



NEWSLETTER

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President's Letter

Karen Shire

Dear RC02 Members,

The year 2023 was a World Congress year for the ISA, this time in Melbourne Australia. For the first time since the pandemic, we were able to meet in person, with most participants (about 3.000 of the 4.700 registered participants) in person. Sociologists from 106 countries and all world regions participated in the Congress. The on-line option opened participation to persons unable to come to Melbourne. Volunteers from across the sociological community in Australia were on site in every room to facilitate the hybrid format. The Australian Sociological Association hosts and ISA outgoing President Sari Hanafi created an outstanding program and series of presidential, plenary and spotlight sessions addressing major challenges in theory building and research in a global world. The spotlight session *Whither the Arab-Israel Conflict?* remains clearly in my mind, for how it brought together leading Israeli and Palestinian scholars in the region and from throughout the diaspora, but also for remembering the hopes this collection of real utopian scholars displayed for a one-state solution. This and other sessions can be viewed online by going to the conference app online, navigating to the session, and following the prompts for logging into the video repository (last name and ISA member number). See: <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2023/meetingapp.cgi>

The World Congress presented an opportunity for the RC02 to establish a new institution, the Early Career Researchers Workshop, organized by Michelle Hsieh. A full report of this session will be included in the Spring/Summer 2024 RC02 newsletter.

The RC02 program included 33 sessions covering socio-economic theories, climate change, care work, international migration, digital platforms, finance, labor protest, precarious work, racial capitalisms, corporate concentration, value chains, tax policy, women's entrepreneurship, debt, the political economy of violence and a session focused on postcolonial ethnographies of racial capitalism from the perspective of Africa. This brief survey highlights the pluralist and critical approach of RC02 in addressing the economy and society from global, regional, and transnational perspectives. This approach continues to enable us to disregard the boundaries set around societal domains, which are often observed in specialized sociological fields. Disregarding intra- and cross-disciplinary boundaries empowers us to ask the big questions necessary for generating knowledge that is relevant for tackling significant global challenges. Also reflected in the topics of our congress is the insistence on intersectional approaches that give equal weight to capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy as structures of domination relevant for understanding the constitution of political and social economies, and to identifying the transformative politics that can address the complex inequalities that perpetuate these structures of domination. One of the last sessions in the program, the keynote address by Sylvia Walby organized with Heidi Gottfried, both past ISA presidents, with Bill Carroll, also former RC02 president, and Margaret Abraham, former ISA president, exemplified the intellectual commitments and spirited debates that have come to characterize RC02 (see article in this newsletter).

President's Letter

Karen Shire

The year 2023 was also an election year for RC02, with many past presidents returning to the board, and new members recruited to the ISA leadership, who are expanding our representation of world regions and generations of scholars. Aaron Pitluck stepped down from the presidency to run for the ISA Executive Board as candidate for the research committees. We congratulate Aaron on his election, thank him for his many innovative contributions to RC02, and for remaining a regular board member. We will depend on Aaron in his new role to advocate for the RCs in the ISA executive. As incoming President and being based in Germany in the European Union, I am delighted to have two excellent Vice-Presidents, Nadya Araujo Guimares, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil and Michelle Fei-yu Hsieh, Academia Sinica, Taiwan at my sides.

Ece Kocabiçak, Lecturer at the Open University UK agreed to take on the demanding task of Secretary and Newsletter Editor. Ece is a scholar of international development focusing on intersecting systems of gender, class, race-based oppression and exploitation in the Middle East and North Africa (Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco) and South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh).

In 2023 the ISA created a new position of Online Communication Manager, to oversee the weekly the Friday announcements and social media presence of RC02. We are delighted that we could recruit an early career scholar, Sandhya AS, a recent graduate of the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy and post-doc at the University Duisburg-Essen. Sandhya's research is on migration markets and economic sociological theories with a focus on Nepal, India, Malaysia and Japan.

Both the newsletter and announcements were strongly developed by outgoing RC02 secretary Dustin Scholz, who has already supported the initiation of Ece and Sandhya to these roles, and who continues to contribute to the leadership of RC02 as reelected board members.

