

**21-23 September 2023**

**WORKSHOP: Dis/Connectivities: Anthropological Perspectives in the South Caucasus**

**University of Bern, Switzerland**

**Call for Papers**

The South Caucasus has so far been studied mainly from the perspective of political science and international relations focusing on the economic and military aspects of borders. In light of the war in Ukraine, the recent oil and gas crisis in Europe and the Russian exodus to the South Caucasus, the dynamics in this region deserve more attention than ever. With an anthropological approach, we aim to shed light on the presence and absence of connectivities as productive tools for a (re)interpretation of authoritarian state formations, border politics and gender experiences.

We approach the concept of 'dis/connectivities' at different local, national, regional and international scales and from various angles including material, social, and methodological. We understand the term not only as the state of dis/connectedness but also as the *abilities to connect* within a context of conflict, rupture and isolation - both in space and time. Connectivity comes from landscape theory and refers to the availability or accessibility of transport infrastructure that connects regions to each other - such as ancient silk roads, pipelines carrying gas, railroads as remnants of the Soviet times, the road on Lachin Corridor connecting Stepanakert to Yerevan and the Zangezur corridor connecting Nakhchivan (Azerbaijan) to Turkey. Geographically speaking, the distinctive mountainous territory of the South Caucasus also remains as a border between Asia and Europe and thus disconnects them. We are interested in emotive infrastructures and materiality of living and non-living beings in this geography that simultaneously bridge, disassociate and isolate populations living in this particular region, who represent an immense diversity in languages and identifications. Sealed or humanitarian, border gates of nation states create political divides that do not always correspond to the cultural divides. Typically mislocated, resettled or displaced, people living in the larger region find creative ways to keep being connected when they want to establish relations based on trade, solidarity or kinship. Meanwhile, marginalized and minoritised citizens of these nations based on ethnicity, sexuality or political engagements disconnected from traditional, national and familial values and expectations of their larger societies rely on global connections with diaspora communities, exiles and migrant labourers. From a perspective of anthropological connectivity between scholarly knowledge and politics, we believe demonstrating these complex webs and modalities of social relations would shift the focus from un(hu)manned debates over geopolitics.

We are inviting researchers to strengthen the focus on the South Caucasus, which is often portrayed as a fractured conflict zone, and relate it with the simultaneity of dis/connectivities by addressing but not limiting to the following questions:

- What material connectivities – such as infrastructure, technology or ecology – can be traced within and across the South Caucasus?
- How can we follow the ambiguity of social dis/connectivities as transnational belonging, diasporic relations or translocal activism?
- How can we study dis/connectivity in the region ethnographically and how does this lens help to develop new perspectives on the region?
- In what ways can we talk about queer and feminist solidarity in the South Caucasus while considering the effects of dis/connectivities in the region?

Please send a 250-word abstract of your contribution and a short bio to [manon-julie.borel@unibe.ch](mailto:manon-julie.borel@unibe.ch) by July 23, 2023.

We have limited funds to provide flight and train travel and lodging subsidies. If you want to be considered for a subsidy, please indicate so in your application. We will prioritize speakers and early-career scholars who are underrepresented at their home institutions. Collaborative works are also welcome.

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