



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Department of Humanities



Lab DEA: Laboratorio demo-etno-antropologico presents

Legally Ownerless Dogs and Their Curators: Indeterminate Property as Theory of Governance

A TALK BY:

XENIA CHERKAEV

Max Planck Institute for Social
Anthropology, Halle

Monday, 5 October 2026, 14.30–16.30

Aula Geymonat, 1st floor

Palazzo Malcanton Marcorà

Drawing on long-term ethnography with animal control workers in mid-sized Russian towns, this talk examines the task of the curator [“kurator”]: a person who personally manages legally ownerless dogs. Curators might themselves physically feed and care for street-dogs, or pay an animal shelter to keep such a dog kenneled, or crowdsource funds for vet services. The relation they have to the animal is formalized, but its entitlements and obligations are nowhere defined. This indeterminacy, the talk suggests, creates a space for personal obligation and stewardship within an otherwise highly formalized culture of regulation.



Xenia Cherkaev is a Senior Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. She is interested in how questionably legal but ethically righteous action enlivens formalized legal systems, and in how domestic and synanthropic animals become the objects and subjects of law. Her book *Gleaning for Communism: The Soviet Socialist Household in Theory and Practice* was published by Cornell University Press (2023). A co-edited special issue on Gleaning is forthcoming in *History and Anthropology*.