Past President Heidi Gottfried has taken over the task of treasurer as reelected board member. Already Heidi has achieved the transfer of our accounts to the ISA central office.

Newly elected to the board is Alice Kroyer, El Colegio de México, Mexico, Rebecca Pearse, Australian National University, Australia and June Wang, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong. Returning to the board are also past presidents Chris Chase-Dunn, University of California-Riverside, USA and William K. Carroll, University of Victoria, Canada.

I wish to thank outgoing board members Cory Blad, Manhattan College, USA, Georgina Murray, Griffith University, Australia, Alejandra Salas/Porras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, and Christian Suter, Université de Neuchâtel, Switzerland for their many years of service and for leaving the new board with a strong research committee to carry forth into the future.

President's Letter

Karen Shire

Elections also took place at the executive level of the ISA. For the research committees the most important post is Vice President Research, and we are delighted to have Allison Loconto, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, France as Vice President Research. She will be leading us through the creation of a program for the upcoming [ISA Forum in Rabat, Morocco scheduled for July 7- 11, 2025](#).

Since taking office immediately following the World Congress this year, RC02 has sponsored several events. In December 2023 we co-sponsored [the East Asian Regional Conference](#) in Alternative Geography on the theme of “The Global East as Borderlands” at the City University of Hong Kong organized by RC02 Executive Board Member June Wang. In 2023 the RC-02 co-sponsored the launch of a Special Issue of the [Women's Studies International Forum on the Future of Gender Regions](#) (see article in this newsletter). Upcoming in 2024, we are sponsoring [a conference on the International Political Economy of Labor Migration](#), co-organized by myself, Heidi Gottfried and Sandhya AS at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Generous funding from the [World Society Foundation](#) allows the conference to include many scholars from low- and medium-income countries who could not otherwise afford to attend an international event.

In closing allow me to encourage all members to publicize their upcoming events, open positions, call for papers, publications, and other academic news over our weekly announcements by simply sending these to Sandhya AS at sandhya.as@uni-due.de with the subject “RC02 contributions”.

Soon, the RC02 board will become the program committee for the upcoming Forum in 2025, and we welcome all members to already consider ideas for panels and to plan to contribute their scholarship for a next meeting in-presence in Rabat, Morocco. Details will follow via the ISA Executive in the early part of 2024.

For the new year I wish for those of us who are living in situations of extreme economic and physical insecurity the courage to find peaceful solutions to the injustices caused by capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and the nationalisms that uphold these, and for those of us in richer regions or positions, to invest the resources at our disposal for creating a more equal and just global society, and to speak out loudly and act visibly against the injustices that divide us.



Political Economy and Violence:



The Implications of Taking Violence Seriously

for Theories of Hegemonic and Counter-Hegemonic Forces

Karen Shire and Heidi Gottfried

This keynote session, hosted by RC02 on the last day of the World Congress in Melbourne, featured new work by Sylvia Walby, past RC02 President, and Co-President of the Thematic Group Violence & Society. The session was organized by Heidi Gottfried, also past RC02 President, with comments by William Carroll, past RC02 President and Margaret Abraham, past ISA President. Before a full room of participants, Walby argued for a macro-sociological theory of violence integrated into a theory of society. While violence as an institution was present in classical sociological theories of society, for example in Durkheim, and later Du Bois, it has been largely marginal in contemporary sociological theory, relegated to specialized areas of analysis. Behind the relative neglect of violence in contemporary theories of society lurks a difference in approaches. On the one side is a securitization approach, from Hobbs to Weber, which views the mobilization of violence as the best means for ending violence. This places the focus on states and coercive powers, and criminalization as the best way to address interpersonal violence. In most such analyses, violence, often understood as inter-state violence, is decreasing. Feminist critiques however, working from an intersectional analysis, question the empirical evidence on another level of analysis, where criminalization as a carceral state response to violence results in punishing disadvantaged groups rather than addressing the systemic origins of violence. Violence, as feminist theory has shown, is central to systems of gender inequalities, while feminist movements demonstrate that the counter-hegemonic movements for more equality are rooted in improved democratic participation rather than securitization.

