



European
Sociological
Association

CPERN

The Critical Political Economy Research Network

ESA RN06 - Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) Biennial Report 2017-2019

Within the political economy academic community in Europe and beyond, CPERN has established itself as one of the most central platforms for promoting and discussing critical political economy perspectives and facilitating research aimed at understanding recent transformations of capitalism and capitalist societies.

CPERN consists of a lively community of scholars and activists in Europe and beyond and currently counts over 2.500 Facebook members, nearly 1500 followers on Twitter and over 1300 subscribers to its mailing list. CPERN members can use the various social media channels for scholarly exchanges, announcing new articles and books, as well as calls for papers, job openings, PhD positions or research funding opportunities. The CPERN board seeks to keep the mailing list and Facebook postings as non-intrusive as possible by ensuring that social media is exclusively used for and by CPERN members, rather than commercial publishers or conference organisers.

In the period 2017-2019, the Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) has organised a range of successful conferences and panel sessions.

1. New CPERN Board 2019-2021

Coordinator: David J. Bailey, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Birmingham, UK
Vice-coordinator: Yuliya Yurchenko, Senior Lecturer in Political Economy, University of Greenwich

Board Members:

Bernd Bonfert, PhD candidate, Radboud University/Roskilde University
Alona Lyasheva, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Ukraine Catholic University
Owen Worth, Senior Lecturer, University of Limerick

2. Outgoing Board, 2017-2019

Coordinator: **Angela Wigger**, Associate Professor Global Political Economy, Radboud University Nijmegen

Vice-coordinator: until October 2018: **Phoebe Moore**, Associate Professor of Political Economy and Technology, University of Leicester
from October 2018 onwards: **David Bailey**, Senior Lecturer Political Science and International Studies, Birmingham University

Treasurer: **Anne Engelhardt**, PhD Candidate, Kassel University

Communication: **Caroline Metz**, Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI)

3. Advisory Board 2017-2019

- Monica Clua Losada (The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA)
- Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands)
- Dorothee Bohle (Central European University, Hungary)
- Ian Bruff (University of Manchester, UK)
- Jan Drahokoupil (University of Mannheim, Germany)
- Eva Hartmann (University of Lausanne, Switzerland)
- Laura Horn (Roskilde University, Denmark)
- Martijn Konings (University of Sydney, Australia)
- Phoebe V. Moore (University of Leicester)
- Magnus Ryner (Oxford Brookes University, UK)
- Susanne Soederberg (Queen's University, Canada)

4. Activities 2017-2019

4.1 CPERN Mid-Term Workshop

CPERN organised the Mid-Term Workshop, titled "Gender, Race, Class and Ecology in and through Critical Political Economy" from 1 to 2 June 2018, at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal (see our Call for Papers below). Our local co-organiser was the Instituto de História Contemporânea (IHC), at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

We received a total of 82 abstracts out of which we accepted 65 (and thus rejected 17). We organised 16 sessions. We had some last minute withdrawals, after which a total of 58 papers were presented.

In addition, we have organised a public event as part of the workshop, titled "Meeting the Protagonists of Labour Struggles: Cross-fertilizing Strategies from Portugal and the UK". The event entailed a public discussion about current labour and social movement struggles against austerity measures and precarity in the UK and Portugal, including activists from the port of Lisbon and LGBTQ struggles. The speakers were António Mariano (SEAL - dockers' trade union of Portugal), Ricardo Noronha (IHC), Paula Gil (Panteras Rosas), Caroline Metz and Tom Haines-Doran (UK UCU Strike). The event took place at the Regueirão dos Anjos 49, 1150-028 Lisbon.

Finance

We received 2.670.-- euros from the ESA: 2.000.-- euro consisted of the generic support, of the ESA 2018 grant and 670.-- euros from the RN membership fees (in 2016 there were 12 and in 2017 there were 55 new ESA members affiliated with RN06, hence a total of 67).

The funding we had received from the ESA was transferred directly to the Kassel University (Anne Engelhardt was the Treasurer, and in charge of administering the reimbursements). We have spent 66.21 euros on catering and 2603.79 euros to support the travelling and accommodation costs of unemployed and precariously employed scholars that participated at the conference. The 2603.79 euro were distributed among 6 precarious conference participants who applied for funding and sent us the receipts. All receipts are stored at Kassel University.

