



# STATE OF AFFAIRS

SOCIAL THEORY: CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### A New Culture of Truth? On the Transformation of Political Epistemologies since the 1960s in Central and Eastern Europe

Recent years have seen the alleged rise of a “post-truth era,” in close association with the destabilization of familiar epistemologies and the dismissal of their classical gatekeepers. New political epistemologies have emerged that follow the truth regimes of specific group attitudes which are often nationalist, chauvinist, and xenophobic. These epistemologies are produced by private, semi-official, and even governmental brokers, and spread via both traditional media (such as television and newspapers) and new media such as Facebook and Twitter.

The deliberate use of “versions” of truth has become a very influential tactic, as political parties have begun restructuring the media landscape, promoting new politics of memory, and so forth. The consequences have become manifest in nation states and international organizations: for a long time, consensus-building stemmed from the integration of different interests on the basis of the same epistemological values (truthfulness, reliability, robustness, etc.) and categories (facts, objectivity, etc.) that are now being questioned. Classical “truth figures” such as scientists, journalists, poets, or dissidents have been joined by bloggers, YouTubers, spin-doctors, debunkers, or whistleblowers, who dwell in places that seem to have emerged only recently, and especially with the establishment of Web 2.0.

Though “fake news” and “alternative facts” have predominantly been discussed with reference to the US and Western Europe, this issue of *State of Affairs* will mainly focus on the former Warsaw Pact countries, where the negotiation of truth has a specific history. After 1989, Marxism lost its official monopoly on interpretation to other – often “Western” – truth regimes. Yet dissidents and social movements, after having emphatically (re-)claimed “truth” as a weapon against regimes before 1989, have since lost their impact, perhaps as an effect of political pluralization and/or the digital atomization of perspectives.

These shifts in epistemological landscapes cannot be observed and described easily along the well-known lines of propaganda, information, disinformation, and so forth. The idea of this issue of *State of Affairs* is to systematically assess such changes. We will therefore examine the practical contexts in which truth claims

are embedded, the (trans-)formation or (de-)stabilization of “truth scenes” (e.g., the trial) and “truth figures.” We want to take a closer look at the shift(s) of truth regimes from the heyday of the Cold War in the 1960s until today. We will pay special attention to the transformation of the media settings for information flows, and the processes of forming public opinion in relation to the complicated history of (Eastern) Europe’s political epistemologies. Of course, it is not only in the US or in post-Soviet spaces that these phenomena can be spotted. Therefore, we are very interested in comparative case studies involving other global regions, without specific post-Soviet experiences.

We especially encourage writers to take the following topics into consideration:

- case studies of truth regimes in Eastern and Central Europe
- comparative analysis of truth regimes both within Eastern and Central Europe and compared to the Western bloc
- analysis of (the emergence, replacement, disappearance of) old and new truth figures (see above – the poet, the debunker, etc.), truth institutions (e.g., the court, the party, the fact-finding team), or truth-spots (the church, the laboratory, the street)
- analysis of old and new practices, means, and technical media of (de-)legitimizing truth, disclosing/concealing truth, etc., such as programming algorithms, rhetoric, or the life-stream
- analysis of (the shifting of) epistemic virtues
- analysis of emerging epistemic categories and objects, such as “factoids,” tweets, and so forth.

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**Please submit your proposal, including all authors’ names, email addresses, and affiliations, with an abstract of around 500 words, to [redakcja@stanrzeczy.edu.pl](mailto:redakcja@stanrzeczy.edu.pl) by 10 June 2019.** The editors will decide which proposals will be accepted by **20 June 2019**.

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The selected authors will be invited to submit their manuscripts (max. 60,000 characters, including tables, figures, and references) by **30 September 2019**. All manuscripts will be peer reviewed. Publication is planned for the first quarter of 2020.

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The guest editors of the issue are Friedrich Cain, Dietlind Hüchtker, Bernhard Kleeberg, Jan Surman. **For any queries, please contact Friedrich Cain** ([friedrich.cain@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:friedrich.cain@uni-erfurt.de)).