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NEWSLETTER 2022/3 OCTOBER

IN FOCUS

The Network after EASA 2022

Dear Anthropology of Economy Network members!

We had a great business meeting at the EASA in Belfast in August and wanted to keep you updated as autumn settles in.

It was great to see many old and new members and companions of the network at the conference, and we do hope you enjoyed the time. The AoE network sponsored two panels that both were beyond successful: "Paper Dreams: traces of unrealised projects as archaeology of collective futures", convened by Luisa Arango and Jon Schubert, and "Imaginaries of foreign investment: friction and co-constitution of international financial flows and national borders", convened by Horacio Ortiz and Gustav Kalm. At the network meeting, we were a mix of old and new colleagues and had invigorating discussions about future activities. First, the convenors introduced the mission of the network, and we discussed the epistemically interesting and institutionally challenging definition of "things economic".

We proceeded to vote about the convenors, with [Ognjen Kojanić](#) nominated for the seat that Charlotte Bruckermann served on for four years (thanks so much for your work, Charlotte!). Of 12 present members, we counted 11 yes votes, so congrats and welcome, Ognjen!

We then discussed past activities, from adaptations of the newsletter to increasing membership on Facebook. In November 2020, we held a Pecha Kucha meeting with three presentations. Among those present, interest arose about holding a next one, maybe about the topic of e-Waste on which several present scholars are working. We presented the 2021 First Global Meet-Up of Economic Anthropology, organized by the network and hosted by the University of St. Gallen. Colleagues from around the world joined, and we'd be very keen to hear that someone could imagine organizing a second one next year!

We also talked about future activities. First, the convenors want to proceed with mapping economic anthropology in Europe, specifically in somewhat peripheralized regions. Several of the present members stated that they would be interested in collaborating or helping out with finding contacts and such. Second, we presented the possibility to co-sponsor events by the AoE. Although not as monetary support, the AoE sponsorship might help in making an event or application more prominent. Thirdly, we reported that we are in the process of preparing an online dialogue series about capitalisms and fascisms with the anthropology of fascisms network and others.

Finally, we agreed that it might be good to have economy-related panels compiled in a newsletter ahead of the next EASA. When talking about a potential mid-term workshop, Daniel Sosna said he might be interested in a theme around quantification, numbers and how statistics are powerful in the world. Several members liked the idea, and we decided to stay in touch regarding a follow-up.

Thanks so much for your attendance. If you have further thoughts or want to know more about this and that discussion point, please let us know. Also, consider sharing your work, news, articles, or events over the mailing list!

For meet-ups with the Society for Economic Anthropology members at the upcoming AAA Annual Meeting in Seattle, please check the mail we sent or contact us directly.

All the best!

Andreas, Juliane, Michele, and Ognjen

PERSPECTIVES, NOTES AND QUERIES

Tax Stories in Contemporary Politics

As the cost of living rises around the world, discussions in the media and amongst politicians about appropriate fiscal responses from government have become heated. Striking in these conversations is the tension between seeing tax as a special form of resource, with its attendant ethical demands, and simultaneously seeing it as a flow of resources that blends in with others and is indistinguishable from them. For instance, wasting taxpayer money is often spoken of as the worst kind of squandering; also, we regularly hear that there are no free hand-outs, only fiscal debts that the next generation will have to pay off. Such statements are matched by talk of how cuts in taxes increase growth and therefore lessen the generational burden of debt. These arguments about the pros and cons of high or low taxes are a mainstay of political debate, but what is interesting now is how they are peddled alongside each other, often by the same people, so that their contradictory logics are apparent.

Recently, anthropologists interested in tax have started paying attention to the difficulties of defining tax. How are taxes different from payments to other collective bodies, such as churches or unions? Do you always have to get something in return? Does the payment have to be extracted from labour, wealth or transactions to count as tax? Such scholars, including myself, are also interested in exploring the political effects of the existing definitions of tax, noting that calling state-led extractions 'taxes' awards those payments a power and moral weight that payments to other bodies do not have. In turn, the labour and wealth involved in paying taxes to the state gain a status different from the labour and wealth involved in generating contributions to non-state bodies. Similarly, taxes do more than redistribute wealth, for they are seen as well to stimulate markets, manage inflation and the like. This means that it is important to ask why many narratives around taxes focus on ideas of wealth creators and dependents, skivers and strivers, ideas that indicate that taxes are not simply directed flows of resources that are somehow not dissolved into the general economy, but instead mark different people and groups variably as debtors and creditors, and so as more or less virtuous.

