

**Beyond »Trauma«
Transregional and Interdisciplinary
Perspectives on War-Related Distress**

*International Workshop at Akademie Tutzing, Germany,
5-7 April 2018*

The international workshop explores the impact of armed conflict on psychosocial wellbeing in an interdisciplinary and transregionally comparative perspective. The objective is to look beyond the presently popular concept of »war traumatization« and to conceptualize the social character of the dynamics in question.

Since the end of World War II, the impact of armed conflicts on the psycho-social wellbeing has become an increasingly important topic in research, among mental health practitioners as well as on national and global public health agendas. Within conflict-affected areas, the capacity of people to cope with war experiences directly affects their capacity for agency as well as the political and social dynamics in the aftermath of a conflict. Furthermore, psychosocial effects of armed conflicts have become a hot topic outside the theatres of war, due to the growing importance of military and humanitarian interventions in which soldiers, policemen/-women and aid workers are sent to war-affected regions but also due to the growing number of refugees from conflict-affected places.

In this discursive field, »trauma«, including »Post Traumatic Stress Disorder« (PTSD), has emerged as the dominant concept to refer to the negative impact of war experiences and to describe the condition of people who cannot cope with these experiences easily. Although both notions are rather narrowly defined in clinical psychology, they are omnipresent in political as well as in academic discourses and are employed to refer to a range of negative effects of war on people around the world.

This extensive use, however, obfuscates the complexity and social embeddedness of the phenomena described: what is expressed and recognized as a »mental illness«, i.e. PTSD, in the context of a modern Western(-ized) public health system, might appear as »spirit possession« elsewhere. What is expressed in words and unusual behaviour in one place, might be expressed through bodily symptoms in another.

Against this background, the universal validity of Western concepts of mental health has been fiercely discussed in recent years. Yet, there is more than cultural hegemony at stake here: the medical language of traumatization systematically narrows the analytical focus by concentrating on the individual as well as extraordinary cases. To understand the social dynamics and societal significance of war-related psycho-social suffering, it seems imperative to move beyond this individualizing perspective.

In doing so, »idioms of distress«, a concept proposed by the social anthropologist Mark Nichter more than 30 years ago that describes the socially and culturally contingent forms of experiencing and expressing distress, serves as an analytical starting point.

The workshop wants to open up perspectives for systematic comparative analyses, asking in particular (a) how experiences of distress in war situations are produced by and for different sets of agents; (b) in which »idioms« these experiences come to be expressed and are socially dealt with; (c) which institutions or organizations are involved in these processes; and (d) what are the implications on the level of public policies.

The event operates at the intersection of different disciplines (especially sociology, psychology, social anthropology and philosophy) and different cultures of knowledge. It brings together a group of scholars with expertise in different world regions, including colleagues from war-affected countries.

Convener: Prof. Dr. Teresa Koloma Beck, Professor for the Sociology of Globalization, Department of Social Sciences, Bundeswehr University Munich, tkb@unibw.de

Venue: Tutzing Academy is located approximately 40 km southwest of Munich, Germany on Lake Starnberg

Schedule:

Day 1, 5 April 2018

12.30 Lunch

➤ **Introduction**

1.30-2.00 pm Welcome

- By: Prof. Dr. Ursula Münch, Tutzing Academy, Germany

2.00-3.00 pm Beyond trauma – Why a social science perspective on war-related psycho-social distress?

- By: Teresa Koloma Beck, Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany

➤ **Session I: Cultures**

3.20-4.20 pm Culture bound »ethos« and its role in human suffering and healing

- By: Pradeep Chakkarath, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

4.20-5.20 pm Rebuilding Hope on Josina Machel Island: Towards a Culturally Mediated Model of Psychotherapeutic Intervention

- By: Boia Efraime Junior

5.30-6.30 pm Reclaiming Culture: Narratives of Resilience in the Shadows of Trauma

- By: Krystal Renschler, Reconciliation Canada

Day 2, 6 April 2018

➤ **Session II: Subjectivities**

9.15-10.15 am Silent resilience of women in trauma

- By: Gayatri Vijaysimha, Bagheera Project, Kolkata, India

10.15-11.15 am Historical Trauma and the Crisis in Masculinities: A Case Study of Black Masculinities from the Colonial period to Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa

