

Call for Submissions

PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review's open-access website, PoLAR online

Emergent Conversations Series:

Cultures of Falsehoods and the Politics of Manipulation

This Emergent Conversation series is part of PoLAR's Digital Editorial Fellowship program (2025-26) and invites contributions around the theme of "Cultures of Falsehoods and the Politics of Manipulation"—ethnographically driven, interdisciplinary perspectives on emerging forms of manipulation, censorship, accusations, conspiracies, and mis/disinformation at a time of rapidly shifting media landscapes and global uncertainties.

Epistemology, the social constitution of truths and facts—and by extension, that of scientific knowledge itself—has been a central preoccupation of social theory. For anthropologists, this preoccupation took on distinctive meanings when critical scholarship acknowledged the multiplicities of knowledge production, including forms of structural inequalities that are often embedded within the social production of facts. Incisive contributions from the fields of postcolonial, feminist, ethnic, and critical race studies provided much-needed methodological and analytical tools, highlighting the broader relations of power that are seminal to the endeavor of knowledge production at large (Liston 2020).

And yet, in the contemporary, digital "post-truth" moment, various forms of falsehoods have ironically become social facts in their own right. Within this context, the series steps away from testing the veracity of claims as either "true" or "false" to instead probe the nature of their social production. In other words, it asks, what can grounded research tell us about the construction of knowledge, authority, information, media, and public life at a time when their very stakes continue to unravel across the world? What might it mean to talk about social trust in our contemporary moment?

The aim of this series is to bring together diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives to examine how some forms and modalities of knowledge and meaning-making thrive over others. We seek contributions that engage the classic Durkheimian dictum of social facts and explore "how they pass the society test" (Greenhouse 2019). This series seeks to bring into conversation an array of diverse social practices that ultimately contribute to our understanding of knowledge production, its manipulation, and its impact on political life across regions. Contributions may consider, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- What conceptions of truth and falsities are certain practices of knowledge production inherently reliant on? What do they assume and disavow?
- How do framings of mis/disinformation, propaganda, and fake news complicate the notion of trust in public institutions?

- How do notions of facts get mapped onto the production of spaces, identities, and discourses? How are they made, unmade, and manipulated in deliberative ways?
- What role does the media play in the production of organized falsehoods?
- How are notions of the “liberal” and “illiberal” challenged, reproduced, and reinvented in creative ways by communities towards specific ends

Submission Guidelines

- This series invites short essays of 2000-3000 words. Ethnographic case studies and thematic analysis grounded in empirical research are welcome. We also encourage visual-textual submissions in the form of photo essays.
- Please follow [PoLAR's Author Guidelines](#) for formatting and citation style.

Please send enquiries, questions and clarifications, proposed abstracts, pitches for essays and submissions to Rohan Sengupta at rs7265@nyu.edu

Works Cited

Greenhouse, Carol. 2019. “‘This Is Not Normal’: Are Social Facts Finished” *American Anthropologist*, vol 121 (1); pp 167-170

<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/aman.13184>

Liston, Noelle Molè. 2020. *The Truth Society: Science, Disinformation, and Politics in Berlusconi's Italy*; Ithaca: Cornell University Press