A second approach, largely ignored, could frame these political movements. In this approach, violence as an answer to violence perpetuates rather than ends violence. The alternative posed is peace by peaceful means. In this line of work, reaching back to Kant the claim is that interdependencies prevent war, and full and democratic political participation deters nations from sending their citizens into violent conflict. In the work of Galtung, social structures generate violence. The only plausible answer is peace by peaceful means. This analysis views violence as caused by the whole of society, and thus, ending violence depends on the mobilization of all-societal forces to end inequalities and guarantee democratic participation. Feminist critiques of criminalization importantly focus on inter-personal violence. Walby's theory aims to embed these critiques into a broader macro-societal analysis of the origins of violence, and the counter-hegemonic movements that can end violence. Drawing on her past work on globalization and social inequalities, Walby argued for giving violence an equal ontological status to political economic and civil societal theorizations of hegemony and counter-hegemonic social change.

The two discussants, Bill Carroll and Margaret Abraham both emphasized the importance of violence as the practice of forms of domination and underlined the importance of Walby's theorization of violence in class and feminist analyses.



The Implications of Taking Violence Seriously

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Both however, resisted the theoretical challenges posed by Walby, launching a vibrant debate about whether violence has equal ontological status with economy, polity, and civil society in critical analyses of the global political economy. For Abraham, violence as an institutional domain is not independent from the political, economic, or civil society, but a cross-cutting set of relations embedded in other forms of domination. More important for Abraham is understanding how violence, especially gender-based violence, cuts across cultures, boundaries, time, economic and political systems, “in and across contexts”. She called for multiple theories of violence rather than one theory to broaden the frame of analysis to critical race theory, post-colonial studies, as well as to contextualized analysis of movements to end violence. Carroll echoed Abraham’s view of violence as a cross-cutting practice, but framed by, rather than on an equal plane with critical political-economic analysis. Here the call was not for multiple theorizations, but for foregrounding political economy, and relegating violence to a practice of domination, as exemplified by Marx and Gramsci. Posed alongside each other, the comments underlined divides in critical political economic and critical feminist work on violence, which Walby is attempting to bridge exactly by elevating the ontological status of violence in social theory and engaging in a macro-social analysis of complex systems of inequalities.

Did Tupac Amaru face 21st century's music?

Uwe Christian Plachetka

José Gabriel Condorcanqui, Tupac Amaru II, the leader of the “Last Inca Revolution” (1780-82) is still admired by the Rapper Tupac Shakur (16 June 1971 – 13 September 1996), an African descendant, and by some South American guerrillas. This admiration also extends to a Peruvian drama (Tupac Amaru 1984). It's intriguing how rappers and left-wing guerrillas admire an 18th-century Inca aristocrat.

Tupac Amaru has become an icon for disenfranchised 'citizens' prompting pressing questions about the state of globalization in the 21st century. The shift towards a digital economy and the growing divide between the North-Atlantic and the expanding BRICS group across various dimensions—governance and rules—require legitimization. A crisis in legitimization might fuel the rise of authoritarian populism, purportedly defending cultural values. Reconstructing the real Tupac Amaru II revolution aims to address these issues without perpetuating such social phenomena, as reification could lead to blame-games.

Socioeconomic transformations then and now

The 'cybernetic revolution' originating in the scientific management era of the 1950s, is now taking off through the data industry, asserting itself as the new hegemonic Production Principle (PP), akin to how the industrial revolution did previously (Grinin et al. 2022; Komlosy 2022). The original data of the model (Grinin 2012:39) indicate that each PP typically requires approximately 69 to 72 percent of its respective lifespan to establish its hegemonic position. Incorporating a spatial dimension, the World-System approach enables the identification of the revolutionary focal group during the early stages of the industrial PP (Plachetka 2023).