- By: Kaymarlin Govender, HEARD, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa

11.30-12.30 pm Temporal sequences in traumatic narratives

- By: Kristin Platt, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

12.30 Lunch

➤ **Session III: Communities**

2.00 - 3.00 pm Conflict and community resiliency: West Africa a case study

- By: Vandy Kanyako, Portland State University, USA

3.20-4.20 pm Present Past: The Trauma of Liberation

- By: Lukas Welz, AMCHA, Berlin, Germany

4.20-5.20 pm Bird in the Cage – How Syrians Deal with the Trauma of Assad's Detention System

- By: Annabel Böttcher, University of Southern Denmark

5.30-6.30 pm Wellbeing of Staff in the Context of War and Conflict – An Impossible Goal?

- By: David Becker, Free University Berlin, Germany

Day 3, 7 April 2018

➤ **Session IV: Memories**

9.15-10.15 am Enigmatic Traces: Remembering & Forgetting in post-war Sri Lanka

- By: Malathi de Alwis, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

10.15-11.15 am Enforced disappearance in Colombia: trauma, forgiveness, reparation

- By: Omar Alejandro Bravo, National University of Rosario, Argentina

➤ **Session V: Conclusions and Outlook**

11.15-12.30 pm Open discussion introduced by a commentary

- By: Bahar Sen, Centre Marc Bloch Berlin, Germany

12.30 Lunch

Abstracts

➤ **Session I: Cultures****Culture bound »ethos« and its role in human suffering and healing**

- By: Pradeep Chakkarath, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

At the “National Conference on Yoga and Indian Approaches to Psychology” held in Pondicherry in 2002, 160 of the participants—among them, some of the most prominent Indian psychologists—issued the “Pondicherry Manifesto of Indian Psychology” in which they lament the miserable state of psychology in India. Their central claim was that “psychology in India is essentially a Western transplant” and therefore “unable to connect with the Indian ethos and concurrent community conditions.”

Since “ethos” is neither a clearly defined term, nor a familiar concept in Western clinical psychology, I will try to impart an understanding of its meaning that can help us assess the potential and possibly important role the “ethos” of a culture may play in the development of human beings, their well-being, their suffering, and their healing.

Using Hindu and Buddhist examples, I will highlight understandings of self, autonomy, and relatedness as these concepts are embedded in both of these rich intellectual traditions of Indian thinking. I will then consider how these traditions of thinking contribute to the “ethos” of a specific culture and thus structure the so-called developmental niches that every individual and every societal group within that culture must adjust to.

The aim of this paper is to think about the significance a culture’s “ethos” might have for clinical work with people with mental health problems who have different cultural backgrounds.

Pradeep Chakkarath is a cultural psychologist at the Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, and (together with Jürgen Straub) co-director of the Hans Kilian and Lotte Köhler Center (KKC) for Cultural Psychology and Historical Anthropology. He is also a fellow alumnus of the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Konstanz, Germany, and a member of the Task Force on Indigenous Psychology of the American Psychological Association. He serves as co-editor of the German journal ‘psychosozial’, consulting editor of ‘Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology’, and editorial board member of the journal ‘Frontiers in Psychology’. Currently, his main interests are interdisciplinary perspectives on human development and the history and methodology of the social sciences.

Rebuilding Hope on Josina Machel Island: Towards a Culturally Mediated Model of Psychotherapeutic Intervention

- By: Boia Efraime Junior

In the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in understanding the cultural dimensions of psychology. This work, along with the experiences of psychologists working with communities under war-time duress and in the immediate post-war context, has forced us to re-think our understanding of trauma and psychotherapeutic intervention; that is, we are beginning to recognize the role of culture in what constitutes a traumatic experience, how people explain and understand the sources of their trauma, how these experiences are elaborated and manifested in psychological disturbances, and even the solutions people look for to deal with situations of extreme duress. In particular, we are beginning to recognize the limitations of conventional views of psycho-traumatology developed in the west when attempting to develop psychotherapeutic interventions in cross cultural contexts. In the African context, for example, Dawes and Honwana (1998); Suffla, Seedat, Christie (2017) suggest that we need to think more holistically to the traumatized individual-in context, for it is only in this way that psychologists can understand the meaning which the individual brings and gives to a stressful experience. Moreover, it is only from this perspective that we can understand the resources available to an individual for dealing with a traumatic event. From this broader cultural context, it may become apparent that there are many more healing resources available not only to the individual, but also to the psychologist. Indeed, psychologists may soon discover that, as healers, the „medicine “of western psychotherapy may have little currency in certain contexts, particularly if they assume that they are the only healers available to individuals and communities in crisis.

