

The Department of
Sociology and Social Anthropology

cordially invites you to the following four Anthropology job talks:

**Anthony Pickles (University of Cambridge)**

**Thursday, April 4 at 10:00, Room N15-106**

**“Becoming Gamblers: Economic Transformation and the Proliferation of Gambling in the Western Pacific”**:The pre-colonial economies of the Western Pacific are famous for their emphasis on reciprocity. Gambling is axiomatically not reciprocal; it stipulates that winners don’t owe a debt to losers, and gambling was completely absent from the region before European contact. However, once introduced, gambling games were both enthusiastically adopted and dramatically transformed to reflect the thoughts of Islanders experiencing intense upheaval. My current research investigates the rising tide of gambling through a combination of archival and secondary source material, ethnographic fieldwork and Geographic Information Systems mapping techniques. In this presentation I track gambling in Papua New Guinea in the four decades from 1931 to 1971, during which it went from a practice peculiar to Islanders who were in regular contact with Europeans to a staple of village life and a recognisably Papua New Guinean activity with a common set of rules. I argue that gambling has furnished Islanders with a conceptual scaffolding with which to engage powerful exogenous economic forces like the indentured labour system and the radical political and cosmological transformation engendered by colonisation and missionization. I conclude that careful attention to gambling facilitates a form of cross-cultural comparison rooted in the lived experience of economic transformation and helps anthropologists locate latent economic agency at the capitalist periphery.

**Claudio Sopranzetti (Oxford University)**

**Thursday, April 4 at 14:30, Room N15-101 Quantum**

**“Owners of the Map: mobility and mobilization in the Thai capital”**: On May 19, 2010, the Royal Thai Army deployed tanks, snipers, and war weapons to disperse the thousands of Red Shirts protesters who had taken over the commercial center of Bangkok to demand democratic elections and an end to inequality. Key to this mobilization were motorcycle taxi drivers, who slowed down, filtered, and severed mobility in the area, claiming a prominent role in national politics and ownership over the city and challenging state hegemony. Nine year later, the same army general who directed the dispersal rules over the country unopposed by protesters, after he staged a coup in 2014. How could state power have been so fragile and open to challenge in 2010 and yet so seemingly sturdy in the present? How could protesters who had once fearlessly resisted military attacks now remain silent? This talk provides answers to these questions through an ethnography of motorcycle taxi drivers political participation. In so doing, I propose an analysis of power that does not focus on the sturdiness of hegemony or the ubiquity of everyday resistance but on the potential fragility of state power and the work needed for its maintenance.

**Čarna Brkovic (University of Goettingen)**

**Friday, April 5 at 10:00, Room N15-106**

**“Humanitarianism as a Politics of Denizenship: Changing Consciousness in a Camp for Displaced Persons in Montenegro”**: What does life look like when humanitarians are in charge of providing welfare – education, healthcare, and even work – to displaced people? And how does this come to be? Roma and Balkan Egyptians who fled from Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 had been living in the Konic refugee camp in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, for almost two decades. Financed by the UNHCR and managed by the Red Cross, this largest refugee camp in the Balkans over time became a disciplinary institution, more similar to schools and prisons, than to a space of sovereign exception. Ethnographically following efforts of the humanitarians to “change the consciousness” of the residents of the Konik refugee camp, this talk explores intersections between humanitarianism and welfare. It focuses on how non-state actors work on disciplining people who were denied full political membership. Approaching humanitarianism as a fragmented project with multiple histories (and not just as an imposition of the West upon the Rest), I will argue that humanitarians exercised a particular politics of denizenship in the Konik camp. Its subjects were neither representatives of “bare life” who needed immediate saving, nor people with political rights and responsibilities. They were more than “bare life”, but they were not allowed to enter the Montenegrin political community as citizens. They would be allowed to join the political community once they “change their consciousness”, discard their “traditional practices”, and become new sorts of subjects.

**Firat Kurt (Columbia University)**

**Friday, April 5 at 14:30, Room N13-118**

**“Political Mobilization as Valuation: 'We keep the Turkish Lira valuable!’”**:Based on ethnographic research between 2013-2017, this paper argues that financial capitalism has a certain tendency to facilitate and promote authoritarian political mobilization. The paper takes its departure from some of the most significant steps for the financial liberalization in Turkey: free-floating exchange regime and inflation targeting. These policies were implemented in 2002 after the greatest economic crisis in the history of the country. Leaving the determination of values of currencies to the actors (financial institutions, companies, and households) in financial markets, the new financial system was formulated as a part of democratic capitalism in which "transparency," "accountability," and "credibility" are the central values to ensure constant and reliable communication. The liberalization of financial markets thus assumed that once political interests and interventions are isolated from the region of money, people start to act in informed manners, inflation gets under control, and the value of the national currency is stabilized. However, my research shows that the attempts to separate the political sphere and economic sphere result in different, and mostly destructive, forms of relationships between politics and economics. Making financial markets more transparent results in the public knowledge that the value of money is sensitive to political developments, even to micro developments like meetings and protests. Economic stability and political stability converge to such an extent that people started to see their actions, e.g., going to meetings, supporting an authoritarian party, or dissuading their neighbors from participating in dissident demonstrations, as a part of the financial mechanisms that sustain and even increase the value of their money. The result is a conflagratory social and political tension that divides citizens into those who produce value (monetary, social, and political) through their support for political stability and those who damage value by their opposition.