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Habits and Rituals Block
Online Workshop at the IS4SI Summit 2021

Title: The fifth season. Fastnacht Carnival in Baden-Württemberg

Carnival is one of the most commonly practiced festivals which has a long tradition in many areas in Europe. Fastnacht in Büßlingen, Baden-Württemberg in Germany, serves as an example of the Carnival ritual which is the main event of the year for the local community. The towns around Lake Constance are very noteworthy as their long-time Fastnacht traditions have been preserved through centuries in many small communities. The popularity of Fastnacht in the village of Büßlingen is impressive in many respects. First of all, Fastnacht has a very strong regional character. It is the main event in community life demanding long-term preparations on the part of the local inhabitants exclusively and it is even called "the fifth season of the year" by them due to its importance. Secondly, the participants speak only dialect during the celebrations. That emphasizes their identity and differentiates them from the other neighbouring communities which speak different dialects. Thirdly, some elements of the celebrations are linked to the history of the village. Büßlingen was initially a Roman settlement. Many areas previously inhabited by the Roman Empire citizens kept celebrating fertility festivals, including Carnival through centuries. A link to the past following its history, tradition and heritage builds a certain feeling of otherness and diversity due to social phenomena that can be characterized as traditional, and as such can be easily linked to the aforementioned identity aspect in Büßlingen. Lastly, the celebrations have a strong family aspect. Many generations participate in the event and through this manifest their identity and kinship.

It is believed that Carnival celebrations in Europe are experiencing a kind of revival after many years of social and economic transformation when urbanization, secularization and industrialization jeopardized traditional regional festivities. The late modernity returned to historical public rituals. This statement might serve as a broader context for celebrations in Büßlingen; nevertheless, Fastnacht should not be perceived as a form of reinvented tradition. Due to being a rural area inhabited by the same families through generations and having a very short break in performing the festivities right after the World War II and during the pandemic COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the village maintained its ability to perform a continuous social ritual through centuries. Although some elements of rite may change throughout time, the core of celebrations – disorder and carousal, remain unchanged.

Nowadays, Fastnacht seems to be perceived by the authorities as a useful element of culture which has a stabilizing effect on the society. For a few days per year citizens enjoy the freedom of

performing a more liberated behaviour. Its unchanged continuity lasts unaffected, apart from the pandemic of COVID-19. The pandemic has brought a harsh stop and discontinuity to the yearly Fastnacht celebrations in Büßlingen. Nevertheless, without any doubt the local community in general and the *Fastnachtvereine* (Carnival associations) in particular will resume the organization and celebration of Fastnacht when the COVID-19 situation seems fit again. That also signifies the importance of Fastnacht for the local community.

Fastnacht shapes the local community and has an influence on the members (not only) during the few days of celebrations in Büßlingen. Through self-exaggeration and irony the villagers perform Fastnacht rituals and by doing so they extol their local microcosm in a globalized world. Büßlingen is special because the local community uses only dialect and emphasizes the kinship aspect and history of their village. Throughout generations the same families have organized the festivity in the same way. Historically speaking, Fasnacht is clearly related to pre-Christian fertility rituals performed by people at the beginning of spring to initiate magic rites aimed at a good harvest, especially in the countryside in Europe. Fertility rituals allowed people to act licentiously and their fertility-related behaviour was condoned. During the Carnival celebrations the whole life of the local communities literally turned upside-down, making the Carnival a reverse festival continuing till this day. There is a political power in Fasnacht. There is also a democratic power: common citizens take over buildings and organize Fastnacht celebrations in buildings which are normally visited by the upper-class citizens exclusively. For instance, village musicians take over the best concert halls in the city where on a regular base they would have no chance to perform.

We present the German Carnival from four perspectives: the first one shows the historic-religious background of Fastnacht, the second presents the social-political aspect, the third one is the music that people listen to during the celebration of Fastnacht and which is an important element of the celebrations. Finally the fourth and the last perspective deals with the *Fastnachtsvereine*, the associations which plan and execute the celebrations. The organisation of Carnival and the extensive celebrations are impossible without the Carnival associations. The associations keep the *Heimatkultur* alive – local activists keep the tradition alive imbuing the local residents with a proud feeling of local identity and bringing them together to perform a common festivity. An important role of the *Fastnachtverein* is to create a regional identity and to keep it alive. Every village keeps its own Carnival traditions. In South-West Germany, a lot of families have lived in the same villages for generations. People pass on their knowledge about Fasnacht rites from generation to generation. Through the Fasnacht celebration, local community builds their own unique bond with the inhabited region and with their own family past. The task of the *Fastnachtverein* is to preserve this collective memory and to present it to others. People want their Carnival traditions to be recognized by others. They donate money to cultural and social causes; for example, donating family masks and costumes many of which are handmade and often over a hundred years old to local museums and to foundations which focus on preserving German regional culture. The Carnival associations organise the Fastnacht events starting with *Schmotzige Dunschtig*, *Narrenbaumumzug*, *Hemdglonckerumzug*, *Römerball* and ending with *Aschermittwoch*.

We conducted our field research in the year 2019, the last year before the pandemic break. We gathered the ethnographic data in February and March 2019 in Büßlingen and in Singen, Germany, through participant observation and in-depth interviews.