



SESSION ABSTRACT

New economic anthropologies: Past, present and future(s) of a sub-discipline
Salverda, Tijo (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT), Streinzer, Andreas (Goethe-University Frankfurt, Frankfurt, GER)

Contact: tijo.salverda@univie.ac.at, streinzer@em.ui-frankfurt.de

Since the 2007/2008 financial crisis, the sub-discipline of economic anthropology has steadily regained steam and anthropologists concern themselves increasingly with things 'economic'. In reflection upon this renewed attention, this panel aims to discuss current developments in relation to the (sub-)discipline's past and future(s). Of notable attention are two developments, namely a return to (political-economic) questions of social reproduction *and* interactions with social studies of the economy and science and technology studies.

The panel invites contributions that reflect upon these recent developments in conceptual and/or ethnographic ways – especially in relation to the sub-discipline's past and future(s). Of particular interests are papers concerned with themes currently addressed in the Vienna department, e.g. on elites, morality, infrastructure, care, land, the welfare state, migration, urban restructuring, or climate change.

Questions that might be addressed are:

How could we bridge and/or connect differences between approaches on social reproduction and such that foreground agency?

In what way is (material) inequality addressed in the 'new' economic anthropology and what (new) theoretical insights does this provide?

How do anthropologists conceive moral and/or political economy and what do their conceptualisations contribute to a broader understanding of economic life?

How does the environment feature in the new economic anthropology?

In what way does the new economic anthropology interact with other approaches developed in the Vienna department, such as *Ethnohistorie*?

SESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday, September 29, 2020 | Slot 1 | Room 2

Ana Rogojanu & Georg Wolfmayr: *Reconnecting the economic and the social realm: perspectives on competition and housing*

Paul Sperneac-Wolfer: *An Ethical Turn in Economic Anthropology? Theoretical reflections on lost chances, difficult legacies and emerging opportunities*

Ainoa Caetano Nuñez: *Reflections on the importance of incorporating race in the line of action of international cooperation for development through the Sustainable Development Objectives of Agenda 2030*

Ali Mohsin: *Transparency and its discontents: Uneasy labors of governing and of being governed in Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program (BISP)*

SESSION PAPERS

Reconnecting the economic and the social realm: perspectives on competition and housing

Rogojanu, Ana (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT) & Wolfmayr Georg (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT)

In the interdisciplinary project SPACE (Spatial Competition and Economic Policies), a group of researchers from Cultural Anthropology, Sociology and Economic Science investigates the impact of an increasing reliance on “competitiveness” in academic debates, political and public discourses, legal regulations, and everyday life. The project combines interdisciplinary analytical considerations of different conceptualizations of competition with empirical research, for example on the Viennese housing market.

We will first present central findings from our analysis of conceptualizations of competition across different disciplines like anthropology, economics and sociology, focusing on the way they implicitly theorize the relation between an “economic realm” and a “socio-cultural realm”. We argue that during the last 150 years periods with a mainly holistic understanding of economy and society have been followed by periods where theorizing about the social and the economic realm was divided.

In a second step, we will consider which conceptualizations of competition lend themselves for an analysis of the changes in housing provision for the Viennese population since the postwar period, with a specific focus on the period characterized by austerity policies after the financial crisis and on the most recent developments. The concrete questions we are interested in are the relevance of the economic concept of competition for the actions of actors involved in spatial struggles in the field of the production of housing and how the logic of competition is adopted, negotiated and transformed in self-concepts and daily practices of actors involved in spatial struggles in the context of access to housing.

Building on a selection of examples from the field of housing, we will show that different concepts of competition are needed to understand the economic and social

dynamics of housing provision. These will lead us to a consideration of the relation between the “economic realm” and the “socio-cultural realm” and to possible research perspectives for an interdisciplinary study of the role of economic aspects in social and cultural processes as well as the role of social and cultural factors in economic processes.