Reorienting the Iberian expansion

The cradle of the industrial Production Principle (PP) traces back to the aftermath of the 14th-century Black Death (Belich 2022). Genoa (Salonia 2017) played a pivotal role in propelling Portugal forward during the early phases of European expansion, establishing an 'Iberian Atlantic'. The Early Renaissance humanists, including João de Barros in Portugal, fostered a new scientific mindset, focusing on linguistics to adapt spoken languages for literature. This was crucial for deep-sea navigation, leading to a transition in seaborne PP and recording discoveries in Portugal, exemplified by João de Barros (Dion 1970). The Portuguese navigators had to become involved in Southeast Asia, acting as gatecrashers in the well-established 'Maritime Silk Road', a route already known to Europe through accounts such as Niccolò de' Conti's and Fra Mauro's map, nearly completed by 1457 (Plachetka 2020). Despite Portugal's success in developing new naval artillery, the conquest of Malacca led to serious tensions with China, jeopardizing their economic success and resulting in precarious situations. Barros' historical account did not see a splendid re-edition by the Hakluyt Society, the renowned 19th-century editorial institution for such documents. Tomé Pires' *Suma Oriental*, discovered and published during World War II by the same society (Cortese 1944), contributed to the provocative nature of André Gunder Frank's *Re-Orient* thesis (Frank 1998).

Did Tupac Amaru face 21st century's music?

Uwe Christian Plachetka

The conquest of the Americas captured historians' attention, but the Inca and Andean civilizations stood as a showcase for a 'Polanyian' moral economy (Wachtel 1974; Isbell 2005). Emperor Carlos V sought Inca allies to prevent the emergence of conquistadors' feudal dominions that would have led to their independence, almost devastating the sophisticated Inca food system (Plachetka 2011), resulting in fatal consequences for the indigenous population. The Spanish crown sanctioned the Inca nobility as the only governing body for indigenous communities, maintaining a form of moral economy, except for *corvée* labor (Garrett 2005). Portugal never found itself in a similar position, contrasting with the Dutch who later achieved comparable results, as depicted in the novel 'Max Havelaar' in 1860.

The 18th century shock-wave

The expansive European World System surpassed the Asian World System by the 18th century (Frank 1998) and collided with the Andean world. In response, the Peruvians initiated myriad uprisings and revolts (Valcárcel 1971:15-61) against this shockwave. Fisher (1966:67) cites Sebastian de Segurola's report, stating that the rebellions commenced in what is now Bolivia for explicit reasons before José Gabriel Tupac Amaru initiated his own rebellion, 'motivated by... deprivation, which compelled him to dismantle these kingdoms' (Segurola 1901:145). Yet, the question remains: why did he become so famous?

Legitimizing a revolution

José Gabriel was severely affected by the excessive tax burden imposed by the Bourbons, prompting Tomás Catari and others to initiate a wave of revolutions. In contrast to Tomás, José faced an extended legal battle concerning his status as the legitimate descendant of the last Inca sovereign, Tupac Amaru I, and his claim to the marquisate of Oropesa y Yucay. Tupac Amaru I had led the Inca resistance from Vilcabamba, as the conquest of the Incas was a protracted process that involved peace negotiations (Hemming 1993:270-453). The Incas received recognition from the Spanish crown by 1544. For José Gabriel Tupac Amaru, obtaining this marquisate was crucial in affirming his social status as an Inca. His involvement in the series of rebellions, adopting the name Tupac Amaru II, transformed it into the "Last Inca revolution" (Fisher 1966).

The clash of civilizations within a society

The Quechua peasants' perception of Tupac Amaru II was that of an Inca, described as someone who turned the world upside down (in Quechua: Pachacuti) (Walker 2013:62-66). According to indigenous epistemology, the Inca was a sacred institution responsible for maintaining the world's functionality and vitality (Pease 1991:155-167). Both the Inca nobility and the colonial middle class regarded Garcilaso de la Vega's Royal Commentaries as the dominant narrative depicting a glorious Inca Empire (Walker 2013:27-30). Tupac Amaru's claim to Inca legitimacy appealed to the non-indigenous Peruvian colonial middle class.

