

# Theorizing the refugee/migrant distinction

Workshop of the Working Group Migration (AG Migration) of the German Anthropological Association (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie)

September 18–19, 2018

Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna  
Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Vienna (4th floor, room C0424, Sitzungszimmer)

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*So far, scholars engaging in ‘migration studies’ and those engaging in ‘refugee studies’ often operate with distinct theoretical apparatuses and engage in different scholarly debates. While refugee scholars often build on the distinctiveness of the refugee experience and the necessity to acknowledge related claims, migration scholars have increasingly argued for jointly addressing migrants, refugees and other mobile groups through concepts such as transnationalism or mobility/immobility. Moreover, the refugee/migrant distinction cannot be found only in academic debates but also in ethnographic encounters. The question how to theorize the everyday practices of enacting and reproducing the refugee/migrant distinction, however, has rarely been addressed.*

*In this workshop, we will systematically tease out the parallels, differences and interrelations of the concepts ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ both in ethnographic encounters and anthropological debates. This includes various intersecting domains such as individuals’ life-worlds, personal experiences and strategies, institutional structures and policies, legal frameworks and humanitarian work, media and public discourses, and academic intervention.*

**Kolar Aparna**, Radboud University  
**Sabine Bauer-Amin**, Austrian Academy of  
Sciences

**Victoria Reitter**, University of Salzburg  
**Maria Schiller**, Max Planck Institute for the  
Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity,  
Göttingen; University of Vienna

**Leonardo Schiocchet**, Austrian Academy of  
Sciences

**Karim Zafer**, University of Cologne

**Ildikó Zakariás**, HAS CSS Institute for Minority  
Studies, Budapest

## PROGRAM (Closed Workshop)

### September 18, 2018

*First session: 1 pm–2.30 pm*

Welcoming words and short thematic introduction

Introduction round of participants

Brainstorming “Why does theorizing the refugee/migrant distinction matter?”

*Coffee break*

*Second session: 3 pm–5 pm*

Small-group discussion of the participants’ think pieces (circulated in advance) with a special focus on the epistemologies, power relations and situated practices related to the notions ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ in the respective research fields

*Dinner*

### September 19, 2018

*Third session: 9.30 am–11.30 am*

Small-group discussion “Particularities and pitfalls in researching among and about ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’”

Joint discussion of selected theoretical approaches

*Coffee break*

*Fourth session: 12 am–1 pm*

Discussion of future cooperation and publications

*Lunch*

*We are grateful to the generous financial support by the German Anthropological Association and the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna.*