An Ethical Turn in Economic Anthropology? Theoretical reflections on lost chances, difficult legacies and emerging opportunities

Sperneac-Wolfer, Paul (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT)

The following proposal draws on my theoretical BA-thesis which explores possible synergies between Economic Anthropology and emerging literature around the Ethical Turn (Fassin 2014, Keane 2016, Mattingly & Throop 2018). My work is based on three questions:

If, as it have been argued in the beginning of the ethical turn, there has been a conceptual flaw in anthropological scholarship on the topic of ethics, is there any resemblance or parallel to be found in regard to (the history of) the sub-discipline of economic anthropology? If yes, what effects can be traced in the course of the sub-discipline? And finally, does the ethical turn provides suitable conceptual correctives?

I begin with an historical argument. In following Laidlaw’s point (2002) – that Durkheimian influence resulted in the neglect of the complexities of ethics and morality within anthropological scholarship as such – I examine the very roots of economic anthropology to show that there is some resemblance within the sub-discipline. Therein, I revisit the formalism/substantivism debate to explicate its ethical implications. Here, I show that Polanyian thinking provided a narrow perspective on why and how people relate to each other by economic means. This led to a substantivist neglect of capitalist realities, resulting in a missed chance of an early anthropology of capitalism. Furthermore, the ambivalence of the concept of “embedddness” had profound impacts on the sub-discipline.

I take this point further discussing the problematics around concept of the moral economy (Fassin 2009, Carrier 2018, Hann 2018, Salverda 2020). I show that’s some of the quarrels around the concept can be traced to Polanyian thinking, especially variants which are based on dichotomies and highly consensual communities. Although Salverda points out that the concept does not define capitalism as amoral per se (2020: 1-2), I would argue that it necessitated a lot of conceptual work to make it useful for social theory.

Finally, I draw on Keane’s discussion (2019) of how an ethical turn in economic anthropology may look like. I would be more than happy to present my modest reflections on missed chances, difficult legacies and emerging opportunities at the panel on new economic anthropologies.

Reflections on the importance of incorporating race in the line of action of international cooperation for development through the Sustainable Development Objectives of Agenda 2030

Caetano Nuñez, Ainoa (Universidad de Salamanca, Madrid, ESP)

Based on the realization that structural racism continues to claim lives across the globe, and that the national and international policies agreed upon so far do not account for the magnitude and depth of the problem, this work proposes to think

about alternatives to anti-racist actions in the arena of international cooperation. Incorporating the ethno-racial perspective in an intersectional manner into the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 would significantly contribute to governmental and intergovernmental policies committing their actions to changing this paradigm conformed by structural racism, ethno-racial discrimination and related forms of intolerance.

Noting that the entire line of action of International Development Cooperation is guided by the ODS agreed upon in Agenda 2030, this intersectional incorporation of the ethno-racial perspective could contribute to avoiding the perpetuation of this foundational gear of the modernized Western-modern world, by carefully perceiving and criticizing how racism and racial discrimination influence transversally many instances of oppression and social exclusion, as well as being a more difficult factor in achieving development in its multiple forms.

Transparency and its discontents: Uneasy labors of governing and of being governed in Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program (BISP)

Mohsin, Ali (Graduate Institute of Int'l and Development Studies, Geneva, CH)

There is relatively little scholarship on how the South Asian states employ apparently mundane technologies of governance to – alternatively – distribute hope and expectation and deliver frustration and anxiety. The emerging distributive politics of direct and unconditional cash transfers such as Pakistan's flagship social safety net initiative, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), is a site – also a sight – where many of these processes unfold around the everyday technologies and processes of subject- and self-making. This paper focuses on one such technology of power recently introduced to secure improved targeting of beneficiaries and transparency vis-a-vis cash transfers: Biometric Verification System (BVS). While the state officials insist that the BVS constitutes an undisputed improvement – a belief also echoed by their powerful partners in the international development industry e.g., the World Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – the experience of the beneficiaries demonstrates that it is hardly an improvement from their point of view. Similarly, those desiring to be beneficiaries come to see the BVS, not as a site of transparency and procedural objectivity but of their opposites e.g., almost a theatre where magic and *kismet* are staged. The arbitrariness the new system of provision comes to embody from this perspective, only cements their exclusion. Building on the empirical insights gathered from ethnographic research in the city of Lahore, this paper explores the contradictions and possibilities inherent in these encounters around the new distributive politics between those engaged in the uneasy labors of governing and of being governed.