Uwe Christian Plachetka

However, with Tupac Amaru II's execution, the revolution descended into violent and senseless inter-ethnic conflicts. Isbell (2005) emphasized the significance of rituals in Andean peasant societies, while Pease (1991) highlighted the ideological-ritualistic composition of the Inca Empire. These distinctive traits bear resemblance to 'cosmological states' found in South-East Asia (Heine-Geldern 1942) exemplified by the Theater state in 19th-century Bali (Geerts 2000), stemming from the preceding Majapahit empire (Atmadja 2017). Legitimacy plays a crucial role in consolidating social cohesion and power. The 18th-century 'caste wars' in Spanish America (Halperin Donghi 1990: 82-86) were revolts lacking legitimate leadership. The absence of a legitimate cultural hegemony in Italy prompted European Renaissance humanism to establish a new cultural foundation drawn from ancient Greek and Roman literature: Rational humanism (Garner (1990) on Burckhardt (1878:4-6), Baron (1966)). Non-European societies that did not undergo this transformation often struggle with such foreign concepts. Even some Italians or Spanish conquistadors faced difficulties in comprehending it: Carlos V had to pivot from conquest to integration, lacking confidence that the cat would keep the cream.

Take home lesson

Legitimization holds significance for entire systems, offering ontological security. The rationale behind the foresight model cautions enthusiasts of the cybernetic revolution who favor 'Transhumanism'. Moral monism (Parekh 2000:16-49) portrays them as unreliable, akin to cats not trusted to safeguard the cream. This lack of trust sparks the emergence of charismatic figures like Tupac Amaru II, becoming flagship figures for revivalist movements among disenfranchised citizens (Wallace 1956), both within society and in the now more perilous realms of international relations. The question arises: who leads these leaders?

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Uwe Christian Plachetka PhD: Agricultural anthropologist and Global Historian, Austrian Institute of Risk and Security Research at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, lecturer at the University of Vienna, several expeditions to Peru and trips to Indonesia before COVID-19. He is now member of the board of directors of the Asociación de Historiadores Internacionales de America Latina y el Caribe (ADHILAC) and member of the Special Research cluster on Global History at the University of Vienna.

Karen Shire

Virtual Special Issue of Women's Studies International Forum

The Future of Gender Regimes -

Edited by Heidi Gottfried, Sylvia Walby and Karen A. Shire

The contributions in this special issue analyze how the futures of gender relations are conceptualized, and the possible pathways for gender equality in a globalizing world. The editors' introduction situates the contribution of this volume in moving gender regime research beyond a Eurocentric perspective, and considering the impacts of globalization in transnational research on gender inequalities in the world. The volume opens with a theoretical contribution by Walby (2023) on violence and the conceptualization of a new type of public gender regime, authoritarian gender regimes. Authoritarian gender regimes are not only part of the patriarchal past, but re-emerging in modern societies as forces against neo-liberal and social-democratic varieties of public gender regimes. The subsequent articles in the volume focus on how the varieties of futures are imagined, as well as the global and transnational processes that are shaping the possible and probable futures in country-level, regional and World Systems analyses. Tied as it is to processes of de-democratization and failures to mitigate violence including that of states in war and inter-personal violence, authoritarian gender regimes are possible futures for some European countries as well as for the more well recognized cases of authoritarian political systems in the world, with consequences for roll-backs in gender equalities.

Empirical research on trajectories of public gender regimes in the special issue cover the full range of social-democratic, neo-liberal, conservative and authoritarian gender regimes evident in institutional changes in Germany (Gottfried 2023, Klammer 2023, Shire 2023), Iran and Tunisia (Moghadam 2023), Turkey (Kocabicak 2023), Spain (Ballesteros-Pena, Bustelo, & Mazur 2023), and regionally in southern (Alonso, Ciccina & Lombardo 2023; Gottschall 2023) and northern Europe (Gottschall 2023; Shire 2023). These interrogations of trajectories of authoritarian, conservative, social-democratic and neo-liberal gender regimes are placed in a broader global and transnational perspective, drawing uniquely on and gendering World Systems (Moghadam 2023) and transnational (Gottfried 2023) theory. The world regional perspective emerging out of these theoretical contributions addresses the European Union itself as a gender regime with its own trajectory (Guerrina, MacRae and Masselo 2023), and the globe, through contributions by Bose (2023) on the trajectories of gender regimes in the global south, and by Weldon, Lusvardi, Kelly and Forester (2023) who trace the historical waves of feminism informing the sorts of activism aimed at creating more egalitarian gender futures.

