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Feminism and the Future of Capitalism: A Note from Europe

The EU is on the edge of either destruction or renewal as a consequence of the challenges from finance capital to the Euro and to the governments of its Member States. Following massive transfers to the banks from taxpayers, the ensuing government deficits have become the new focus of justification for neoliberal restructuring. As democratic governments in Europe fall in the face of these challenges, they are being replaced by those more willing to withstand popular pressure. For example, the Greek Prime Minister was recently replaced just as he sought to hold a referendum on policies to address the crisis.

The financial crisis is gendered not only in its causes and consequences but in the policy and political responses to it. The intensification of neoliberalism is taking a gendered form in that the cuts in public expenditure fall disproportionately on the gains that feminism had achieved in many welfare state regimes. Gender budgeting analysis reveals the gendered nature of these regressive policies.

The developing political responses to the financial and economic crisis involve coalitions of gendered forces that vary significantly between locations. In order to understand this, the focus of analysis of contemporary feminism needs to be shifted from concerns about culture to address the many and powerful forms of feminist politics that engage with political economy. Feminist engagement with economic issues has often been rendered invisible by the refusal to name coalitional activity involving trade unions as feminist. The Icelandic response to the crisis was different from many because of its inclusion of feminist voices during its 'pots and pans revolution' and the use of the device of the referendum to respond to international financial pressure. This is finance versus a gendered democracy.

The understanding of these processes requires rethinking the conceptualisation of capitalism so as to better include finance as well as the development of the conceptualisation of its intersection with gender regimes. Finance capital has different dynamics than other forms of capital; different forms of expropriation; different ways of manipulating and benefiting from crises. Further, the cultural turn in feminist theory needs to be replaced by a turn to political economy; while world-systems theory needs to be more adequately gendered.

Sylvia Walby, Lancaster University, UK
2 December 2011

New book: *The Future of Feminism* (Polity Press 2011).

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Forthcoming, May 2012 Newsletter

Program for the ISA Interim Conference in
Buenos Aires, August 2012

Please send articles, book
announcements and other material by
April 15, 2012 to:

Heidi Gottfried
(Heidi.gottfried@wayne.edu)

Global Capitalism and Transnational Class Formation Conference 17-19th September 2011

A very successful conference called Global Capitalism and Transnational Class Formation was held at the Academy of Sciences, Prague. This was co sponsored by RC02 interim conference committee under the auspices of President Bill Carroll (Victoria University Canada) and Vice president Georgina Murray (Griffith University, Australia). On the organising committee also were Marek Hrubec (Academy of Sciences Czech Republic), Jerry Harris (National Secretary Global Studies Association), and Johanna Fahey (Monash University).



Jerry Harris, chairing the wrap-up business meeting.



Bill Robinson giving his keynote.

The conference featured a series of excellent papers, including a superb keynote address from William I Robinson (University of California at Santa Barbara), on *Global capitalism and the current crisis of humanity*. This was a passionate, erudite and inspirational talk about the developing global crisis, the new fascism and possible strategies against this. Leslie Sklair also gave an intriguing keynote address on international iconography entitled *The Icon Project: the transnational capitalist class in action*.

Plenaries by Bill Carroll (University of Victoria) on *Alternative policy groups and counter hegemonic struggle: Transnational class formation from below* and Marek Hrubec (Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic) speaking in a parallel session on *Transnational subjects of resistance and change: the global poor, social criticism and the global state* also met with very appreciative audience responses. Much the same can be said of parallel plenary sessions that featured, respectively, Jerry Harris speaking on *Translatelism: state power and the politics of the transnational capitalist class* and Georgina Murray and David Peetz (Griffith University) speaking on *The global financial crisis and the restructuring of capital: three case studies – USA, Canada and Australia*.

One of the most impressive aspects of the conference was the large cross-section of ages that were represented. At one end of the continuum were the nicely mature (such as ourselves) plus Jane Kenway (Monash University), Cameron McCarthy (University of Illinois), Debbie Epstein (Cardiff University) and Fazal Rizvi (University of Melbourne) reporting on their studies of elite schools in a transnational class formation. That age category also took in David Lane (University of Cambridge) speaking to state of the crisis and the shift made in post socialist states across a number of regions; plus Ravi Palat (State University of New York Binghamton) eruditely addressing the US's dangerous fortunes and financial crisis using a world – historical perspective.

