

## **Deservingness - power, morality and inequality in contemporary Europe and beyond**

### **Workshop of the EASA Anthropology of Economy Network**

**October 27th-28th, 2017**

**Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna**

Convenors: Andreas Streinzer, University of Vienna, Jelena Tomic, University of Vienna and University of Bern

The dynamics of present-day inequalities are often manifested as a moral debate and even panic. People and groups create, maintain and transform arrangements of power through processes of justifying inequalities as either substantive features of groups or in terms of the neoliberal ideology of self-responsibility. The workshop explores how this is done through narratives, practices, or institutional arrangements, as well as the ideological, socio-economic and political legacies they are embedded in.

Justifying inequalities happens along established markers of difference such as gender, race, class, but is also grounded on novel intersectional categories. One such notion that we argue as especially significant is deservingness. The notion of "deservingness" is a crucial marker by which people, practices and relations are categorized to signify legitimate access to social transfers, money, citizenship, social status, conspicuous consumption. Within struggles for distribution and recognition, deservingness serves an essential feature of contemporary struggles for legitimising or challenging arrangements of power.

It is employed both as an emic category and a tool of governance and used to moralise and legitimise the retreat of welfare services, the unequal distribution of social transfers, to categorize people on the move into migrants and refugees and treat them differently. It is often used to moralise existing or emerging inequalities, such as in recent political events and transformations (economic crisis in Southern Europe, Brexit, the "refugee crisis", the rise of the far right in Europe, the election of Trump). In economic anthropology, deservingness has been explored, yet often without an explicit consideration of its intersectional dimensions and role in creating, maintaining and dissolving social boundaries.

With the proposed workshop, the convenors want to bring together a range of anthropologists on different stages in their career to discuss the conceptual frame and potential of "deservingness" from various angles and in various anthropological fields. We want to encourage participants to relate deservingness to other conceptual and analytical frameworks, such as intersectionality,

moral economy, policy and governance, neoliberalism and others.

We invite scholars from various fields of study (economic anthropology, anthropology of (forced) migration, legal anthropology, feminist anthropology etc.) to think through the justification of inequalities through ethnography and argue for analytical frameworks by which we can study such contemporary dynamics of social power and distribution. We invite contributions that think beyond their case studies and discuss implications for an understanding of contemporary societies.

**The papers can touch on the following themes but are not limited to them:**

- justifying class inequalities through notions of meritocracy
- the diversification of societies and the politics of citizenship and residence
- the categorisation of migrants in deserving humanitarian refugees or undeserving economic migrants
- subjectivizing unemployment through activation policies
- justifying extreme wealth (e.g. business, film, sports)
- the socialization of inequalities (e.g. schools, neighbourhood, state-minority relations)
- gendering inequalities (e.g. far-right pseudo-feminist xenophobia)

**Abstracts of 300 words and a short author biography should be sent to [andreas.streinzer@univie.ac.at](mailto:andreas.streinzer@univie.ac.at) and [jelena.tosic@univie.ac.at](mailto:jelena.tosic@univie.ac.at) no later than May 10th, 2017.**