There was no conference fee. Our local co-organisers took care of the conference venue and provided bottled water in addition.

CPERN has a core policy of using the majority of its funding for travel subsidies for precariously employed or unemployed participants (PHD students, or scholars from Central and Eastern, as well as Southern Europe).

Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) 2018 Midterm Workshop

CALL FOR PAPERS

“Gender, Race, Class and Ecology in and through Critical Political Economy”

1-2 June 2018, *Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal*

Capitalism cannot be explained by class alone. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, alongside the reinvigoration of far right groups, the global women’s strike in Spring, the vast number of public and political figures guilty of sexual harassment, and environmental disasters such as devastating wildfires, floods and hurricanes, we need a critical political economy that can take account of these interconnected problems and pressures. The upcoming CPERN midterm workshop seeks to reaffirm the importance of class *in relation* to gender, race, ecology and migration. We are interested in how gender, race, class and questions of ecology intersect, and resulting overlapping oppressions, material inequalities, power relations and social struggles. This includes postcolonial and Marxist feminist approaches to political economy and the personal and ‘embodied’ aspects of political processes. Overall, we welcome contributions on a range of topics that explicitly link gender, sex, race and/or class to key themes and pressing issues in political economy, including (but certainly not limited to) the following:

- **Feminist political economy, labour, social reproduction and race:** In recent years we saw impressive interventions by Marxist feminists such as Silvia Federici, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Susan Ferguson. We invite contributions on the future of work; invisible, informal and unwaged (domestic) labour; labour, health and safety in logistics and retail industries; the role of migration and race; digitalisation and Gig Economy, precarity; and social reproduction in relation to austerity, neoliberalism or finance-led accumulation.

- **Disruptive politics:** There is an ongoing debate over the relationship between social movements/labour studies and critical political economy. We invite contributions that target the role of the state and trade unions in social partnerships and social movement unionism, and that explore (possibilities for) new solidarities and dual power structures.
- **Sex, sexuality and political economy:** Sexuality, sex work, sexual violence, male and female pleasure, menstruation, fertility and resulting social power relations often remain understudied in critical political economy. We invite contributions that address these issues and more.
- **The political economy of ecological conflicts:** We invite contributions that link ecological struggles, environmental degradation, climate change, natural disasters, the limits of fossil fuel to mass migration, inequalities and the future of capitalism.
- **Finance, debt and the state:** Ten years after the financial bubble burst, the financial sector is back with double-digit windfall profits, while global debt-levels are now far above that of 2008. We welcome contributions that address (regulatory) developments in the financial sphere, including debt creation, the growth and/or impact of debt, and resistance to debt.
- **Power relations in academia:** We invite contributions that address the various ways in which academia, higher education and teaching spaces each contribute to the reproduction of inequalities based on gender, race, class and other hierarchies; and ways in which these can be resisted.

We are interested in all of the above and more, and wish for the workshop to cover a wide range of topics. We welcome scholars with an interest in critical political economy, from a variety of countries, social backgrounds, and disciplinary affiliations, regardless of whether they are in academia or not. We are particularly committed to promoting the participation of PhD students, early career scholars, and activists. Limited funds will be available for scholars and activists in precarious situations (who cannot get other sources of funding) to support travel and accommodation costs. Please inform us if you may require help with funding when you send us your abstract.

There is no fee for attending the workshop. The conference language will be English.

Abstracts of around 250 words should be submitted to cpern@criticalpoliticaleconomy.net by 1 February 2018.

We hope that you will find this Call interesting – please also share with colleagues and students who might not yet be part of the CPERN community!

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions regarding this Call, or the conference in general.

Many thanks,

The CPERN Board

Caroline Metz, Anne Engelhardt, Phoebe Moore, David Bailey and Angela Wigger

4.2 Critical European Studies Workshop 2019

For the sixth time in a row, the Critical European Studies Workshop (CES) was held, a spin off of CPERN, 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. The 2019 Workshop was held at the Urban Library (Lviv, Ukraine) from 10 to 11 May, and organised by Yuliya Yurchenko, Christakis Georgiou, Daniel Keil, Aliona Lyasheva, and Ana Podvršič (see the conference programme below).

