



European  
Sociological  
Association

**CPERN**

The Critical Political Economy Research Network

## Biennial Report

### Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) – RN06

#### 1. New CPERN Board 2017-19

- Chair:** **Angela Wigger**, Associate Professor Global Political Economy, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, e-mail: a.wigger@fm.ru.nl
- Vice-chair:** **Phoebe Moore**, Associate Professor of Political Economy and Technology, UK, e-mail: pm358@le.ac.uk
- Treasurer:** **Anne Engelhardt**, [PhD Candidate, Kassel University, Germany](#)
- Communication:** **David Bailey**, Senior Lecturer Political Science and International Studies, Birmingham University, UK
- Communication:** **Caroline Metz**, [ESRC PhD Candidate at the University of Manchester, UK](#)

#### 2. Outgoing Board 2015-17

- Chair:** **Monica Clua Losada**, Associate Professor in Global Political Economy, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Vice-chair/treasurer:** **Angela Wigger**, Associate Professor Global Political Economy, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands
- Network liaison officer:** **Phoebe Moore**, Senior Lecturer, Law and Politics, Middlesex University, London, UK
- Communication officer:** **Caroline Metz**, [ESRC PhD Candidate at the University of Manchester, UK](#)

#### 3. Activities 2015-17

##### 3.1 CPERN Mid-Term Workshop in Ljubljana, 27-28 May 2016

CPERN organised a Mid-Term Workshop, titled “(Conflicting) Political Ontologies and Implications for Transformative Action” on 27-28 May 2016 at the Department of Sociology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (see our Call for Papers below). Our local co-organiser was the [Institute of Labour Studies](#), formerly the Workers and Punk University.

We received a total of 76 abstracts out of which we accepted 64. We organised 14 sessions. Due to some some last minute withdrawals, ending up with 58 paper presentations.

### **Financing**

We received 2.910.-- euros from the ESA (2'500 from the ESA as a generic support, and 410 euro from our 41 members at the time).

There was no conference fee. Our local co-organisers took care of the conference venue, and the conference package with information on travelling/hotels.

CPERN has a core policy of using the majority of its funding for travel subsidies for PhD students, colleagues from SEE/CEE and precariously employed participants. The funding we had received from the ESA was transferred directly to the Radboud University (Angela Wigger was the Treasurer, and in charge of administering the reimbursements). The 2.910.-- euro were evenly distributed among 12 precarious conference participants, of which each received 242,50 euro. All receipts have been checked with the RN06, the ESA Executive, and the originals are with the Radboud University.

## ***(Conflicting) Political Ontologies and Implications for Transformative Action***

### **Call for Papers**

Ontology is often overlooked in discussions about political thought and action. Several emerging debates reflect different and conflicting positions that are often either assumed, invisible or intentionally opaque. Breaking down the apparent barriers between philosophy and theory and theory and action, we welcome discussions on ontologies of power and transformative action. Critical realists have long demanded that ontology be taken seriously and have encouraged discussions on how 'reality' conditions action. New materialist and anti- and post-capitalist debates tease out the assumptions across Marxism and poststructuralism, and demand new ways of thinking about specific thought formations, ethical and moral frameworks. The current crisis has forced us to think, explore, and practice multiple ways of organising, resisting and building prefigurative practices. Understanding ontology not only as a philosophical standpoint but also as a myriad of calls for action will allow us to understand how people organise and what motivates us to do so/prevents us from doing so, and to initiate new ways of communicating and reflecting on our own ontological praxis.

We are keen to receive paper proposals which focus on exploring political and social ontologies for transformative action. Some of the topics we would like to invite in particular are:

- Ontologies of capitalist spheres of production, trade and finance
- Ontologies of praxis in trade unions, social movements and new Left political parties/platforms
- Anarchism, feminism, new materialism and Marxism – ontological friends or foes?
- The materialities of ecological challenges
- The political economy of migration and human trafficking
- Building tomorrow's future today (with yesterday's historical conditions) – Prefigurative practice and its relationship to time, space and capitalism

- Damaged lives, intensified precarisation and horizontalist escapes
- Reclaiming the Caliban and the Witch: social reproduction as a source of value-creation

We are interested in all of the above plus more, and wish for the conference to cover a wide range of topics. As such, we seek contributions from scholars and activists with an interest in political economy research, regardless of their disciplinary affiliation and whether they are in academia or not. We also hope to attract a diverse range of participants, from a variety of countries and backgrounds. To this end, **limited** funds will be available for assisting PhD and early career scholars (who cannot get other sources of funding), especially those from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, with their travel and accommodation costs (please inform us if you may require help with funding when you send us your abstract)

