Authoritarian Conditions

Arts & Culture Under Authoritarian Regimes & In Political Resistance

An Invitation to Participate in Two Conferences at the IKK in Fall 2017 & Spring 2018

CONCEPT:

The new leaders are in charge: Democratic institutions and multicultural lifestyles may easily be altered towards bluntly authoritarian regimes these days -- in Europe, in the Americas, in manifold nations all around the globe. The initiators of the movements behind these changes present themselves as agents of the one true opposition and resistance – a well-known, common denominator for authoritarian movements in history. The exclusion of select groups of people through ridiculing, scapegoating, and even outright violent abuse and the promotion of an almost unbelievable degree of kleptocratic and nepotistic execution of power seem to be fashionable again – or did this never change anyhow?

Douglas Kellner and Georg Seebßen propose to interpret these movements of the 2010s as variations on an authoritarian governing style accelerated by contemporary and highly populist means of digital production and of networked dissemination. Hence, these political formations articulate themselves in all forms of visual, sensory, auditory, textual and musical cultures. Nationalists and racists make use of contemporary media culture – between memes and tweet storms, music videos, propaganda music, flash mobs and the ubiquitous soundbites of leaders and agitators ready to be reused and reposted on all platforms. In what ways may such authoritarian practices be dealt with in perspectives from arts and culture?

Two international and interdisciplinary conferences at the Department of Arts & Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen shall focus on the effects of these developments regarding the arts and culture in general – focusing on the department’s four major fields of Modern Culture & Comparative Literature, Theater & Performance Studies, Art History & Visual Culture, and Musicology. The conferences will focus (a) on the authoritarian regimes & parties in Europe & the World in the autumn and (b) on the political opposition and resistance in Europe & the World in the spring:
What are the actual performative acts, the rhetorical figures, visual signatures, the sonic markers occurring when authoritarian regimes and parties take power?

• Does authoritarianism have its own imagery, performance tradition, its musical genres or linguistic symptoms?

• How may musics and literatures, performances and the visual arts be part of a resistance movement against authoritarianism?

• Are there artistic and cultural practices that work almost indistinguishably as trompe l’oeuil or trompe l’oreille for authoritarian regimes – and movements of resistance against the abuse of power?

• What are the limits of the concept of authoritarianism in regard to cultural and artistic practices – as a general description of these threatening political movements?

We invite all colleagues at IKK to send us their ideas, proposals, sketches.

For most of us this specific field probably represents a rather new area of inquiry – hence we welcome especially tentative explorations of this field or efforts to transfer previous research.

We will allocate all proposals into 4-5 thematically or disciplinarily focused sections, maybe even spanning over 2 conferences at IKK: fall 2017 & spring 2018.

For 15-20-minute-presentations (+ca.10 minutes of discussion) please send your abstract (100 words; subject: Authoritarian Conditions) until May 30th, 2017 to:

info@soundstudieslab.org

Organizers: Morten Michelsen & Holger Schulze

Advisory board: Laura Luise Schultz, Malene Vest Hansen, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen
References & inspiration:


Mario Perniola (2004), Contro la comunicazione, Torino: Einaudi.