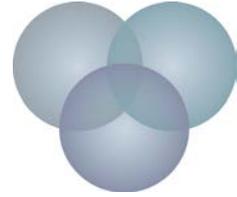




International Max Planck Research School
'Retaliation, Mediation and Punishment'
(IMPRS-REMEP)



Conference Call

'Punishment: Negotiating Society'

14 – 16 February, 2018

Venue: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany

Deadline for abstract submission: 31 December, 2017

Confirmed keynote speaker:

Professor John Pratt: "The end of penal populism; the rise of political populism?"

Call

REMEP is a multidisciplinary research school that examines the concepts of retaliation, mediation and punishment from different theoretical and methodological angles, with a focus on their role on peace and social order. This conference looks at the social context of punishment.

We start from the premise that punishment involves not only a handful of actors (i.e., members of the jurisdiction, perpetrators, victims, etc.) but a complex array of actors, including families, kin groups, and other polities that judge and punish; peers; associations; the audience(s) (including the media audience and the (mass) public); the punished (including, group-, surrogate- or proxy-punishment); and executive bodies such as states and private prison managements. We see punishment not only in the context of retaliation, deterrence, prevention, incapacitation and rehabilitation/retribution, but also as a reflection of society and as a constant negotiation of legitimacy, a renegotiation of social order and control. Populism, neoliberalism, misogyny, nationalism, and racism – to name just a few phenomena – are negotiated in the context of punishment.

This conference will be anchored around three key issues:

1. Theory, legitimacy and history of punishment

In this section, we propose to concentrate on the development of a coherent framework and theories of punishment in order to elaborate the semantics of punishment. Topics within this include the purposes of punishment in various legal systems and the historical shifts that punishment has undergone. We further seek theoretical contributions related to the informal, micro, local, national, international, and global influences on punishment policies and especially the challenges that emerge when these levels interact. Both historically and in the present, challenges can be observed

especially at the fringes of normativities, it is here where legitimation is scrutinized. This occurs, for instance, in cases in which the perpetrator is also a victim, e.g. in the case of (former) child soldiers. A less obvious example are trials that shift venues from local to national or to the International Criminal Court, including changes of prisons and favourable prison conditions. This can culminate in the evasion of mundane punishment, replacing it with divine punishment by shifting the discourse from a legal to a religious one. Secular, domestic, familial, religious, cultural, and human rights discourses interact and demand for a more complex understanding of criminality and punishment. Furthermore, these interactions result in a need to find alternatives to criminal procedures that include restorative justice.

2. Media audiences, mass publics, and group punishment

The contested term “penal populism” is at the centre of a debate that questions the involvement of “the public” in the criminal justice systems, based on the argument that the presence of the public tends to encourage symbolic actions which disregard the proportionality principle in favour of populist gain. Since populism targets political success in elections, it potentially leads to preventive policies that are detrimental to minority groups, increasing the likelihood of punishment becoming a matter of living on the wrong side of the street or having the wrong passport. Such populist measures further reduce the use of risk prevention in the form of social programmes, instead giving preference to repressive measures. We are seeking to unravel the interaction of media, populists, and the public that is said to have weakened the principle of equality before the law; simultaneously, we propose to move away from this approach and analyse the justice system now and in the past as a tool of and for governing and for the creation of social order and the exertion of social control, benefitting some but not necessarily all.

3. Interdisciplinary approach to punishment

To ensure different approaches to punishment and critical perspectives on our law- and social-science-based analysis, we especially invite scholars from other disciplines – for example, neuroscientists who are working on understanding the relation of the brain to punishment and behaviour and investigating changes in the frontal cortex that occur during and before acts of crime. Such research puts questions of free will, social control, deviant behaviour, and crime at the forefront. Further, we invite political economists who are studying the effects, benefits, and disadvantages of private prisons and home-confinement technologies and how these increase the likelihood of mass condemnations; and evolutionary anthropologists who include the evolutionary effects of punishment in their studies.

Speakers will be invited by the organizers on the basis of submitted abstracts. For invited speakers travel- and accommodation costs will be covered (economy fares). PhD students within the REMEP program are encouraged to submit an abstract. We hope to produce an edited volume based on the conference. Abstracts should not exceed 500 words and should be submitted to Timm Sureau (sureau@eth.mpg.de) and Günther Schlee (schlee@eth.mpg.de) by December 31, 2017. Further questions should be directed to the coordinator Timm Sureau.

A selection from submitted abstracts will be made by early January 2018.