As psychologists of the non-governmental organization Rebuilding Hope working with former child soldiers in one post-war community in southern Mozambique, Josina Machel Island, we quickly learned the full significance of the cultural dimension of psychotherapeutic intervention. Largely Mozambican by birth, and western by training as psychologists, we arrived there believing that we were the primary resources of healing available to children, their families and the community at large. We also arrived with a certain degree of faith in the diagnostic instruments and perspectives on psycho-traumatology we had acquired in our training. Our long-term relationship with the people of Josina Machel have taught us otherwise. It has forced us to expand both our notion of what constitutes psychotherapeutic intervention, as well as our understanding of the causes, consequences and elaboration of trauma and its psychic integration.

We found that the people of Josina Machel had healing resources such as shamans and religious leaders whose legitimacy and currency pre-dated our arrival by several centuries. Over the course of the last five years, these traditional healers have enriched our understanding of psycho-traumatology, and together, we have attempted to

elaborate more effective culturally mediated approaches to psychotherapeutic intervention for children, their families and communities affected by prolonged exposure to political and military violence. In this presentation, I intend to present some of our experiences resulting from individual client cases, discussions with families and the community at-large, and consultation with traditional healers.

Boia Efraime Junior, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, with extensive experience in the psycho-social work and psychotherapy with unaccompanied minor refugees in Germany, (1990 – 1994), former child soldiers in Mozambique (1994 – 2002) and children survivors of sexual violence in Mozambique (2008 – 2012). Currently living and working in Rome as Staff Counsellor and Consultant.

Reclaiming Culture: Narratives of Resilience in the Shadows of Trauma

- By: Krystal Renschler, Reconciliation Canada

This presentation will explore aspects of historical trauma in Canada as a result of the colonial subjugation of Indigenous peoples that constituted 'cultural genocide'. The Canadian colonial project was disastrous for Indigenous culture, identity and pride and caused severe disruption of traditional social structures, alliances and kinship ties. In addition to individual experiences of trauma, the historical perspective will consider more deeply the impacts of trauma at the societal level, and the social harms that were inflicted as a result of dislocating a people from their culture, community and collective identity. A particular focus will be given to the impacts of Indian Residential Schools that were designed to "kill the Indian in the child" and how this disruption of cultural traditions and ways of knowing left survivors disconnected from the practices traditionally used for recovery and healing. Not surprisingly, Western approaches to healing the residual trauma in Indigenous individuals and communities has proven insufficient. Integrating Indigenous epistemology, and the notion that knowing itself is a social process, this presentation will consider community approaches to healing that have been recovered through a social reclamation of Indigenous cultural ceremony and practice. Considerable space will be given to explore the role that 'culture as treatment' has played in recovering from historical trauma among Indigenous peoples in Canada, and to acknowledge the resilience embedded in Indigenous cultural practices, and their ability to contribute to trauma recovery at the individual, family and community level. The presentation will conclude by exploring the implications these findings have for organizations, policy makers, funders, governments and academics working with Indigenous peoples, and other cultural minorities, recovering from trauma.

Krystal Renschler is a conflict transformation practitioner and researcher. In her current role of Director of Strategic Initiatives at Reconciliation Canada, she leads the development of national programming aimed at transforming relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through public dialogue, leadership development, and community engagement. Previously she has worked on and supported conflict transformation and reconciliation projects in Cambodia, Sierra Leone and the Middle East/North Africa region. Her research interests combine transitional justice, social-psychology and peace studies. Krystal was a Rotary International Peace Fellow from 2014-2016 and has a MA in Peace and Conflict Research from Uppsala University.

