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## Studying Re-enactments. Makeshift method or effective ethnographic research approach?

**Prof. Dr. Michaela Schäuble**

Wednesday, **14. October 2015**, 5:00 p.m.

**Hörsaal H10**, Rathausstraße 19, 1010 Vienna

Re-enactments are currently booming: be it in theatrical and “living history” performances, museum exhibition and/or on television. But is the study of re-enactments worthwhile and can it serve as a viable vehicle for ethnographic and/or historical inquiry? In which contexts is it inadequate or inefficient to distinguish between “authentic” and “staged” ritual performances?

In my presentation I will present and compare examples of ritual re-enactment from two different research sites in Croatia and Southern Italy. In each case re-enactment is used as an emancipatory gesture that allows participants and performers to stage the past in reaction to a conflicted present, yet the engagement with the respective historical subject matter differs fundamentally. Drawing on these ethnographic examples, I will critically assess the importance of re-enactment with regards to notions of intangible cultural heritage as well as an ethnographic research method.

**Michaela Schäuble** (Paul-Lazarsfeld-Visiting-Professor) is Assistant Professor for Social Anthropology with a focus on Media Anthropology at the University of Bern, Switzerland. She has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Croatia and published widely on the impact of violence on memory politics, the gendered character of ethno-nationalist discourse, and post-war transition in the former Yugoslavia.

In addition, she is also trained as a documentary filmmaker. In her current project she investigates the corporeal and sensory dimensions of religious ritual practice in early ethnographic documentary films (1940-1960s) on trance and spirit possession, comparing audio-visual material from West Africa, Haiti, and Italy.