While these sorts of questions resonate with durable anthropological interests, the current political moment has a further intriguing aspect. That is the open unravelling of neat tales about what taxes do in our societies, as ideas about tax as a special kind of delineated resource flow and ideas about tax as fully entangled in the wider economy are presented at the same time in a flurry of polemical debate.

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If you want to reply to this column, or if you want to write a column or have an idea for one, please communicate with James G. Carrier: jgc.jcarrier@gmail.com

CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS AND PAPERS

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German Anthropological Association (DGSKA) conference, Munich, 25-28 July 2023

Panel: "Re/conceptualizing the Economic Subject: An Invitation for Contestation"
Convenor: Mechthild von Vacano (on behalf of the Economic Anthropology Working Group)

In economic anthropology and beyond, the universalist myth of the self-interested, utility-maximizing homo oeconomicus has long been debunked. Yet, it remained an ever-present hyper figure in the subdiscipline's conceptions of the economic subject that is reproduced even in its strongest rejection. By extension, economic subjects have been characterized along the lines of egoistic and altruistic orientation and conceived in immaterial terms of "interests" and "rationalities". These themes reoccur in the framework of "neoliberal subjectivation", as a specific mode of (economic) subject constitution by which the neoliberal brand of capitalism is deemed to proliferate. Though, outside of that context, the question of economic subject constitution has received curiously little attention.

This workshop seeks to expand the discussion on economic subjects and subjectivities through the perspective of a "human economy" (Hart, Laville and Cattani, 2010) – as it is practiced and experienced by real people with a plurality of needs. It focuses on economic subjectivity as a site of political and practical contestation about the means and ends of the economy. To promote such a wider debate, the workshop invites empirical and theoretical contributions that draw out new perspectives on the economic subject, as an abstract formation and an embodied being. These perspectives may derive from original ethnographic material or from rereading other economic anthropological materials and reframing them; or they may be developed from bringing (non-economic) subject-theories in conversation with (economic) anthropological knowledge. In that, the workshop welcomes engagements with non-canonical approaches and diverse forms of knowledge. It further encourages contributors to reflect on the potential contribution of a distinct economic perspective on subjectivity to current contestations of power and (subject) recognition – in and beyond the academic discipline of anthropology.

Please send your abstract of max. 200 words to m.vacano@fu-berlin.de by 15 December 2022. We look forward to your contributions!

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

SPECIAL ISSUE



Lofranco, Z.T., Zanotelli, F. (ed.) (2022). Special issue on City and Finance. Meridiana, 103.

Has finance been more important to urban growth or has urban growth been crucial for financial expansion? This article seeks to answer this question drawing from multidisciplinary literature that focuses on the urbanization process in the peculiar conjuncture of financialized capitalism. Leaving on the background definition of financialization formulated by economists or political economists, it suggests adopting a relational approach to financialization of the urban space. Setting macro and micro analysis in dialogue, this approach is able to shed light both on structural aspects and social impact of financialization process in variegated historical, political and geographical contexts, as the articles of this themed section widely show.

<https://www.viella.it/download/6725/93e9408a56d1/meridiana103-introduzione.pdf>

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Fontefrancesco, M.F. and S. Mendonca. 2022. Migrant Entrepreneurship and Social Integration: A Case-Study Analysis among Bangladeshi Vendors in Rome. *Societies*, 12 (5). DOI: [10.3390/soc12050139](https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12050139)

Fotta, M. and M. Schmidt. 2022. Cash Transfers. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. DOI: [10.29164/22cashtransfer](https://doi.org/10.29164/22cashtransfer).

The Anthropology of Economy network was launched at the 2012 conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists. The Network unites EASA members who share an interest in the anthropology of economy.

Further information on the AoE Network: <https://www.easaonline.org/networks/economy/>

Contact for Newsletter inquiries and submissions:
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AoE Network Newsletter 2022/3 was set by Ognjen Kojanić.



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