Bahar Şen is a doctoral candidate at the French-German institute Centre Marc Bloch at the Humboldt University of Berlin where she takes part in the research group Experiences of Globalization. She started her PhD at the Technical University of Darmstadt as a scholarship holder of the research training group Topology of

Technology and was a visiting scholar at the Faculty of Humanities at the Charles University in Prague.

In her PhD project about the global phenomenon of urbanization, Bahar develops the concept of centrality of Henri Lefebvre by using Georg Simmel's reflections on a Philosophy of money. The combination of monetary logic and urbanization can be considered as an innovative cultural-philosophical contribution to current urban theories. By going beyond system theoretical approaches her research focuses rather on classical phenomenological considerations that take into account the risk of a money-related desensualization of the lived urban space.

Abstracts

➤ **Session II: Subjectivities****Silent resilience of women in trauma**

- By: Gayatri Vijaysimha, Bagheera Project, Kolkata, India

Women experience war and conflict very differently, adopting varying roles, strategies and networks to negotiate violence, conflict and war. Very often seen as helpless victims, studies, reports and humanitarian actors fail to document the myriad of perceptions, roles and strategies women employ to negotiate conflict, trauma and rebuilding. While women show remarkable resilience and fortitude, playing important roles within families and the communities, taking on new responsibilities, breaking societal norms to take action, most political process are still gender blind. This study looks at women's experiences in prolonged conflict across different contexts to understand strategies women employ to create resilient safe communities that have been ravaged by prolonged war. It will also look at whether, how a woman perceives her role in conflict, affect her strategy. The study uses case studies of women survivors from Syria, Kashmir, Manipur and Myanmar.

Gayatri Vijaysimha is the co-founder of the Bagheera Project, a new project to engage youth in Disaster Relief and Reconstruction. She is passionate about creating grassroot change through innovation. Driven by the need to democratize innovation, creating a more equitable and inclusive capability to solve problems using people's ingenuity, science and technology she has worked with communities to develop solutions that are inclusive and sustainable. Currently Vijaysimha is in the process of establishing the Bagheera Project, which involves working with a community that lives on a waste landfill in Kolkata, India. Her work involves education, public health and disaster mitigation. She plans to research the impact of the landfill on the health of the community living nearby and the flooding in the area. In 2015, Vijaysimha worked as a research associate at the MA school of Development and a supervisor at the Human Rights Cell at the Azim Premji University, Bangalore, India. She has been working with them over the past few months coordinating the sustainability program, helping develop their social justice program, mentoring students and researching social justice issues in Orissa. Her previous work experience also included developing a mobile application to inform Syrian refugees both within the country and in neighboring countries about UNHCR services. Vijaysimha's role in Syria primarily involved collecting and analyzing data on the impact and effectiveness of Humanitarian aid delivery on communities and the technology used to reach out and inform communities on the ground of emergency situations and understanding the challenges humanitarian

worked faced while delivery aid. In 2012 she helped set up Amnesty International in India and went on to work as a campaigner and researcher for Amnesty International. Earlier she helped the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation develop their community mobilization monitoring research, conducted across 18 districts in India. She graduated from Tata Institute of Social Sciences with a MA in Globalization and Labour in 2011.

Historical Trauma and the Crisis in Masculinities: A Case Study of Black Masculinities from the Colonial period to Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa

- By: Kaymarlin Govender, HEARD, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa

Historical trauma offers some insights into the understanding of how the self (individual and collective) carries the historical and intergenerational baggage and how this exerts its influence on experiences in the present (Alleyne, 2004). Given that historical trauma is intimately tied up with expressions of gender, race and class, this paper uses these axes to explore black masculinities as a socio-historical project through different epochs in the South African landscape- from the colonial period, through to apartheid and post-apartheid contemporary South Africa. The paper draws on theoretical concepts of hegemony, internalized oppression and the notion of thwarting (the inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position) to assist our understanding of institutionalized forms of violence, which are inscribed into the male psyche resulting in a real or imagined crisis of the self. Violence is viewed as the outcome in situations where the individual feels thwarted, whether in relation to material loss, social status or failed access to economic resources. Significantly, fantasies of identity are enmeshed with fantasies of power. Subsequently, lost identity, in this case male identity, is intrinsically linked to loss of personal power (whether this is real or imaged). Expressions of violence especially in modern day South Africa are then seen as a form of 'masculine performance' for the reassertion of a lost identity.

