullivan and Fisher-Smith 2020). This is less an attack on truth than an imagined battle between egalitarian and identitarian knowledge, values, societies. I know this conflict intimately; I teach a course on appreciating diversity at a large American public university, but was raised by an identitarian – a believer in 'white culture' and white superiority – a woman who supports flat-earth and fascism, biblical gender and biological race.

The right describes itself as an alternative to a nihilist, meaningless modernity, but the meaning they seek to restore is hierarchy, white male supremacy. The Intellectual Dark Web embraces evolutionary psychology in the service of misogyny. Misogynist incels, involuntary celibates, revive phrenology to explain their solitude. Race science