To the other end of the age scale were a large number of PhD students such as Jeb Sprague (UC Santa Barbara; see photo above) who gave us an update of his excellent participant observation of paramilitarism in Haiti; Jason Struna (University of California Riverside) who gave two papers, one with Edwin Elias on the USA and its transnational migrant political actors and the gruesome repercussions that they face daily. Jason's other paper, based on his PhD thesis, looked at global workers forming global chains in transnational class relations, working under enormous duress. Johanna

Wolf (research Academy Leipzig) presented her work in progress from her PhD on West German labour Movements in the 1970s. Josh Murray (Stony Brook University), also a PhD student gave a very interesting talk on the influence of the Political Action Committees (PACS) and the transnational capitalist class in the US, using material from the Global Fortune 500 2000-2006 data.



Ingo Schmit, Elaine Coburn, Manolis Kalaitzake.

There were over 20 nations represented at the conference: from the host Czech Republic Academy of Sciences, Ilona Svihlikova, Martin Brabec, Ondrej Lansky, Oleg Susa, Milos Pick; from Turkey, Timucin Yalcinkaya, Gorkem Aydemir, Mehmet Gursan Senlap, Kamil Demirhan and Derya Cakir; from Poland, Malgorzata Maciejewska, Joanna Szalacha; from Sweden, In Richardson; from Australia – Ariel Salleh, Jenny Chester, Mingulu Chen; from Korea, Yun Tae Kim; from Japan, Hisano Takaase, from Germany, Jens Wissel; from Greece, George Liodakas; from Canada, David Coburn, Mikhail Molchanov, Ingo Schmit; from Slovakia, Ladislav Hohos; from Austria, Karin Fischer, Johannes Kepler; from the Netherlands, Andre Mommen; from Hong Kong, Lydia Lam; from USA, Adam Howard, William Pelz, Soyon Kim, Edwin Elias, Rubin Patterson, Scott Frey, Peter Funke, Joseph Cohen, Ellen Rosen, Rubin Patterson, Amandeep Sandhu, Yousef Baker, Jackie Smith; from Italy, Laura Gherardi; from the UK, Jill Timms; from Germany, Jens Weissel; from China, Wei Xiaoping; from Mexico, Alejandra Salas-Porras, Marcelo del Castillo-Mussot; and from Ireland, Manolis Kalaitzake.



Originally formulated as a writing conference for the book to be coming out next year called *Who Rules the World* (John Scott, Georgina Murray (eds), chapters from William Carroll, Jerry Harris, Alejandra Salas-Porras) the conference obviously struck a nerve and drew over 70 participants. This will give rise to further ideas for publication including four journals that are looking toward publishing some of the papers presented at the conference.

Overall this was a most enjoyable conference, the ideas were fresh and plentiful and the camaraderie was everywhere. The wrap-up session was an unusually packed business meeting at which participants agreed (a) to form a Network for Critical Studies in Global Capitalism and to hold another conference in Brisbane Australia in 2013 – yet to be named, but watch this space.

William Carroll

Georgina Murray,

Prague 2011.

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference in Moscow

**"Embeddedness and Beyond: Do Sociological Theories Meet Economic Realities?"
October 25-28, 2012**

Conference theme statement

Over the last quarter century, new economic sociology emerged and evolved, by and large, within the broad theoretical framework of social embeddedness of economic action. While being initially rooted in the structural social networks perspective, the framework gradually expanded to integrate institutional and cultural arguments and to overcome the analytical separation between economic and social. More recently, it was complemented by the performativity approaches, which challenge traditional inquiries into the socially constructed nature of markets by focusing instead on their role in constructing (performing) societies.

These developments show that the concept of social embeddedness has inspired a large number of insightful sociological theories and empirical studies of economic phenomena which, taken together, constitute a mature field of inquiry with its distinctive questions, arguments, and contributions. Yet, today's rapidly evolving and highly uncertain economic realities put these theories to a challenging test. Are they up to the task of thorough understanding market transitions in postcommunist and third-world countries, the continuing global financial crisis, or the new modern forms of calculability, governance, and social control? Given a rather static view of social embeddedness, how much can we say about the emergence, reproduction, and dissolution of networks, markets, and institutions, in other words, the dynamic nature of socio-economic reality? Or, on the contrary, about the stubborn resistance to change of old patterns of inequality and forms of governance? Does the proliferation of online purchases and Internet social networking sites radically alter the very notion of embeddedness? Overall, do our theories have enough "give" and can be slightly adjusted to answer such questions, or do we need a completely new toolkit to tackle them? The conference brings together the leading experts in the field who will concretize and explore these questions with regard to their own areas of research and theoretical approaches.

