

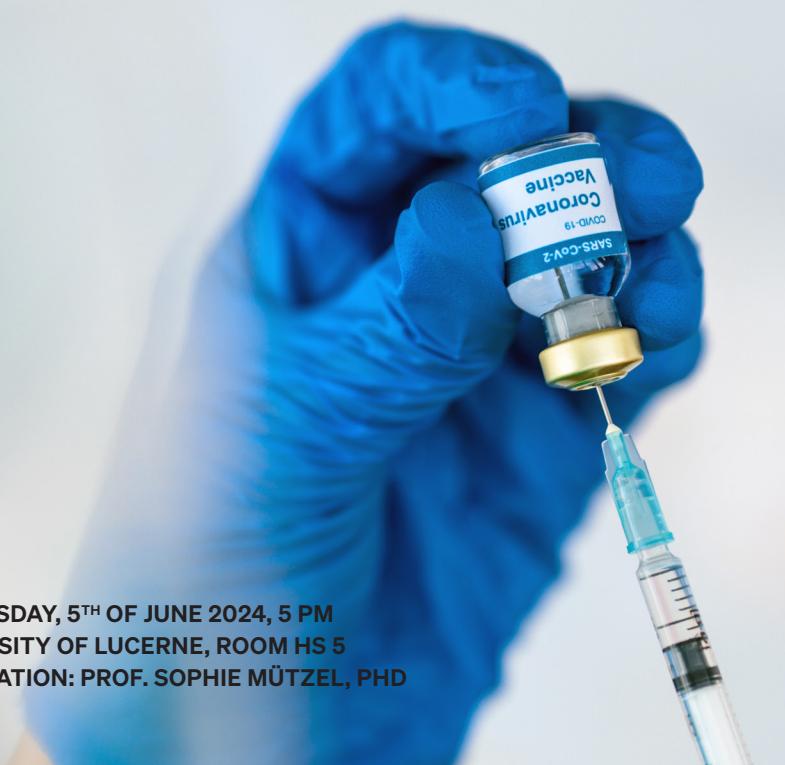
**UNIVERSITY OF
LUCERNE**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

THE CRISIS OF EXPERTISE AND THE QUESTION OF TRUST

**KEYNOTE LECTURE BY GIL EYAL
(COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY) AS PART
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
„THE RISE AND CRISIS OF EXPERTISE“**



**WEDNESDAY, 5TH OF JUNE 2024, 5 PM
UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE, ROOM HS 5
MODERATION: PROF. SOPHIE MÜTZEL, PHD**

CV Gil Eyal



Gil Eyal is professor of sociology at Columbia University in New York City. He graduated from Tel Aviv University (1991/92) and the University of California, Los Angeles, with an MA (1992), and a PhD in sociology (1997). He was an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1997 to 2002, and has since been a professor at Columbia University. His writing and teaching range over historical sociology; science, knowledge, and technology; expertise; fields; and elites. His publications include *The Crisis of Expertise* (2019), *The Disenchantment of the Orient* (2006), and *The Origins of Post-Communist Elites: From the Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (2003). With Tom Medvetz he co-edited the *Oxford Handbook of Expertise and Democratic Politics* (2023) and with Brendan Hart, Emine Onculer, Neta Oren, and Natasha Rossi he published *The Autism Matrix: The Social Origins of the Autism Epidemic* (2010). Additionally, his recent work has been published in publications such as *The American Scientist*, *Big Data & Society*, *Social Studies of Science*, *Sociological Theory*, and *Theory and Society*.

Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic made visible to many what sociologists and STS scholars have diagnosed earlier as a systemic and recurrent crisis of trust in science and expertise. Neither of these two terms – “expertise” and “trust” – however, are well-understood or have an unambiguous meaning. In this talk, I will trace multiple causes of the crisis, but will focus especially on regulatory science. The temporal structure of the facts produced by regulatory science differs from Kuhnian “normal science,” even as they carry profound distributional implications. As a result, they suffer from a set of congenital problems that provoke mistrust in a way that normal science facts do not. While “expertise” is often offered as an answer to these problems, I will argue that it is rather a symptom of the malaise, reflecting a situation where it is no longer clear how to decide between competing claims to authority as experts. Finally, the crisis is often represented as a matter of trust and mistrust, but I will argue that our theories and measures of trust are inadequate and shot through with profound ambiguities. We need to abandon the idea of trust as some social glue that holds societies together, and replace it with a theory of trusting as skilled, practical action. Such a theory offers many insights about the sources of the crisis and how to counteract it. The talk will address an interdisciplinary audience from the social, cultural, and health sciences, including interested practitioners from Health Communication, and will be followed by a reception.

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