

The Gender of Labor in Privatizing Vietnam

Double Session (2x90')

Conveners and discussants:

Minh Nguyen, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Ann Marie Leshkovich, College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts, USA

Three decades after its shift from socialist central planning to a market economy, Vietnam is vastly different from what it used to be. Economic growth, privatization, industrialization and urbanization have ushered in entirely new landscape of production, consumption and mobility. Cities are rapidly expanding, so are global factories and urban service industries, attracting millions of migrant workers; micro-businesses abounds; mobile economic networks extend beyond national borders. Recent Vietnam scholarship has documented the emergence of new configurations of labor, work and care in this context. In particular, it has shown complex dynamics of class and gender at the intersection between new production regimes and techniques of governance on the one hand, and new politics of the self on the other. Such politics draws on both the socialist structure of feelings, enduring moral ideals and competing notions of modernity. It also invokes a new divide between 'meaningful', socially valued and formalized labor and low-qualified and precarious labor that garners little social recognition or even stigmatizes.

This panel explores the nexus of value, gender and class in relation to the question of labor in Vietnam today with papers that discuss the implications of gender for one or more of the following themes:

- **Labor and class:** The articulation of class identities through labor processes, explorations of precarious labor, and the politics of labor that shape the relations between workers and employers, between migrant workers and the urban middle class, and between the state and citizens.
- **Labor, migration and mobility:** The diverse trajectories of migration and mobility among social groups, the emergence of new labor subjectivities, and the implications of mobility for the valuation of labor.
- **Labor and care:** How the valuation of labor is integral to relations and practices of care within and beyond family and kinship (at community and societal levels, including those of philanthropy and social welfare).
- **Labor and morality:** Competing moral valuations of labor based on different value orientations that coexist in Vietnam today, e.g. socialist, capitalist, communal, labor as the basis for moral and communal life, and the emergence of moral economic networks around particular forms of gendered labor.