Status of the conference: Joint Interim conference of ISA RC02 "Economy and Society" and ESA Economic Sociology Research Network with the support of ASA Economic Sociology section.

Conference venue: National Research University 'Higher School of Economics', Moscow, Russia

Selection of participants: Selection of the Conference participants is made by mini-conference coordinators on the basis of submitted extended abstracts. Proposals can be accepted for oral presentation or as distributed papers. Full papers are submitted before the Conference.

Deadline for submitting proposals : February 15, 2012.

Funding: Stipends for graduate students pursuing MA and PhD are provided on a competitive basis.

Contact information: Conference e-mail: esconf2012@hse.ru Conference Website: <http://esconf2012.hse.ru>

Member News

Salvatore Babones has been appointed an Associate Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC. The Institute for Policy Studies (<http://www.ips-dc.org>) is the leading progressive think tank in the United States. Historically active in the US civil rights and anti-war movements, it now pursues more than a dozen projects related to peace, justice, and the environment. In this honorary role Salvatore will be helping develop the Institute's expertise on social justice issues related to economic inequality in America, in particular their Inequality.org website. He is writing a weekly column for Inequality.org and welcomes your comments at: <http://inequality.org/author/sbabones>.

Problemas del Desarrollo

The Latin American Journal of Economics constitutes an academic space for analyzing the *theory of development*. Since the publication of the first issue in October-December, 1969, the objective of the debate has been the problematic centering on economic development from a rigorous multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary point of view. This is a magazine that is critical of orthodox focuses where the problem of development is absent.

The magazine's objectives are:

- a) To publish articles that reflect the relevance of paradigms aimed at explaining the causes of development and under-development, essentially in Latin America, and with this in mind, to promote the debate and diffusion of all theoretical focuses and currents of economic thought based on a rigorous methodological structure.
- b) To make the magazine a participant in the national and international debate on economic theory related to matters relevant in studying the problems of development.

For more information go to <http://www.probdes.iiec.unam.mx/normas.html>.

CALL FOR PAPERS

LABOR, DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL CAPITAL

XXXVI ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WORLD SYSTEM

CLARK UNIVERSITY

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 19-21, 2012

Crisis and stagnation, growth and industrialization; upward mobility among the hierarchy of nations and growing inequality within nations: all these are part of the world scene. In the core nations of the world system laborers and the labor movement were able to attain a modicum of social inclusion during the middle of the 20th Century. Can this be regained or duplicated on a world scale? In the course of the 19th and Twentieth Centuries, again among the rich countries, many previously excluded or marginalized groups obtained both the formal franchise and the promise of social inclusion. Under the institutional conditions of global capitalism can democratic aspirations once again be realized? This conference will focus on Labor and Democracy for the coming era. It includes the following subthemes:

1. The Race to the Bottom: Labor, Environmental and Social standards in the global market. What is the evidence for geographical/political shift of investments from higher wage/ social standards jurisdictions to lower ones? What are the consequences? What should be done?
2. The Fate of the "Welfare State." In the Era of Neoliberalism and Globalised Capital can high wage, high benefit social regimes survive? Long term trends seem to indicate rising inequality and erosion of social benefits even among the more generous of the welfare capitalist nations. Is this temporary or reversible? Can workers in peripheral social formations enjoy the fruits of growth under conditions of neoliberal competition? What can be learned from the Chinese case?
3. Democracy for Whom? Global Governance and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund have been subject to long term criticism as agents for the rich in the rich countries. But now they claim to have reformed. Have they changed, and if so how? Are the IFIs a skeleton of world governance? If so, are the Enlightenment ideals of republican and democratic government relevant to the global future? If not, how are they to be governed and by whom?
4. Formal/ informal: globalization, gender, and livelihood strategies. The flows of people from countryside to city or from poor or crisis regions to richer or growing regions highlight the challenges individuals, families, and communities face as they are incorporated into the global wage worker economy. How are formal and informal economies being (re)integrated in Northern and Southern contexts through migrations and livelihood strategies among the poor and disenfranchised? How are marginalized or subordinated groups, such as workers, women, and migrants, experiencing the global market and how are the forces of global capitalism supporting or neglecting these groups in new (or old) ways?

Submissions should be sent to pewsconference36@clarku.edu. Abstracts of 250 words on the general theme or on one of the specific subthemes, including full contact information for all authors should be sent by December 23, 2011. Accepted papers will be considered for a planned edited volume. Send other inquiries to Robert J.S. Ross (rjsross@clarku.edu). The Conference will be hosted at historic Clark University in Worcester, MA.

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