The special issue was launched on September 15, and a recording of the presentations can be accessed here https://www.uni-due.de/ekfg/research_sylviaawalby.

Karen Shire

Links to the articles in the Virtual Special Issue:

[Alonso, A., Ciccio, R., & Lombardo, E. \(2023\). A Southern European model? Gender regime change in Italy & Spain. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Ballesteros-Pena, A., Bustelo, M., & Mazur, A. \(2023\). Theorizing the penal state: The darkside of gender regimes in the case of Spain. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Bose, C. \(2023\). Regional gender regimes in the global south: An empirical approach. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Gottfried, H. \(2023\). Multi-scalar geographies of inequalities: Trajectories of gender regimes in a world regional perspective. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Gottschall, K. \(2023\). The interaction of gender and long-term care regimes across Europe: Ambivalent intersections of gender, class and ethnicity. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Guerrina, R., MacRae, H., & Masselo, A. \(2023\). Between a rock and a hard place: The EU's gender regime in times of crisis. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Klammer, U. \(2023\). The ambivalent trajectory of the German gender regime: Are female breadwinner families an indicator of a shift towards a public gender regime? Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Koçbıçak, E. \(2023\). The causes and the consequences of the patriarchal state: Evidence from Turkey. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Moghadam, V. \(2023\). Gender regimes, politics, and the world system: Comparing Iran and Tunisia. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Shire, K. \(2023\). Social democratic imaginaries of transformation in conservative gender regimes. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Walby, S. \(2023\). Authoritarianism, violence, and varieties of gender regimes: Violence as an institutional domain. Women's Studies International Forum.](#)

[Weldon, S. L., Lusvardi, A., Kelly-Thompson, K., & Forester, S. \(2023\). Feminist waves, global activism, and gender violence regimes: Genealogy and impact of a global wave. Women's Studies International Forum](#)

The webinar launching the special issue took place on 15 September 2023. The recording of the event is now online!

Uwe Christian Plachetka

Andrea Komlosy (2022) provides a foresight study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemics based on models of Big History (Leonid and Anton Grinin, Korotayev 2022). Kondratieff waves and Grinin's conception of production principles are global history's chief trajectories. The agricultural-craft, industrial and cybernetic production principles are established by the neolithic, industrial and cybernetic revolution. The original data of each production principle's life cycle (Grinin 2012:39) indicate that the lion's share of their life span is spent reaching their hegemonic position, resembling Godelier (1974): The respective revolutionists need cultural hegemony over all other existing modes to establish their socio-economic configuration with its specific legal and normative framework.

Since no one can see into the future, calibrating a model means running it backwards into history checking whether the algorithm's data are matching reasonably well with known data. I suggested the 14th-century Black Death and its impact as a reference pandemic due to the subsequent "scientific revolution" in astronomy by renaissance humanists (Plachetka 2020a). Leonid Grinin (pers. com.) insists on each principle's direct impact on manufacturing. The military revolution, dated back may be a substitute for the industrial revolution to meet the model rationale.