### **3.2 Critical European Studies Workshop (CES), Goethe-University Frankfurt, 23-24 June 2017**

For the fourth time in row, CPERN collaborated with the [Arbeitskreis kritische Europaforschung \(AKE/AkG\)](#), the [Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung](#), International Political Economy Group of British International Studies Association (BISA-IPEG), and [Transform! Network](#), and the [CES](#) organisation team (Agnes Gagyi, Christakis Georgiou, Daniel Keil, Tino Petzold, and Yuliya Yurchenko) to hold the annual CES conference, bringing together European scholars, students and activists working in the field of Critical European Studies to discuss critical theoretical and empirical perspectives on the configuration of European capitalism, the EU and political resistance. See the programme below!

Previous editions were held at the [University of Greenwich](#) in London 2017, at the [Universitat Pompeu Fabra](#) in Barcelona (2015), and at the [Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam](#) (2014).

The CES workshops usually avoid the 'usual' conference structure with individual paper presentations but foregrounds collective discussions instead on the basis of thematic block sessions, with each tabling a core text that all participants will have read beforehand. Each of the sessions in the workshop starts with a brief introduction, and six participants discussing and enhancing the perspectives developed in that session's core text from the angle of their own research/activism. This is followed by a mumble where all participants share their ideas in small groups, after which the floor is opened for a plenary discussion.

There were six sessions: 1. Crisis of the state: State of emergency and authoritarian modes of politics in the EU; 2. The uprise of the new right in Europe; 3. Shifts in (transnational) fractions of capital and 'deep state'; 4. Climate – the invisible obvious: from denying the problem to inadequate solutions based on agnotology; 5. Resistance and strategy 1: in production and reproduction; 6. Resistance and strategy 2: in politics and on the streets. See [here](#) the programme, and more the sessions and the papers/participants.

### 3.3 7th Annual Conference in Political Economy, Berlin School of Economics and and Law, 13-15 September 2017

CPERN collaborated with the [International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy \(IIPPE\)](#) and the [Berlin Institute for International Political Economy \(IPE\)](#) to organise the 7th Annual Conference in Political Economy, titled “The Political Economy of Inequalities and Instabilities in the 21st Century” at the Berlin School of Economics and and Law, 13-15 September 2017.

The Berlin CPERN/IIPPE conference was the largest in the history of both institutions. There were 444 presentations and 108 panels. CPERN organised streams with a total of 46 presentations, and a keynote speaker, formerly a CPERN chair, Laura Horn.

#### ***The Political Economy of Inequalities and Instabilities in the 21st Century***

##### **Call for Papers**

In the context of the IIPPE/CPERN/IPE conference, the Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) invites paper and panel suggestions on the suggested streams below, but also welcomes suggestions that fit with the conference theme more broadly, which are ‘inequality’ and ‘instability’.

To contribute to the conference’s overall themes, CPERN calls for papers and panels that want to destabilise perceptions in political economy that breed closed talking shops and echo chambers. We aim to talk about how the urgencies of rampant inequality and instability bring us to query how and why they have become so widespread in the global capitalist economy; to critically discuss how social and structural imbalances are fuelled by extremely unbalanced power relations; and, importantly, to consider how we can tackle these issues, whether by challenging stagnant ideas in political economy and theories, or disputing the conditions under which instability and inequality have been emerging.

The following reflect desired CPERN contributions based on suggestions from CPERN members yourselves and in discussion with the Executive Board: Monica Clua Losada, Angela Wigger, Phoebe Moore and Caroline Metz. However, feel free to submit papers/panel proposals that may not precisely fit with the below, but fit with the conference themes instability and inequality.

##### **THEMES**

###### ***Confronting (inherently unstable) capitalism***

This stream will critically analyse (global) anti-capitalist, anarchist, feminist, cooperative and other movements that both destabilise capitalist tendencies and represent moments that disrupt relations of domination and exploitation, but also remain unsure about how to develop into more substantial anti-capitalist movements. Panels seek contributions about how social movements have met transformations in capitalism, or new left convergences are being coopted by political parties, e.g. in Brazil, Rojava, Chile, the Czech Republic, Spain, landless workers movement, and the radical left in Africa and more.

###### ***Debt and financialised capitalism***

This stream speaks to the interrelated workings of ‘states’ and ‘markets’ in the reproduction of (financialised) capitalism. To what extent are public and private actors cooperating in the creation, expansion and reshaping of markets? How are state-market interactions evolving in an economy reliant on and fuelled by household and

student debt? How does financialised capitalism impact inequality in terms of gender, class and race? What are the current or potential forms of resistance to markets and the commodification of debt, and to financialised capitalism overall?

