

Finally, I would like to cordially thank the organizers for bringing together this wide range of papers, topics and positions in this intriguing and thought-provoking conference. The venue, Erbacher Hof, took excellent care of us conference guests and provided more than what was necessary to make the conference a success. The conference lunch room in particular proved to be 'the place to be' if one wanted to continue the substantial discussions that the papers evoked. The 'Under Construction' sections of the conference offered a glimpse at the futures of the field and possibly the organization. The reading by Oladipo Agboluaje, the walking tour of Mainz and the conference dinner were most welcome items on the already rich program.

I am very much looking forward to attending GAPS 2019 in Bremen.

Hanna Teichler (Frankfurt)

Conference Report

At a time when far-right nationalism is becoming a matter of concern in the West, the theme 'Nationalism and the Postcolonial' seemed at first glance as an odd choice for convening the 2018 international conference of the Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien (GAPS). Not only did the pairing of nationalism and postcolonial immediately suggest a link between the postcolonial and nationalism; it seemed to place a focus on the postcolonial world and shift attention from resurgent nationalism in the West, a hemisphere that is ostensibly not part of the postcolonial world.

However, on reading the Call for Papers for the conference, the organizers and hosts at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz had been careful to draw attention to the ambivalence of the ideology of nationalism, noting how it functions differently in different contexts and can be put to different uses. Hence, the Call recognized that nationalism, at one point considered outmoded in the West and a relic of the emergence of the modern nation-state, was once again reasserting itself following a shift in global geopolitics that has seen countries such as Britain and the United States search for identity and national relevance in an increasingly globalising world. The above resurgence notwithstanding, the Call also pointed out how nationalism has been instrumental in decolonial processes in formerly colonised countries of the Global South; processes which, I hasten to add, have contributed to the global shifts whose results are now visible in the collapsing of national borders and the waning power of former empires such as the British.

The concerns raised in the CfP reverberated in the three keynotes and in most of the papers presented at the conference. Interdisciplinary in its scope and with speakers drawn from universities from different parts of the world, the conference had close to 50 paper presentations categorised in thematic panels. For example, the panel on "Theorizing Nationalism" featuring speakers Frank Schulze-Engler (Frankfurt), Ryszard W. Wolny (Opole), and Przemyslaw Górecki (Poznan) spoke

directly to the concerns raised in the Call, tackling questions of the meanings, dangers, and usefulness of nationalism as well as focusing on identities that are excluded from national discourse.

Some of the issues raised in the “Theorizing Nationalism” panel were also picked up by Nikita Sud (Oxford) in her keynote titled “Indian Nationalisms as Encountering and Othering”. While her focus was on India, Sud warned against conceptualizing nationalism as singular arguing that nationalisms exist in the plural thereby negating any ideas of a one type of nationalism. If Sud’s keynote focused on India, Bruce Berman’s keynote located in the field of Anthropology and titled “Ethnic Nationalism and the Global Crises of Capitalist Modernity,” focused on African contexts and the ways in which ethnicity intersects with nationalism. The exploration of the intersections of ethnicity and nationalism resurfaced in a paper delivered by two scholars from Mainz, Marie-Christin Gabriel and Konstanze N’Guessan, titled “Nationalist Ritual or Global Model? Independence Day Celebrations in West Africa.” The panel on “The Language(s) of Nationalism” featuring research from linguists Michael Westphal (Münster), Rose Marie Beck (Leipzig) and Natascha Bing (Leipzig) also engaged with questions of ethnicity vis-à-vis the nation while assessing the ideologies that inform national language choices especially in the context of Kenya.

Interdisciplinarity at the conference did not only manifest in the different fields represented at the conference, from anthropology to literary and cultural studies, linguistics and development studies, but also manifested in the different artistic genres that formed researchers’ objects of study. From Grime music videos to video games, YouTube clips, novels, and plays: the varied genres showed that the nation is ubiquitous as an object of artistic representation.

While this conference report only gives snippets of what occurred at the conference and reconstructs it through personal impressions largely ignorant of the behind-the-scenes that went into conference organization, the 2018 GAPS conference was all in all timely. The questions that the conference raised speak to contemporary times when ideas of how to make sense of nationalism and to delineate what constitutes the postcolonial take centre stage.

The conference was to a certain degree inclusive in the ways it blended the work of senior and junior scholars. The inclusion of two under construction panels gave an opportunity to young scholars to present their research projects and receive audience feedback. One can, however, also question the limits of this inclusivity when one considers the decision to hold the GAPS annual general meeting solely in German when the whole conference had been conducted in English. This risks inadvertently sending out a signal, especially to aspiring members who might have travelled from elsewhere to attend the conference, that GAPS membership remains confined to the boundaries of German speaking countries. In an epoch when, in Goethe’s words, “world literature is at hand” it would be unfortunate to send out such a signal.

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