

Call for Papers: Conference “Remittances as Social Practice”

University of Innsbruck, 27-28 September 2018

Organised by SIEF Working Group “Migration & Mobility”, the Institute of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck (FWF Research Project “Follow the Money. Remittances as Social Practice”); Silke Meyer, Fatma Haron, Claudius Ströhle)

Remittances, i.e. the portion of someone’s earnings sent from one’s migration destination to the place of origin, impress by sheer numbers: the private money transfers add up to three times the budget of official development assistance. Currently, the volume of remittances worldwide is more than 600 billion US Dollar a year and the prospering market continuously draws new interests and players. It is therefore no surprise that remittances have gained much attention from policy-makers, economic developers and academic researchers of many disciplines. Cross-border payments are politically and economically regulated and governed by national and supranational institutions like the World Bank and Financial Action Task Force (FATF). They open and close barriers for the operating finance system and negotiate agreements and transaction costs for money transfers. These financial regulations have political and social impacts on remittance actors.

From the perspective of anthropology, the key factor of remittance studies are the people who earn, save, send, receive and spend the money and therein earmark it with different meanings. Next to policy interpretations of humanitarian support and financial investment, remittances can be seen as vectors of social relations, emotional expressions of nostalgia or as powerful tools of controlling a network one has long left behind. We conceive remittances as social practice, which comprise the exchange of money, objects, behavior and habits, social capital, opinions, ideas, norms and narratives (Peggy Levitt/Nina Sørensen). Remittances are acts of participation, manifestations of loyalty and of individual as well as of collective agency. In this broad understanding we can grasp financial support wired on a regular basis as well as abstract concepts like the exchange of ideas about health care, education, insurance or democracy and equality, which are part of historical and contemporary identity formation.

With this conference, we seek to bring together different approaches and perspectives in remittance research. We therefore invite contributions on the role of remittances in building financial systems (for example, micro credits) and in development policies both in underdeveloped and in advanced economies (about one third of the global remittance sum is sent to industrial countries). Especially the latter represents a desideratum in remittance

research. We also welcome papers on remittance actors in their transnational social spaces, on their patterns of sending and receiving and on remittance impact on consumption, education and gender roles. The micro-perspective on remittances could further include intergenerational encounters and conflicts as well as practices of remigration – intended and accomplished. Finally, we encourage the contribution of papers on remittance theory as well as empirical studies.

In sum, we are interested in contributions to the following fields:

- Remittances as acts of policy-making and development instruments; social change through remittances
- Remittance actors and their earmarking of transferred monies; consumption patterns, the role of remittances in transnational identity formation
- Remittances in the intersectional context of gender and generation
- History of remittance practices
- Remittance institutions (like banks or money transfer operators) in historical and contemporary perspective
- Remittance theory and methodology of empirical studies on remittances

We encourage academics, international remittance experts and policy makers to submit an abstract of 200-300 words and a short CV (max. 150 words) until 15 April 2018 to remittance2018@uibk.ac.at. The conference language is English. Travel expenses can be partly refunded, accommodation will be organised and paid by the University of Innsbruck.

We look forward to receiving your application; please contact us with any questions!

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