



## The Moral Dimensions of Economic Life in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia

20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2019

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**Please send abstracts of max. 250 words to [nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk) by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.**

Morality and ethics have recently become a central theme in the Social Sciences, leading to a revival and reevaluation of the concept of 'moral economy' (Götz 2015, Sayer 2015, Palomera and Vetta 2016). A growing range of scholarship now employs the term to analyse, amongst others, political conflicts, resistance, and social movements; patterns of economic relationships and behaviour – including consumption, subsistence, and resource use; youth and migration; as well as fraud, corruption, and violence (Wheeler and Gluckmann 2016, Whyte and Wiegatz 2016). Morality and moral economy are also increasingly being used as a lens through which to study the ways in which the increasing neo-liberalization of society is reshaping moral-economic orders and reformulating, for instance, welfare, citizenship, and humanitarian aid (Fassin 2012, Muehlebach 2012, Wiegatz 2016, Sliwinski 2018). And finally, in the wake of the global financial crisis, scholars have begun to turn their attention to moral economies of precarity, labour, and debt, as well as economies of hope and value (Narotsky and Besnier 2014, Knight and Stewart 2016, Stubbs and Žitko 2018).

This engagement with the morality-economy nexus stands in contrast with orthodox views and mainstream analyses - especially in much of economics and parts of political economy study - which tend to exclude morality from the investigation and understanding of economic life. As the scholarship cited above shows, however, there are always moral dimensions at play when it comes to people's economic thinking, practices, and relationships on the one hand – and the structures in which they operate on the other. This has recently led to a growing interest in the morality of markets and market behaviour amongst economic sociologists (Zelizer 2011, Abend 2014, Balsiger and Schiller-Merkens *forthcoming*). Furthermore, the topic of the morality of economic life has begun to receive significant attention from political theorists and economists (Sandel 2012, Bielskis and Knight 2015, Bowles 2016), as well as major figures outside of academia such as Pope Frances and the US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders<sup>i</sup>. Across the world, in other words, the moral qualities of contemporary capitalism, and the moral climate in various economic sectors and in society more broadly, are increasingly being questioned and scrutinised in public and political debates across the ideological spectrum (Wiegatz 2016, Carrier 2018)<sup>ii</sup>.

Against this background, this workshop invites participants to consider the morality-economy nexus in contemporary Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia. Challenging the orthodox exclusion of morality from the investigation of economic life, scholars of this region have long documented how the post-socialist experience has reshaped the morality of commerce (Humphrey & Mandel 2002, Hann 2006), working lives (Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008, Morris 2016), informal economic practices (Morris and Polese 2014, 2015, Henig and Makovicky 2016), and even notions of moral personhood (Sanghera et al. 2006, Zigon 2010, Swader 2013, Osburg 2013, Makovicky 2014). Today, 30 years after the end of communist rule, the region continues to be a privileged site for studying the moral dimensions of economic thinking, practices, and relationships at different scales. The deepening of capitalist restructuring, the expansion of the European Union, Russia's move towards 'sovereign democracy', and the rising economic and political influence of China have all caused a profound shift in regional political economies. As the collective experience of Communism fades, there has been increasing public debate about the social and cultural changes which have come with political and economic liberalization, including labour migration, the rise of identity politics, and the formation of new elites (Healey 2017, Dzenovska 2018, Schimpfossel 2018). In some parts of the region, such discussions have articulated contemporary concerns about moral change, crisis and decline, triggering political, social, and religious calls for moral renewal. At the same time, an increasingly vocal set of social movements are contesting existing structures of power, wealth, and inequality, challenging the operations and outcomes of the current political economy, and demanding, amongst other things, stronger redistributive measures and a clean-up of widespread corruption and crony capitalism (Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013, 2015, Jacobsson 2016, Fabian and Korolczuk 2017).

In the face of such diversity, the organizers view this workshop as an opportunity to take stock of the capitalist moral order(s) in the region, and to map the drivers and characteristics of relevant moral changes in this part of the world. We invite abstract submissions (max 250 words) from across the Social Sciences, and particularly welcome papers that use case studies and/or fieldwork material to explore respective issues. We believe that there is a need to advance relevant theoretical debates via the use of more empirical data showing how different moralities interact (and often compete) in the organisation of economic life in different contexts. In particular, the theme of the moral characteristics (including representations, repercussions, contestations) of capitalism in the region – against the broader global context – deserves more analytical attention.

Thematic areas that the workshop organisers hope papers might explore include:

- (i) moral articulations of global capitalism and neoliberalism in the region;
- (ii) the link between politics/political economy and economic moralities/moral economy;
- (iii) moral dimensions of ideologies, programmes and policies concerning the economy, as advanced by the state, (I)NGOs, donors, business associations, unions, etc.;
- (iv) the moralities of powerful economic actors (e.g. large transnational/national corporations), elites, and various professions, etc.;
- (v) the moral economies of class relations, of subaltern groups, and the moral dimension of generational and demographic change;
- (vi) the moral dimensions of economic life in particular local settings (markets, villages, cities, neighbourhoods, mining sites, special economic zones, border regions etc.);
- (vii) how kinship, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, race, class and other forms of belonging shape economic behaviour and its moral dimensions;

(viii) the moral economies of internal migration and migration to/from the region, and how mobilities and migration flows transform regional economies and their moral dimensions including representations;

(ix) the moralities of reciprocity, solidarity, and sharing; and the moral dimensions of debt, saving, investment and consumption;

(x) the moral economies of patron-client relations, crime, corruption, fraud and violence

(xi) the moral economies of sex, sexuality, and sexual relations.

**Please send abstracts of max. 250 words to [nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk) by February 1st, 2019. There will be limited amount of funding available for scholars from the EERE region. Please indicate if you require financial assistance to attend.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Following this workshop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March there will be an extra day of discussion about what it takes to do *cross-regional analysis* on the moral dimensions of economic life, i.e. explore specific phenomena not just in, say Eastern Europe, but Asia, Africa etc. as well. We are still looking for scholars who have either actual cross-regional research experience concerning our workshop theme (not necessarily in Eastern Europe), or for any other reasons (e.g. strong theoretical background in say, markets/capitalism/neoliberalism etc. and morality) feel that they can contribute to such a discussion. Please email [nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nicolette.makovicky@area.ox.ac.uk) if you think this is you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://money.cnn.com/2016/04/15/news/economy/bernie-sanders-vatican-moral-economy/index.html>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-36057229>; <https://berniesanders.com/urgency-moral-economy-reflections-anniversary-centesimus-annus/>; <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/05/30/capitalism-gives-moral-cloak-inequality-pope-francis-says-italian-steel-plant>;

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/04/will-hutton-capitalism>; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/sep/28/ed-miliband-not-anti-business>; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8701371/UK-riots-David-Cameron-confronts-Britains-moral-collapse.html>