James Belich (2022) does exactly that, holding the Black Death responsible for the "Great Divergence". The end of the Pax Mongolica during the Plague disconnected Europe from the Silk Roads. Belich (2022: 232-33) considers the seven expeditions by Ming Admiral Zheng He (1405-1433) as a reboot of the Maritime Silk Road as a World-System network. This makes plausible Fra Mauro's citing Asian experts in his map made in Venice (Plachetka 2019) on his map. Novel Asian information generated circa 1420 C.E. made him reject Ptolemy's portraying the Indian Ocean as landlocked. Anyway, Europeans had to make their own way: In contrast to the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic has no Monsoon winds providing "sea highways" to India. Since sea highways are one-way, the maneuver "volta do mar" required astronomic navigation for spotting sea highways suitable for sailing back home. Early Renaissance humanism developed scientific astronomy for mathematical geography. Between 1482-86, Diego Cão reached latitudes at the African West coast, where the pole-star is not visible. He put the then novel humanist solar astronomy to the test (Hunter 2012). Martellius turned that into cartography: The Yale Martellius map (ca. 1491) also allows us to understand the impact of a geographical symposium during the ecclesiastical council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-45) (Van Duzer 2019) contained in Fra Mauro's map as a "knowledge aggregator" (Nanetti et.al. 2015). Dating the map depends on the entry of the latest information, because the conventional date 1457 refers to Portugal's payment for the map after the expeditions of Cadamosto and Usodimare to Senegal (1455-56). After China's official inward turn since 1433, the maritime Silk Road was run by private traders of Hokkian origin left alone, with the apotheosis of Zhèng Hé among them exclusively (Tan 2009). The 16th-century Sino-Portuguese alliance to run the maritime Silk Road furnished Hokkians with some protection by state-craft i.e., superior battle-ships as results of the European military revolution. Without that scientific-epistemological revolution, the Portuguese would not have been able to establish anything around the Indian Ocean.

Uwe Christian Plachetka

As a preliminary conclusion:

1. The complexity of Belich's evidence for the impact of the Black Death requires a model to reduce it to manageable concepts for calibrating the discussed model.

2. The term "Fitness region" as analytical category: Vavilov's law of homologous series means to Peruvian Quechua farmers the use of spots of specific microclimatic conditions as selection criteria for cross-breeding of wind pollinators, e.g., potatoes: Random mutations that don't fit in won't blossom there. Thereby they adapt seeds to their local environmental conditions (Plachetka 2020b). In models of system evolution, such a selecting spot is a "fitness region".

3. Grinin's phases of a production principle's life cycle indicate that a new production principle in its infancy requires its adequate fitness region, such as the Mediterranean at the end of the Silk Roads for capitalism. Relevant changes in the system context allows the new system to transgress the boundaries of its pristine fitness region, heading towards its maturity and eventually its hegemonic position.

Based on these modeling considerations, trajectories from suitable historical showcases, considering their scale, can enable a calibration of the discussed model, but it's still a long way to identify the relevant proxy data from history, so Komlosy (2022) can only rely on narratives on the effects of Covid-related lockdowns to draw her conclusions.

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Featured member publication



Capital Redefined:

A Communist Value Theory for Liberating Life

S. A. Hamed Hosseini and Barry K. Gills

Hosseini, S A Hamed, and Barry K Gills (2024)

[Capital Redefined: A Communist Value Theory for Liberating Life](#). Routledge.

In an age where the detrimental effects and complexities of capitalist systems' dominance on all aspects of our socio-ecological relations have reached their zenith, the imperative for groundbreaking perspectives and transformative theories becomes paramount. It is within this context that "Capital Redefined," authored by S. A. Hamed Hosseini (University of Newcastle, Australia), and Barry K. Gills (University of Helsinki), embarks on a new scholarly quest to reassess, and reconfigure the concept of 'capital' and its associated values. This short essay explores the core themes and radical insights presented in the book.

The Necessity of Liberating Value from Capital

The book opens with a compelling argument for the urgency of liberating our notion of 'value' from capital (Chapter 1). Hosseini and Gills set the stage by illustrating how ecological and social crises are exacerbated by the pervasive influence of capital's value regime. They emphasize the historical necessity to challenge the capitalistic definition of value, advocating for a radical retheorization that recognizes the detrimental impact of capital on essential resources of our planetary organized life. The radical retheorization they advocate for is rooted in what they term a "commonist perspective." This perspective seeks to redefine value in a way that transcends its capitalistic constraints, recognizing the intrinsic worth of more-than-human life-domain, human creativity, extra-human convivial and care-oriented relationships, and the emancipatory potentials of prefigurative politics. The commonist perspective, as outlined by Hosseini and Gills, is a holistic approach that values the interconnectedness of all life forms and the collective well-living of communities. It challenges the notion that value is a product of market transactions or economic output, instead proposing a more inclusive and equitable framework that acknowledges the diverse contributions to societal and ecological flourishing in a normative commonist state of becoming.