*Destabilising labour processes: The machinery question*

The machine question is back with a vengeance with the threat of automation, the algorithmic boss, gig economies and platform work. This stream looks at problems that the contemporary machine question poses for organising workers and resistance. To do so, we will look at extreme quantified workplaces with self-tracking and monitoring of all-of-life and affective digitalised labour, changing concepts of urban guerrillas and hacking, digital intermediation platforms and the human price of everyday rhetorics in the digital economy.

*Regional destabilisation and uneven capitalist development*

Regions have risen and fallen. This stream will look at areas of destabilisation of regional groupings and integration practices, from the much-heralded alternatives seen in the Pink Tide (and its fall), to questions of continuation and challenges to neoliberalism through regional disintegration. How has regional change impacted age-old inequalities of gender, class, race? Discussions may include the urgency of reviewing regional significance brought to the fore with Brexit, critical perspectives on the interface of EU investment politics with trade/trade agreements and on recarving (virtual) accumulation spaces as mechanisms of capitalism's transformativity.

### **3.4 13th European Sociological Association (ESA) Conference in Athens, 29 August to 1 September 2017**

CPERN very much welcomed the overall ESA conference theme *(Un)Making Europe Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities* and issued a call for papers under the title *Resisting Capitalism in, under and beyond Authoritarian Neoliberalism – Radical Praxis, Real democracy and (Prefigurative) Alternatives in the 21st Century* (see below the call for papers).

We received the largest number of abstract submissions ever (over 120) and organized a total of 19 sessions with each consisting of four or five paper presentations. In addition to the 19 sessions, CPERN organised a semi-plenary mid-day session "Author Meets Critics: Clyde W. Barrow's book *Towards a Critical Theory of the State*" where Clyde Barrow's recent book was discussed by Claus Offe, Laura Horn, Ian Bruff.

We also organised a very successful open session, titled *Collective Experiences of Sexism and Racism in Academia*, which offered space to scholars and activists to share stories and personal experiences of sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression in academia. All accounts were welcome, whether they concerned subtle attitudes, silencing, verbal assault or outright physical harassment on the part of students, colleagues or superiors; imbalances in representation and content in the curriculum, in conferences or in other settings; or institutionalised forms of discrimination regarding salaries, maternity/paternity leaves, promotion schemes, or the distribution of admin and other types of work. The session sought to debate successful and unsuccessful strategies and responses, and reflect collectively on how we can react in individual situations, in order to deconstruct and resist institutionalised sexists, racist and other oppressive structures in academia.

***Resisting Capitalism in, under and beyond Authoritarian Neoliberalism – Radical Praxis, Real democracy and (Prefigurative) Alternatives in the 21st Century***

**Call for papers**

Capitalism has been resilient to various crises and contradictions, including the current global crisis. At the same time, ever more cracks are opening up, pointing to avenues of resistance and alternatives to capitalism. We interrogate the mechanisms and processes that facilitate the reproduction of the continued accumulation of capital: reproductive labour, inequalities of class, gender, race and ethnicity, capitalist competition and technological innovations, the ubiquitous role of debt, the disciplinary role of the judicial and administrative state apparatus and in particular, coercive state practices that suppress and marginalise anti-capitalist oppositional forces.

We are keen to receive paper proposals which focus on the analysis and critique of features of capitalism and anti-capitalist resistance. Some of the topics we would like to invite abstracts in are:

- Capitalist spheres of production, trade and finance
- Authoritarian neoliberalism, coercion and the disciplining of labour
- The role of trade unions, social movements and new Left political parties/platforms
- Anarchism, feminism, new materialism and Marxism – Building alternatives from horizontal escapes
- The materialities of ecological challenges – The political economy of migration and human trafficking
- Damaged lives, intensified precarisation and the rise of inequalities
- Reclaiming the Caliban and the Witch: social reproduction as a source of value-creation

We are interested in all of the above plus more, and wish for the conference to cover a wide range of topics. As such, we seek contributions from scholars and activists with an interest in political economy research, regardless of their disciplinary affiliation and whether they are in academia or not. We also hope to attract a diverse range of participants, from a variety of countries and backgrounds.

**4. CPERN activities through social networks**

CPERN actively communicates CPERN and other interesting events, conferences, call for papers, PhD positions and publications through social media channels and our mailinglist. We currently have 2477 members on Facebook group, 960 followers on Twitter, and 1'263 subscribers to our mailinglist.