

Session Proposal

Geographies of Anti-/fascism in Eras of Austerity: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives

Convenors: Anthony Ince and David Featherstone

Abstract

The rise of far-right parties such as Golden Dawn in a context of entrenched austerity has given a particular urgency to the theoretical and political engagements with fascism and anti-fascism. This session seeks to explore the contemporary and historical geographies of fascism and anti-fascism. While geographers have been at the forefront of anti-racist social science research, the discipline has engaged much less with the everyday politics and movements around racism's manifestations on the far-right. The session thus seeks to engage with the diverse manifestations of far-right political activity. In the UK, for example, the electoral threat of the BNP has waned in recent years, but the growth in street-based, violent forms of fascist and racist activity is a significant cause for alarm. Deepening austerity measures and aggressive immigration policies and agendas are likewise driving a growth in both progressive and exclusionary forms of popular politics and socialities.

There are important histories and geographies of anti-fascist organising particularly, though not exclusively, in relation to crisis moments. Often these have been shaped by significant cultures of translocal organising and have been forged through intersections of anti-fascism and anti-colonialism (Atkinson, 2000, Featherstone, 2013). We are also seeing a growing internationalisation of the far right – something that the left has throughout its history laid sole claim to. While the 'official' politics of state multiculturalism are increasingly criticised by left and right alike, liberal 'apolitical' anti-fascisms, similarly appear to be losing their resonance in increasingly divided, violent, and austere times. However, there is also a need to transcend simplistic accounts of fascism as a mere response to crisis and to situate the politics of the far-right into broader histories of organising and political cultures (Dalakoglou, 2012).

In this session, we invite papers that engage with the relationships between the cultural, political and economic causes and contexts that give rise to far-right activity, and the spatial strategies of fascist and anti-fascist activisms. In particular, we invite papers that discuss the ways in which fascisms and anti-fascisms are to an extent relationally co-produced in place and across space. Further, we are interested in how anti-fascist politics draws on and memorialises past struggles such as the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. We are also interested in critical engagements with the politics and organising strategies of anti-fascisms, as well as the intersections between anti-/fascist politics and the possibilities of grassroots forms of multiculturalism and internationalism.

We are particularly interested in papers that engage with the following key questions:

How does thinking fascism and anti-fascism spatially matter?

What are the place-based dynamics of fascism/ anti-fascism?

How can anti-fascist organising/ solidarities be facilitated?

What are the relations between the rise of the 'far-right' and a so-called 'post-political' condition?

What can be learned from past experiences of anti-fascist struggle?

What are relations between anti-fascism and anti-colonialism?