Rethinking Marxian Value Theory

In a significant thematic section (Chapters 2 and 3), Hosseini and Gills delve into re-evaluating Marxian value theory. They acknowledge the strengths of Marx's work while simultaneously pointing out its limitations in addressing the complexities of the modern world. The authors argue for a more inclusive approach that transcends traditional analyses focused solely on capital's "inner organization." This novel approach lays a foundation for an ontologically coherent and sociologically broader framework that better captures the multifaceted nature of value creation and appropriation under capital.



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True Value vs. Fetish Value

A central theme of the book is the distinction between ‘true value’ and ‘fetish value’ (explored across Chapters 1, 2, and 4). It critiques the traditional association of value with capital, introducing the normative-yet-analytical notion of ‘true value’ as a counterpoint to the life-negating ‘fetish value’ created within capitalistic systems. This differentiation is crucial for understanding the book’s core argument: the need to redefine and reclaim value from the clutches of capitalistic exploitation. A central pillar of the book is the call for a defetishization of value, challenging the widely accepted idea of its objectivity. The authors introduce their “commonist value theory,” effectively redefining capital as both the product and the infra-process of perverting the fundamental causes of true value into the causes of fetish value. As the product, ‘capital’ is the corporeal manifestation of fetish value, and as the infra-process, it is essentially the abstraction and appropriation of fundamental commons.

The Modular Architecture of Capital

In an innovative thematic discussion (Chapter 4), the authors introduce a modular framework to understand the “architecture of capital.” This framework is a blend of Marxian theory, critical realism, and Aristotelian causation theory. It provides a comprehensive view of how capital, as ‘fetish value,’ erases ‘true value’ and undermines life’s self-sustenance and how the opposite ((re-)commonization) can happen. The book redefines key concepts like abstraction, reification, and appropriation to elucidate the nature and operations of capital.

Labor Theory of Value in a Commonist Framework

A significant part of the book (Chapters 5 and 6) is dedicated to reconstructing the Marxian labor theory of value through a commonist lens. The authors explore how labor, seen as a perverted form of human creative power, is decommonized under capital. This exploration is crucial for understanding the socio-ecological and political implications of labor in capitalist societies and the potential for its liberation.

Challenges in the Age of Smart Machines and Climate and Care Crises

The book also addresses contemporary challenges to the labor theory of value, particularly in the context of smart machines, the growing role of social reproduction, and ecological crises (Chapter 6). Hosseini and Gills navigate these debates by incorporating their commonist approach, suggesting new ways to understand and apply their new labor theory of value in a rapidly changing world.

Critical Acclaim

Prominent scholars from various fields have praised its substantial contributions to the reimagining of Marxian value theory. Leslie Sklair, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics, hails it as a “challenging contribution” to our understanding.



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Paul James, Professor of Globalization and Cultural Diversity at Western Sydney University, emphasizes its relevance to the future of human productivity. Ariel Salleh, a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Queen Mary University of London, appreciates its open-ended approach. William K. Carroll, Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria, Canada, finds it timely for our troubled times. James Goodman, Professor of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, finds it essential for envisioning post-capitalist possibilities. Hans A. Baer, Principal Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne, describes it as an indispensable literary companion for those exploring revolutionary potentials. Jamie Morgan, Professor of Economics, commends its reimagining of value theory in the age of climate and ecological emergency. Ulrich Brand, Professor of International Politics at the University of Vienna, sees it shaping the debate about radical political strategies.

In conclusion, “Capital Redefined” is not only a critique of existing economic systems but also a radical manifesto and a blueprint for envisioning and working towards post-capitalist futures. This work stands as an essential resource for academics, policymakers, and activists engaged in the pursuit of radically progressive futures.

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