Previous editions were held at the Olive Initiative (CEU, Budapest), the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt (Germany 2017), University of Greenwich in London (UK 2016), at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona (Spain 2015), and at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Netherlands 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.

Over the past six years, the CES has received support from the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, the Arbeitskreis kritische Europaforschung (AKE/AKG), as well as occasionally BISA-IPEG, the Greenwich University Business School, the Transform! network or the Open Learning Initiative at the CEU.

CES Workshop 2019, Lviv, Ukraine

The frontiers and the state of the European – quo vadis?

Fifteen years since EU’s biggest enlargement being celebrated as a movement towards unification of European countries under the same vision for the future we see the region falling to the right wing rhetoric amidst the talks of disintegration. Increasing economic unevenness, Brexit, revision of the free movement of labour while deeper economic integration inside the EU and of the Union with its “outside” e.g. the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, complex role in the refugee crisis, are seemingly contradictory; in many cases contrary to the founding principles and declared mission. Escalating geopolitical confrontations along Europe’s geographic boundary pose questions about the state of the region, its future and its self-appointed – yet often reluctant to take responsibility – hegemon, the EU. The armed conflict and economic crises in Ukraine, Transnistria, Abkhasia – unresolved; the climate change action despite the new elaborate frameworks – toothless; labour mobility is riddled with problems; human rights framework – impotent when applied to non-EU citizens; ‘wealth through growth’ is accumulated by translational capital while subsidized by the taxpayer, unwaged labour and increasingly low waged labour, backed by sweatshops, refugee labour camps and like conditions of migrant labour in global supply chains; responsibility for the unresolved economic recession – shouldered by the region’s most vulnerable. In this workshop we will discuss a number of those burning questions focusing on understanding the causes of the existing problems,

assessing their frontiers and the frontier of struggles, the ongoing and the ones to come.

Programme:

May 10

12:00-13:00 Round of Introductions

13:00-15:00 Session 1: What is Europe beyond EU-N? Europe and beyond, geopolitics and epistemology

Core text: Stathis Kouvelakis: Borderland. New Left Review 110, March-April 2018.

Commentators: Angela Wigger, Niko Huke, Joachim Becker, Nataliya Romyantseva, Ivo Georgiev (RLS), Aliona Liasheva

15:00-15:30 Refreshments break

15:30-17:30 Session 2: Fascicisation and crisis of 'cosmopolitanism'

Core text: Joachim Becker and Koen Smet, The Socio-Economic Programmes and Praxis of the Nationalist Right in the EU: the Core-Periphery Divide, Paper for the 24th Annual Conference on Alternative Economic Policy in Europe "10 Years into the crisis –What prospects for a popular political economy in Europe?", Helsinki, 27-29 September 2018

Commentators: Volodymyr Ishchenko, Vika Mulyavka, Owen Worth, Ruth Cain, Yuliya Yurchenko, Daniel Keil

17:30-18:00 Refreshments break

18:00-19:30 Roundtable: left politics and activism in Ukraine

Speakers: Social Movement reps, women, human rights and LBTQI activists, Ukrainian Christian Youth, trade union activists in Ukraine, Ecological Platform (local Lviv left/anarchist group)

20:00 Dinner

May 11

10:00-12:00 Session 3: The crisis of work: we work more, we earl less, we pray for robots?

Core text: Moore, P. V. (2018). Tracking Affective Labour for Agility in the Quantified Workplace. *Body & Society*, 24(3), 39–67.

Commentators: Gunjan Sondhi, Oksana Dutchak, David Bailey, Nina Potarskaya, Artem Tidva

12.00-12.15 Break

12.15-14.15 Session 4: European division of labour and growth regimes

Core text: Angela Wigger (2019) The new EU industrial policy: authoritarian neoliberal structural adjustment and the case for alternatives, *Globalizations*, 16:3, 353-369

Commentators: Johannes Jaeger, Phoebe Moore, Julia Eder, Christakis Georgiou

14.15-15.30 Break

15.30-17.30 Session 5: Towards the ecological catastrophe or an opportunity to change the course? Rebalancing labour, state, and capital in climate politics

Core text: Joel Wainwright & Geoff Mann (2015), *Climate Leviathan*, Antipode, 45 (1), 1-22.

