

**German Anthropological Association (GAA) Conference in
Berlin (4th-7th October 2017)**

***"Belonging: Affective, moral and political practices in an
interconnected world"***

In the mobile, interconnected and mediatised societies of the 21st century, forms of belonging are subject to complex dynamics of renegotiation. The reconfiguration of connections to familiar social and cultural environments, and thus also to objects, places and ways of life, depends on available resources and politico-legal conditions. Furthermore, the intensification, weakening and novel constitution of forms of belonging are closely connected to social, economic and technological processes of diversification: these confront people in a globalized world with varied possibilities but also pressures concerning (re-)location as, for instance, within the context of financial crises, mass media hypes, violent conflicts, etc. On a global level, processes of deterritorialisation, increasingly porous nation-state borders, and the collapse of simplified, post-colonial dichotomies (such as between the "western" and "non-western world"; "global south" and "global north") have also shaped this experience. At the same time, new forms of demarcation and exclusion – such as recent tendencies towards re-nationalisation and separatist movements that emphasise localised feelings of unity and that explicitly reject supra-regional or global attachments – are discernable.

With the 2017 GAA conference we would like to focus attention on the diversity of affective, moral and political resonances that people use to relate to each other in an interconnected world, and to localise them in their material and non-material environments. The conference will explore the affective and moral challenges that people face – often over extended periods of time – given experiences of mobility, displacement and the accumulation of political and economic hardship, but also the formation of new orientations and directions incited by these challenges. We will also focus on everyday processes of globalisation, and the corresponding possibilities

for the development of new forms of attachment that are shaped by sex/gender, age, ethnicity, religion and social status. In addition, the conference aims at illuminating the practices that (re-)produce individual and collective forms of belonging in specific localities and beyond national and continental borders, as well as the exclusions that are experienced in relation to being connected (to persons and places, to material and non-material entities). While a focus on the actors' practices and experiences will help to emphasize the fluid and often-contradictory nature of belonging constructs, it will also reveal the dynamics of social differentiation and the ways these unfold in structures of power.

The conference invites participants to reflect about the following questions: How do (at times competing) forms of belonging to social, cultural, religious or economic collectivities take shape within global and transnational assemblages? To what extent do globally circulating technologies and discourses of knowledge enable new forms of articulating belonging (such as in the fields of genetics or reproductive medicine)? How are social conditions maintained – but also newly established – across borders and continents, and what roles do new media and communication technologies play in these processes? How do the varied legal and ideologically normative arrangements of an interconnected world structure the dynamics of belonging? What are the possibilities that they open up and the limitations that they establish? How do current political and economic processes of interconnectivity – that are always historically situated – impact the formation or valuation of belonging? To what extent are forms of belonging instrumentalised, such as through normative practices of remembering? What roles do materiality and material culture play for the establishment of attachments and articulations of being connected? What global forms of inclusion and exclusion are produced via the growing intensification of social disparities, and what are the (new) forms of societal and cultural (non-)connectedness that often accompany these occurrences?