



Lecture Series in Social Anthropology

Full
Semester
2026

Tuesday, 6 October 2026 | 4.15 p.m. | Room AND-4-06

Provisional Futures: Work, Belonging, and Temporary Migration

Prof. Dr. Helena Hof (University of Zurich)

How to engage with the future when the economy runs on conditionality, and social fabrics are (said to be) increasingly characterized by temporariness and flux? This lecture considers the gradual dependence on foreign labour in liberal democratic states and the growing divide between those admitted permanently and those who are not. The question at the heart of this talk revolves around the subjectivities emerging among temporarily accepted labour migrants and focuses on migrants' place-making and belonging as they are shaped by processes of capital accumulation and migration governance. Temporariness is not only experienced by migrants. Jobs themselves are increasingly insecure and often temporary and create a shared understanding of (precarious) employment conditions across migrant and non-migrant workers. Yet, legal temporariness differentiates those considered foreign from citizens. At the same time, foreign workers are urgently needed and might use temporary assignments strategically for social mobility and onwards migration. Regardless of such (mobility) imaginaries, migrants are institutionally embedded in their host countries' migration and labour market regimes, which are operating with deeply entrenched notions of migrants as temporary guests or as a threat. The talk considers theoretical approaches to the way migrants negotiate state, social, and labor market-imposed structures of conditionality along with chrononormative biographical temporalities of the life course. It ends with a reflection on the provisional futures envisioned and enacted by temporary migrants' daily work practices and everyday encounters in socio-culturally diversifying localities.

Organisation:

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Entrance free of charge.

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