

RN31: Ethnic Relations, Racism and Antisemitism – Biennial Report 2017-2019

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This research network is the only international network in the social sciences explicitly dedicated to the research of racism and antisemitism. The network was founded in 2008 as a unique space for researchers of new forms of antisemitism and racism, particularly their contemporary developments. Until then, antisemitism research was not institutionalized within the ESA and there was no space where discussions on antisemitism and its connections to racism could take place. So the research network filled a gap both institutionally as well as with regard to theorizing and analyzing the continuing and indeed growing relevance of antisemitism and racism.

In 2018 we lost two important members of the Research Network: Robert Fine, co-founder and for many years chair, of the network died on 10 June 2018. Evelien Gans, longstanding active member of the network, died on 19 July 2018.

Developments since 2017

Developments since the last ESA conference in Athens in 2017 have been positive in the sense that the Research Network is now well established within ESA and has grown to be one of the medium-sized networks with a respectable membership. The recent **mid-term conferences** in Warsaw (2016) and Ferrara (2018), as well as a **conference** on Antisemitism in Europe in Berlin (2015) outside the normal range of mid-terms, were all very productive and well attended. We thank the respective organisers (Ireneusz Krzeminsky, University of Warsaw; Alfredo Alietti and Dario Padovan, University of Ferrara; and Kim Robin Stoller, International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism, Berlin) for the hard work and their effort that made these events possible. We also try to continue our collective **publishing activities** that started with two special issues in peer reviewed journals (2012 in *European Societies*, 2016 in *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*).

While initially the main **research focus** of the Network's presentations and debate was on the relation between antisemitism and racism, more recently the focus has broadened in order to develop a comparative analysis of different forms of antisemitism, racism and racialisation across different European and global contexts, with attention to the significance of antisemitism within that analysis but also in regard to anti-Roma, anti-Muslim, anti-migrant and anti-refugee resentments and racisms, nationalism and xenophobia. We have sought to respond sociologically to the on-going economic and political crises in Europe and to offer solidarity and intellectual resources to activists as well as scholars working to understand and combat antisemitism and racism across our continent.

We have sought to strengthen our active membership in **under-represented European countries**. We are pleased, for example, to have recruited board members from the Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal. Our mid-terms in Warsaw (2016), Ferrara (2018), and our upcoming 2020 mid-term in Braga (Portugal) are reaching

scholars, including junior scholars, in Eastern, Southern and Central Europe, a task we consider a priority given the urgency of our issues in many Eastern, Southern and Central European countries. We have actively encouraged **PhD and early career participants**, reserving spaces on the Board for representatives of these groups.

2018 Midterm conference at the University of Ferrara

Local organizers: Alfredo Alietti, Dario Padovan

with support by Karin Stoenner, Kim Robin Stoller, Ben Gidley

The Mid-term conference took place 5-6 September 2018 at the University of Ferrara. During the conference, more than 40 papers were presented on subjects related to the call for paper and the overall focus of the research network, particularly on Antisemitism, different forms of racism and nationalism. The conference has been divided in 14 sessions in line with the main themes of the call. Beside presenters from Europe, it is important to highlight the presence of scholars from North America and Latin America.

Another success has been the involvement of civil society and public institutions from Ferrara, participating during the two-days conference, such as ACLI, ARCI (catholic and laic association that work with migrant and refugees) and members of UNAR (National Office on Racial Antidiscrimination). Moreover, there has been cooperation with MEIS (National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah of Ferrara) through a visit to the museum at the closing of the conference.

The opening of the conference marked a very emotional moment, with a commemorating event for the late Robert Fine, co-founder of our research network as well as essential intellectual point of reference. The introduction by Karin Stoenner and Kim Robin Stoller (ESA RN31 chair and co-chair) and the tributes by David Hirsh, David Seymour, and Philip Spencer have recalled the commitment and the fundamental contribution of Robert Fine in the analysis of racism and Antisemitism during his academic and political life.

All the sessions were attended not only by the speakers/participants but also by students of the local Department of Humanities.

The conference was free of charge and announced at the website of the University of Ferrara, local newspapers and a Facebook page.¹

2019 14th ESA Conference, Manchester

At this conference, the RN included eleven sessions with 44 presentations from several European and non-European countries on antisemitism, racism and ethnic relations, xenophobia, national identities, including scholars not previously affiliated to the network. Together with RN29 and RN15 we organized the Midday Special MD01 “Cosmopolitanism, Antisemitism, Universalism: A Tribute to the Critical Social Theory of Robert Fine”, with Christine Achinger and Daniel Chernilo as speakers. Together with RN21 we organized the Joint Session “The Challenge of Measuring Antisemitism”.

¹ see: <https://www.facebook.com/Global-perspectives-on-racism-antisemitism-and-nationalism-373112339863487/>

Beside the general issues of the conference and the RN, we called specifically for papers focusing on theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects of research on antisemitism and racism, also in a comparative framework. The network's perspective is to bridge an exclusive divide between the understanding of antisemitism and of racism, exploring the correspondences and affinities, but also the differences and contrasts. Our over-arching question is to understand what are the material conditions and the social, political and historical contexts shaping variations in antisemitism and racism, across time and across different European and global contexts.

In particular, we called for papers focussing on the role of antisemitism and racism in current threats to democracy and democratic values in Europe and beyond. Specific questions included:

How can we explain the relationship between authoritarian populism, right-wing extremism and Islamism, three of the main vectors for antisemitic, racist and xenophobic narratives in Europe today?

What are the gender politics of these formations?

As always, we welcomed papers that highlighted neglected forms of racism and racialisation (including anti-Roma discrimination or "anti-Gypsyism") and papers that explored the intersection of different racisms or of racisms with other axes of difference and power.

Future activities

We are currently planning our **2020 mid-term conference**, which will be held at the University of Minho, **Braga, Portugal**. Beyond this, we continue our commitment in building collaborations with new research areas in the broad field of the comparative study of antisemitism and racism – including the dialogue between scholars of antisemitism and anti-Roma, anti-Muslim, anti-migrant and anti-refugee racism, as well as nationalism.

Board members 2019-2021

Our current Board membership is as follows

Coordinators:

- Coordinator: Karin Stoegner, University of Passau, Germany, karin.stoegner@uni-passau.de
- Co-coordinator: Kim Robin Stoller, International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism/ Free University, Germany, [kim.stoller\[at\]iibsa.org](mailto:kim.stoller[at]iibsa.org)

Board Members:

- Christine Achinger (University of Warwick, UK)
- Alfredo Alietti (University of Ferrara, Italy)
- Véronique Altglas (Queen's University Belfast, UK)
- Sina Arnold (Humboldt University, Germany)
- Claudine Attias-Donfut (CNRS, France)
- Ben Gidley (Birkbeck, University of London, UK)
- David Hirsh (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)
- Günther Jikeli (Indiana University, USA)
- Ireneusz Krzeminski (University of Warsaw, Poland)
- Maria José Manso Casa-Nova (University of Minho, Portugal)

- Dario Padovan (University of Turin, Italy)
- David Seymour (City University, UK)
- Philip Spencer (Kingston University, UK)
- Zbyněk Tarant (University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic)

Former (Co-Founding) Board Members:

- Late Robert Fine (University of Warwick, UK)