Commentators: Judith Dellheim, Richard Lane, Christina Plank, a representative from the EcoPlatform (Lviv)

17.30-18.00 Closing

4.3 ESA Biennial Conference 2019

The CPERN call for papers for the ESA Biennial Conference in Manchester, held from 20 to 23 August 2019, was sent out under the title (*Digital) capitalism, trade wars and bubble economies: Reclaiming critical political economy in dystopian times*. See below the CfP. We received a total of 83 abstract submissions. Eventually, not everyone paid the conference fee, leaving us 72 submission of which 21 withdrew. There were 14 sessions organised (including the Business Meeting). The sessions all included four paper presentations, with the exception of one with three presenters and the Business Meeting.

(Digital) capitalism, trade wars and bubble economies:

Reclaiming critical political economy in dystopian times (RN06)

14th European Sociological Association (ESA) Conference, 20-23 August 2019, Manchester, UK.

Current times appear dystopian. The rise of the populist right and neo-fascist movements and parties seems to overshadow the prospect for progressive alternatives. The aftermath of the global economic crisis has brought with it prolonged neoliberal restructuring, authoritarianism and heightened inequality. Trade wars, nationalism and closed borders seem to generate more hope than visions of global solidarity. Natural resources continue to be exhausted and climate change proceeds unabated. Quantitative easing – the one ‘solution’ to the last crisis – has only re-inflated the global financial bubble, and created the prospect for the next impending crisis to be greater than witnessed heretofore. All this at a time when digital technologies should be offering a major advance in human capacity; but instead seem only to result in fear of a world without employment.

These dystopian times therefore demand a critical political economy that at once diagnoses the crises that we face, delineates the social structures which have produced them, but also points towards alternatives that are grounded in a utopian vision for making a better world possible.

We invite scholars and activists from the broad spectrum of critical political economy, including scholars with Marxist, feminist, ecologist, postcolonial, labour- and social-movement perspectives, as well as scholars with critical approaches to finance, trade and investment; to reclaim the field of critical political economy, and to advance a form of knowledge that can contribute towards the politicisation and acceleration of social struggles, and transformative praxis.

We especially (but not exclusively) invite abstracts on the following topics:

- Finance, debt, bubbles, and critical theories of money
- Theorising critical political economy: Beyond mainstream, heterodox and/or post-Keynesian economics?
- Rising trade protectionism: A welcome reversal of globalisation?
- Capitalist production and value chains in the digital age
- 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 horizontalist escape-routes?
- The materialities of ecological challenges: The political economy of migration
- Damaged lives, intensified precarisation and the rise of inequalities
- The question of social reproduction: commodification, cooperation, or mutual aid?

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.

Notes for contributors

Deadline for submissions: extended to 15 February 2019

Abstracts should not exceed 275 words. Abstracts must be submitted online to the submission platform, see below. Abstracts sent by email cannot be accepted. Abstracts will be peer-reviewed and selected for presentation by the Research Network; the letter of notification will be sent by the conference software system in March 2019.

Abstract submission deadline: extended to 15 February 2019. Conference website and abstract submission platform: <https://www.europeansociology.org/abstract-submission-now-open>

Make sure you submit to the correct stream: RN06.

If you have any questions regarding this Call, or the conference in general, feel free to contact a.wigger@fm.ru.nl or d.j.bailey@bham.ac.uk.

In addition, CPERN also organized a semi-plenary with RN18, titled “Boundaries, Barriers and Belonging in Digital Labour Capitalism” - with Phoebe Moore and Jamie Woodcock, held on Wednesday 21 August. See below the titles and abstracts of the presentations.

Artificial Intelligence and Humans as Resource

Phoebe Veronica Moore

Leicester University, United Kingdom

Interest in artificial intelligence (AI) has reached hyped levels simultaneous to concern for human intelligence, as we face seeming intractable social issues caused by decades of technological developments in human resources and algorithmic and surveillant management practices with accelerated integration of the role of technology into workplaces, accompanied by shifts and experimentation in modes and relations of production. From the 1950s, humans have asked to what extent humans should or can compare our minds to machines. Earlier views on AI, so-called ‘GOFAI’, were representationalist, where researchers considered domains of experience to be fixed and context-free, where principles that determine behaviour are systematic. However, this line of reasoning relies on a transcendentalist ontology. This paper argues that the flaws in AI research have been ontological, where human’s bodies and affective labour have not been considered relevant for intelligence and work. How affective resources will be acknowledged within AI practices is yet to be seen.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Phoebe V Moore is an Associate Professor in Political Economy and Technology at the University of Leicester School of Business,

