

Call for Papers

International Conference: **Desiring Just Economies / Just Economies of Desire**

Date: June 24-26, 2010

Location: ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

Confirmed Speakers: Lisa Duggan, Kevin Floyd, Josephine Ho, Ratna Kapur, Desiree Lewis, Anne McClintock, Donald Morton

Deadline for abstracts: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Concept:

The conference seeks to explore how desire not only sustains current economies, but also carries the potential for inciting new forms of understanding and doing economy. We propose to focus on the notion of desire as a tool to explore economy's sexual dimension as much as the economic dimension of sexuality. Drawing on Queer Theory we understand desire as historically structured by heterosexual norms, while simultaneously functioning as a structuring force itself – thus inscribing reproductive heteronormativity to subjectivity and society. Presuming that desire can be envisioned beyond heteronormative restrictions and that this bears on the idea of justice, the question arises whether the pursuit of economic and sexual justice can be made to coincide when economy is queered by desire. Rather than a realisable universal norm, the term justice is employed as a contestable term, offering possibility for debate and political practice. The conference's twin interest lies in unpacking how sexuality is implicit in economic processes and in unfolding how economy is linked to sexuality. How do current global economic processes (including production, reproduction, consumption, circulation, speculation) constitute specific sexual identities and practices that collaborate in relations of exploitation, domination, and subjectivation? Conversely, how do ways of organizing sexuality influence economic processes?

In addition to exploring the reciprocal relation between sexuality and economy, the conference inquires into how a queer reconceptualization of desire may emerge as a destabilizing and transformative force in economic relations. One of the aims of the conference is to fashion space for imagining “other” economies or imagining economy “otherwise”, as well as for the deployment of the concept of desire in ways that allow for a reworking of social relationships and economic practices. The presumption here is that global capitalism is not a monolith; rather, there exist diverse capitalisms and diverse economies. For instance, economic practices in the fields of migration and diasporas, subcultural economies, gift and barter economies and cooperative economies do not all conform to the capitalist logics.

Within the large field of exploring other economies and their potential to unsettle global capitalism, one focus of the conference is on the connection between heteronormativity and neoliberal capitalism. How does neoliberalism mobilise desire in order to obtain compliance from individuals? What is the role of the increasing socio-cultural integration of diversified genders and sexualities? What role does homo- and trans-phobia play in contemporary economic developments? Is there a ‘necessary’ or rather ‘historical’ connection between heteronormativity and capitalism? In how far do the notions of heteronormativity and capitalism have to be problematized as eurocentric or occidentalist? In order to tackle these questions, it is necessary to engage critically with the transnational mechanisms of sexual and economic exclusion, exploitation and superexploitation. Why is the question of sexuality foreclosed from critiques of capitalism and redistributive activism? To

what extent do political struggles for sexual justice in the global North inadvertently reinforce sexual injustice in the South? How can one consider the colonial, post- and neocolonial legacies and restructurings that underlie the forms of exploitation induced by the current financialization of the globe without ignoring its gendered and sexualized dimensions? How is sexual injustice in the global South instrumentalised to enable the self-constitution of the West as 'progressive' and thereby consolidate its hegemonic position? What is the link between justifications of economic and sexual violence?

While desire for economic justice tends to accept and perpetuate the principle of reducing all value to its pecuniary equivalent, desiring other economies can also take the form of envisaging alternate modes of recognizing value beside financial compensation. The prevalent view understands desire as being ultimately grounded in a fundamental lack, incited by a longing for recognition. According to this framework, the quest for capital, property and consumption beyond what is defined as "basic need" appears as but a particular avenue of being re-assured of one's value and as an ultimately futile attempt to cover up lack. This raises questions like: To what extent do existing and imagined alternative economies challenge this false promise? How far do they replicate scarcity in a symbolic register and use symbolic recognition as a cheap, exploitative substitute for financial compensation? How may justice be imagined in the realm of desire to be recognized and valued? Does the value of recognition rely on unequal distribution? Can it grow indefinitely?

Substituting the concept of "desire as productivity and becoming" for the model of "desire as lack" does not provide an exit from capitalist economy either. While such a concept of plenitude and excess renounces normative restrictions and disciplinary arrangements of desire, it nonetheless risks appropriating difference to capitalist economy, celebrating it as the principle capitalist renewal. Thus, it seems essential to ask critically how specific economies deploy desire, and which concepts of desire allow for what kind of economic thinking. Moreover, the main concern of the conference is to reflect upon and, perhaps, invent queer conceptions of desire beyond the logics of both lack and excess, in order to ask what they offer in view of just economies of desire, of a desire for economic and sexual justice.

Submission:

"Desiring Just Economies / Just Economies of Desire" is an international, transdisciplinary conference that welcomes a wide range of presentations, from academic papers to experimental writing, lecture performances, and visual presentations. We invite scholars, activists and artists inspired by queer and postcolonial theory to submit abstracts that relate to the questions raised above.

Abstracts (200-300 words) for **fifteen-minute presentations** should be submitted as an email attachment to [cfp@desiring-just-economies.de](mailto:cfp@desiring-just-economies.de) by **January 20, 2010**. Please use your surname as the document title. Abstracts should be sent in the following format: (1) Title (2) Presenter(s) (3) Institutional affiliation / Field of Activity (4) Country (5) Email (6) Abstract.

Organizers:

Nikita Dhawan (Frankfurt Research Center for Postcolonial Studies [FRCPS],  
Excellence Cluster "Formation of Normative Orders" Goethe-University Frankfurt)  
Antke Engel (Institute for Queer Theory, Berlin/Hamburg)  
Christoph Holzhey (ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry)  
Volker Woltersdorff (SFB "Cultures of the Performative", FU Berlin)

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