Dr. Kaymarlin Govender is a psychologist and behavioural scientist specializing in research on youth risk and masculinities. He has published over 70 papers on these issues and lead or co-lead a number of international research projects. His research skills include quantitative and qualitative methods, including evaluation methods. He is Research Director at the Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa and Senior Faculty member in the College of Law and Management Studies. Dr. Govender has undertaken work on several projects on psycho-social and behavioural issues on behalf of UN agencies (UNAIDS, UNICEF); Governments (South African, Swaziland), funders (Swedish SIDA, NRF, STINT, RNE, DfID, GFATM, USAID, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the CDC).

Temporal sequences in traumatic narratives

- By: Kristin Platt, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

Autobiographical narratives are based on temporally ordered narrative structures. Temporal structures can be recognized as the most important element in reconstructing experience. Studying temporal patterns allows statements about the coherence of an autobiographical self – and traumatic fragmentations. Various therapeutic approaches integrate the notion that achieving a temporal order for the memory and narrative of a traumatic event is an important step in working through an overwhelming experience. The concept of trauma itself reflects the idea of an injury that causes a fundamental break between before and after. But irritations of temporal order are also already part of the experience of traumatic distress: time seems to stand still or run faster. Clearly, the autobiographical time is not linear, but it is known as a time that intersects with historical time. The idea, that particularities of how temporal order is represented in narratives allows us to draw conclusions about the effects of traumatization, overlooks the metaphorical character of temporal figures in traumatic language. From the perspective of social and cultural psychology the paper will discuss the importance of metaphors relating to temporal order, to show, that disintegrations are not only reflections of social fractures and personal injuries, but also a function, that can stabilize the coherence of traumatic narratives.

Dr. Kristin Platt studied sociology, political science and social psychology i.a. at the University of Bochum. Her research concerns questions on collective violence and genocide, identity patterns in diaspora communities, psychic trauma and biography range from the interpersonal to the international. Since 1992 she is working in a multistage project about psychic trauma and elderly survivors. At present she is research director at the Institute for Diaspora and Genocide Studies, University of Bochum. She has authored numerous studies on trauma, biography, Armenian and Jewish survivors.

Abstracts

➤ **Session III: Communities****Conflict and community resiliency: West Africa a case study**

- By: Vandy Kanyako, University of Portland, USA

West Africa has experienced its fair share of natural and human induced disasters in the recent past. More than 15 years after the end of region's transnational conflicts, which at its height produced more than 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons, the negative effects are still being felt by its survivors today. The conflicts which engulfed Liberia, Sierra Leone, and to some degree Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire not only inflicted damage on the affected countries' physical infrastructure and caused needless death and suffering it also devastated local communities and wrecked social institutions. The erosion of social support networks, which are critical as coping mechanisms has exacerbated the long-term impacts of this dark chapter on the local population of West Africa. This presentation will explore the long-term impact of war and conflict across West Africa. particular emphasis on community resiliency and traditional mechanisms for healing and reconciliation.

Dr. Vandy Kanyako teaches conflict resolution, human rights, transitional justice and peacebuilding at Portland State University. He is the founder and former Executive Director of Peacelinks, a civil society organization that promotes human rights in Sierra Leone and the Director of West Africa Oil Watch, a grassroots regional organization that monitors human rights issues in the oil industry. From 2004 to 2005 he served as the Coordinator of the UN-NGO Conflict Prevention Working Group in New York. He has written widely on civil society empowerment and the political economy of conflict. He holds a Master's Degree in International Relations from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Masters in Peace Studies from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA; and a PhD in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University, USA. His work has appeared in several print journals including Africa Today; Journal of Peace Support Operations; Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict; Journal of Peacebuilding and Development; and the African Center for Constructive Resolution of Disputes.