Digital Workerism: Tracing the Recomposition of Workers’ Struggle in Digital Labour Capitalism

Jamie Woodcock

University of Oxford, United Kingdom

The rise of digital labour capitalism has become a key part of contemporary debates on how work is changing, the future of work/ers, resistance, and organising. Workerism took up many of these questions in the context of the factory – particularly through the Italian Operaismo – connecting the experience of the workplace with a broader struggle against capitalism. There are, of course, many differences between those factories and the new digital workplaces in which many workers find themselves today. However, the methods of workers’ inquiry and the theories of class composition remain a useful legacy from Operaismo, providing tools and a framework to make sense of and intervene within work today. However, these require sharpening and updating in a digital context. This talk discusses the challenges and opportunities for a “digital workerism”, understood as both a method of research and organising. It takes the case study of Uber to discuss how technology can be used against workers, as well as repurposed for their struggles. By developing an analysis of the technical, social, and political recomposition taking place on the platform, it is possible to move beyond determinist readings of technology, to place different technologies within the social

Division of Management and Organisation. Her research looks at the impact of technology on work from a critical perspective. Moore's most recent book *The Quantified Self in Precarity* looks at quantification through wearable tracking and algorithmic decision-making as a set of management techniques, with evidence of creative new controls of affective labour and various forms of worker resistance to corporeal capitalism arising. In 2018-19, Moore published one report for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) workers' bureau, ACTRAV, and will publish one further paper for the European Union agency for Safety and Health (EU-OSHA) on the risks that digitalization and artificial intelligence pose for workers. Previously, she was funded by the British Academy / Leverhulme (2015-2017) to carry out a research project looking at digital tracking in office work in the Netherlands. Alongside her Associate Professorship, in Autumn 2018, Moore is carrying out a research fellowship at the WZB in Berlin working closely with two research groups on artificial intelligence and quantification at the Weizenbaum Institute.

relations that are emerging. In particular, the talk focuses on how these new forms of workers' struggles can be circulated. Through this, the talk argues for a "digital workerism" that develops a critical understanding of how the workplace is becoming a key site for the struggles of digital labour capitalism.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Dr Jamie Woodcock is a researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford. He is the author of *Marx at the Arcade* (Haymarket, 2019) about videogames, and *Working The Phones* (Pluto, 2017), a study of a call centre in the UK – both inspired by the workers' inquiry. His research focuses on labour, work, the gig economy, platforms, resistance, organising, and videogames. He is on the editorial board of *Notes from Below* and *Historical Materialism*.

CPERN Website, Mailing list, Twitter and Facebook

CPERN thrives through its active and inspiring community of scholars and activists, collaborations with other organisations and welcomes future cooperation with other ESA Research Networks. All the CPERN activities are communicated through the [website](#), [mailing list](#), our [Facebook](#) page, or [Twitter](#).

We currently count more than 2.500 Facebook members, more than 1000 followers on Twitter and roughly 1.400 subscribers to our mailing list. CPERN members can use the various social media channels for scholarly exchanges, announcing new articles and books, as well as calls for papers, job openings, PhD positions or research funding opportunities. The CPERN board seeks to keep the mailing list and Facebook postings as non-intrusive as possible by ensuring that social media is exclusively used for and by CPERN members, rather than commercial publishers or conference organisers.

Publications

CPERN has been portrayed in a publication of *The European Sociologist* (Issue 41, 2018) alongside other ESA RNs. The publication is titled "The Critical Political Economy Research Network (CPERN) and its Activities" and can be found [here](#). We also liaised with Open Democracy regarding the possibility of drafting a series of online pieces to coincide with the ESA conference and hopefully gain further publicity about the work of CPERN and ESA. This resulted in a co-authored piece (Angela Wigger and David J. Bailey) that was released during the Conference, in order to highlight the work that we discussed during the conference and to draw attention to CPERN and the ESA. The article was titled, *Studying capitalist dystopias, and avenues for change*, and can be found on the Open Democracy website.