

Sonja John

## **Denunciation – Creating a Culture of Fear**

**Estland, Tartu University, 6–8 June 2024.**

### *Call for Papers*

Denunciation—the act of accusing someone in front of state officials of divergent or delinquent behaviour—can have far-reaching effects on individual and societal levels. Throughout history and across regions, denunciation has caused the death of the denounced person and led to widespread distrust and fear that undermines social cohesion. In the history of mankind, we have a long tradition of denunciation, it was common in the Assyrian Empire, the same trend can be traced in the Roman Empire, ancient China, in the Middle Ages, as well as in modern times, for example in the Soviet Union, North Korea or in Putin’s Russia. German research focuses on the (lack of) accountability of denunciation during the Nazi regime (Halbrainer/Kuretsidis-Haider 2007) or the “dimensions of betrayal” during the GDR system (Krätzner-Ebert 2023). Besides the fear of being monitored by state actors like the police or secret services, an especially problematic case is denunciation by fellow citizens, friends and family. “Denunciation as a social practice” can result in the creation of a culture of fear and the acceptance of a culture of denunciation (Hornung 2010).

Undermining social cohesion can be the aim of hybrid warfare or the result of despotic or simply bad politics. One of the consequences of influence activity can be a culture of fear and panic in society due to the insecurity created by crises or war. A culture of fear precipitates insecurity, instability and anxiety in social discourses and relationships caused by emotional reactions (Mölder 2011: 241). A culture of fear may even appear to increase solidarity in societies, but the irrational decisions that are taken in response to it, the constant need to introduce ever new measures that pretend to be crisis management, and other tactical miscalculations can lead in the long term to large-scale strategic errors and global miscalculations with negative social and political consequences. The sense of social unity achieved through a culture of fear is never effective as society does not evolve but focuses all its energies on self-preservation (Mölder 2018: 69).

This conference will investigate the reasons for denunciation and coping mechanisms. Aiming at providing a solid background for the analysis of denunciation, we welcome papers that investigate the historical development of denunciation from its origins in the ancient world to modern times from an international and interdisciplinary perspective.

Papers are welcomed that touch on the following themes, but need not be limited to theme:  
Denunciation and the law

1. Denunciation in history (i.e., Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Middle Ages, Modern Era, USSR, Communist China, Third Reich, Francō’s Spain, Mussolini’s Italy and other dictatorial, communist and fascist regimes of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America)
2. Social, economic, political, and cultural aspects and effects of denunciation
3. How did the COVID-19 crises affect our approach to denunciation?

4. Denunciation during wartime (wars in antiquity, wars in the Middle Ages, Thirty Years' War; Naopoleonic wars, WW I, WW II, Iraq-Iranian war, Russo-Ukrainian war, Israel-Palestine conflicts, Syrian civil war, etc.)
5. Denunciation in modern times of classical snitches and social media finks
6. Official and local authorities of denunciation

Keynote speakers: Dr. Anita Krätzner-Ebert (Germany) and Dr. Holger Mölder (Estonia)

Organisers: Vladimir Sazonov (University of Tartu), Alevtina Solovyeva (University of Tartu), Sonja John (Berlin School of Economics and Law), and Sebastian Fink (University of Innsbruck)

Please send your paper proposal of approximately 300 words and a short bio to [denunciation2024@gmail.com](mailto:denunciation2024@gmail.com) by Feb 1, 2024. Notifications will be sent out by Feb 15, 2024.

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