Present Past: The Trauma of Liberation

- By: Lukas Welz, AMCHA, Berlin, Germany

Collective violence, war, genocide and social destitution have the potential to be traumatic events in which individuals will often experience sequential traumatization. Learning from the past, Holocaust survivors are still suffering the traumatic experiences of violence and persecution more than 70 years after WW II. The presentation will focus on principles that a group of Israeli and German experts with clinical and scientific research backgrounds in the field of trauma – clinical psychologists, psycho-therapists, consultants and social workers – aggregated from their work with traumatized persons and populations in both countries in the project Present Past.

The presentation will describe the two key necessary elements identified in this dialogue project: recognition and community. These non-therapeutic concepts reveal that the social and political dimensions in supporting survivors of violence are necessary key elements in understanding success of therapeutic and non-therapeutic aid. They also indicate that trauma is to be understood as a sequential process which cannot be limited to the initial violence suffered.

Recognition of suffering and harm-afflicted victims and survivors of man-made violence is of utmost importance for their recovery. The evil and harm done must be recognized. And the person, who suffered these traumas, must be recognized, acknowledging his or her individuality, unique personality, cultural and ethnic back-ground, beliefs, and hopes, spiritual and religious beliefs.

Community is needed to heal the traumatic past, especially when caused by man-made trauma. Establishing, promoting and maintaining a framework of communities is a necessary under-lying condition for the provision of mental health care and intervention. And Community is needed for the Helpers as well, to counteract feelings of isolation, burnout, pessimism and vicarious traumatization.

These two key elements will be outlined by taking the example of AMCHA in helping Holocaust survivors and their families.

Lukas Welz is chairman of AMCHA Germany, an institution that supports the psychosocial aid for Holocaust survivors in Israel. Within this volunteer position he developed the PresentPast dialogue forum on trauma that brings together practitioners and scientists. He worked as policy advisor in the German Bundestag and currently develops a qualification and empowerment center for minority communities, in particular Roma people. Lukas Welz studied political sciences and history in Heidelberg and conflict, development and governance at Cranfield University/Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. He was head of the Working Group "Conflicts in Europe" of the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research and researched on Transitional Justice in Cambodia.

Bird in the Cage – How Syrians Deal with the Trauma of Assad's Detention System

- By: Annabel Böttcher, Syddansk Universitet in Odense, Denmark

Since 2011, Syria's dictatorship has drowned the country into one of the most brutal wars in the early 21st century to preserve its power. Its experienced sophisticated system of security agencies (mukhabarat) with its strategy of arrests, tortures and killings has turned into a pillar of repression. After six years of massive destruction of the infrastructure, influx of armed collective and individual actors, displacement over 12 million Syrians from their homes, and over 400,000 dead, Syrians realized that they paid an enormous price, while the repressive authoritarian system is still in place.

With the regime survived its security apparatus and state-sanctioned abuse, and more so it turned it into lucrative business. At least 60,000 people died as a result of torture and of dire conditions in Syrian detention. Every Syrian has either experienced arrest, detention and torture him- or herself or has a family member or a friend, who does or did. Many fled due to the fear of being arrested, tortured and killed. Families of detainees are paying enormous sums frequently indebting themselves to safe their loved-ones from torture and rape.

In my contribution I will look at how individual male and female Syrian refugees view and deal with the experience of being exposed to the Syrian security apparatus during the war since 2011.

Annabelle Böttcher is a professor at the Center for Contemporary Middle East Studies at the Syddansk Universitet in Odense, Denmark. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg, Germany, and a habilitation in Islamic Studies at the Institute for Islamic Studies at the Free University of Berlin. From 2005 to 2015 she worked as a delegate and advisor for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Bangladesh, Niger, Switzerland, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey.

Her field of interest are contemporary Middle Eastern politics, namely Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, Islamic (Sunni, Sufi, Shiite and Salafi) networks, non-conventional Islamist arms-carriers (Shiite, Sunni militias), migration and health system. She is currently working on cultural negotiations of Middle Eastern patients in the Danish health system.

Wellbeing of Staff in the Context of War and Conflict – An Impossible Goal?

- By: David Becker, Free University Berlin, Germany

The presentation discusses the difficulties of developing meaningful staff- and self-care structures in the context of war and conflict. Based on an ongoing research project focusing on staff-care concepts and needs of institutions working with Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, as well as a peer support project for UNRWA staff in Syria the realities of professionals are described in terms of sequential traumatization (Hans Keilson). While their inevitable suffering must be acknowledged it is not useful to do so in the language of mental illness. Three key-conflicts seem to be central to the perspective of meaningful staff-care especially in a context where wellbeing is literally impossible: acknowledgement vs. lack of acknowledgement; the need to protect resilience and vulnerability; the difficulty of enhancing equality and difference.

Prof. Dr. David Becker teaches Psychology (Focus: Social Psychology and Intercultural Praxis) at the Sigmund Freud Private University in Berlin/Germany. He is a consultant to GIZ and other International organizations in reference to psychosocial work in areas of conflict and crisis. In the last 10 years a lot of his work has focused on the Middle East, specifically on behalf of GIZ helping the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to establish sustainable mental health and psychosocial support services in all fields and all programs. He is also currently involved in a bigger research project for GIZ about Staff-Care. He has recently (2016) edited and co-authored the book "1:0 for Rafah – Potentials and Challenges of Psychosocial Work in Palestine" (1:0 für Rafah, Chancen und Herausforderungen psychosozialer Arbeit in Palästina", Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag).

Abstracts

➤ **Session IV: Memories****Enigmatic Traces: Remembering & Forgetting in post-war Sri Lanka**

- By: Malathi de Alwis, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a long history of monumentalizing and memorializing. Both rural and urban landscapes are scattered with Buddhist stupas and irrigation tanks built by pacifist as well as war-mongering monarchs, rock stelae proclaiming conquests, cave inscriptions commemorating acts of beneficence, statues of colonial and nationalist rulers, tsunami memorials, war cemeteries and 'victory' monuments. Monumentalizing has also been accompanied by iconoclasm, in post-war Sri Lanka, and the battle for remembering and forgetting plays a central role in the Sri Lankan state's fraught relationship with its Tamil population who have borne the brunt of a three-decade long war. This paper delineates certain contours of this festering wound while exploring an alternative politics of bereavement and memorialization encompassed in the work of one of Sri Lanka's foremost artists.

*Malathi de Alwis received her PhD in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago and is currently affiliated with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo. She has written extensively on nationalism, humanitarianism, maternalism, suffering and memorialization. She is the co-editor of *Tsunami in a Time of War: Aid, Activism and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka and Aceh* (2009), *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across War Zones* (2003) and *Embodied Violence: Communalizing Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (1996).*

Enforced disappearance in Colombia: trauma, forgiveness, reparation

- By: Omar Alejandro Bravo, National University of Rosario, Argentina

The practices of forced disappearance began in Latin America, as a State policy and as a technique, in the 70s, with the rise of military dictatorships and in the context of the Cold War. Its objective was to create terror in society and prevent the process of mourning for those close to the victims. The traumatic potential of these practices is evident and perpetuates over time.

This work focuses on the analysis of the consequences of such practices amongst relatives of the victims that belonged to the Patriotic Union (a political movement massacred in the 80's), as well as those who died in the massacre of the Palace of Justice and in the city of Trujillo, Valle del Cauca. The psychosocial character of the trauma and the revictimizing character of the reparation and justice policies, as well as the eventual banality present in them, are highlighted in this work.

The notions of forgiveness, memory and forgetting are discussed based on this general framework. Regarding forgiveness, it often appears as a demand that responds to the needs of our times, linked to resignation more than to the character of forgiveness itself.

Memory, when imposed by institutions and circumstances, is limited in its capacity to repair the damage suffered and challenge society around the causes that generated this phenomenon. Without this reconstructive process, overcoming the traumatic event, often arbitrarily associated with oblivion, cannot occur.

Omar Alejandro Bravo is a psychologist at the National University of Rosario, Argentina. He holds an MSc and PhD in Psychology from the University of Brasilia, Brazil and was a postdoctoral fellow at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His research as well as his interventions as a practitioner focusses on community mental health, especially of marginalized and incarcerated populations, as well as the relation between subjectivity and politics.