

POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY SEMINAR

POPULATION MOBILITIES AND NEO-LIBERALISM

An informal discussion group of the Chair in Sociology and Social Theory

In association with the Bauman Institute



MONDAYS 4-6pm (Feb-May), SSP 12-21

“Oublier Marx; oublier Foucault...”: On rethinking political economy for a world of population movements and mobile freedom

After all the naiveties of globalisation theory of the 80s and 90s, and amidst the subsequent gloom of the 2000s and after, theoretical formulations across the critical humanities and social sciences – in both a post-Marxist and Foucauldian mould – seem stuck on a set of inflexible, deterministic pieties about the evils of “neo-liberalism”. It demonstrates a growing inability in critical social theory to think through the continuing paradoxes and dynamics of de-/re-nationalising global capitalism, states/markets/rights/populations/flows beyond national borders, and the unruly, irrepressible and diversifying economic, cultural and political consequences of growing movements/mobilities – and associated population changes such as fertility, ageing and care – worldwide. With, by definition, no time for the f-word in their world view, the “freedom” of moving persons – the consequences of the unruly “fourth freedom” sometimes present, formally or informally, alongside the unholy late-capitalist trinity of “freedom of movement of capital, goods and services” – remains a problematic residual. Typically it is reduced by Marxists and Foucauldians to either a further exploitable factor of production, domination or privilege – whether class based or colonial – and/or to a further symptom of the top down institutionalised production and control of capitalist/colonised bodies and subjectivities.

And yet, people keep moving and populations keep changing—and not only in structurally determined ways. They move and act as persons with rights, agency and/or creative responses to domination/control, and with complicated social trajectories and cultural consequences, that are neither in line with the interests of governmental institutions nor entirely captured for profit by a faceless global capitalism. Not least these kinds of changes reveal the resistant powers of anti-state informality, of everyday innovation, and of spontaneous orderings (economic or communal) – social products normally attributed by Marxists and Foucauldians, as much as neo-classical economists, to the “neo-liberal” market-state.

The exploratory intuition of this seminar is that we might look for answers or at least alternate ways of talking about markets/states/citizenship/culture beyond nationalised capitalist democracies by delving again into the origins of liberal political economy and demographic theory, and by reexamining resources in the anarchist and libertarian traditions for capturing some of the ongoing possibilities and paradoxes of post-national economic and demographic change. After a Part One working through a set of classic left and right alternates to the Marxist tradition, Part Two will read and discuss four recent classics which each offer new resources for fresh thinking in political economy, political demography and, consequentially, political ecology.

Note on readings

I am not an advocate of minute, ecclesiastical style readings of classic texts. Strategic and selective reading is preferable (suggestions will be made). In Part One, I'm rather more interested in what can still be squeezed conceptually and analytically from these well known texts, for the purposes of discussing the above set of contemporary questions. Part Two, I take these five large books as well worth close reading, but also as starting points for wider issues about conceptualising states and markets, mobilities, globalisation, and change/creativity/innovation/critique in liberal democratic capitalist societies. Marxists, Foucauldians, Postmodernists and Post-structuralists, of course, are welcome to join the discussion!

Adrian Favell, School of Sociology and Social Policy

Organisation of Seminar

On February 1st (4-6pm), I propose a discussion of the theoretical problems raised by my paper, "The fourth freedom: theories of migration and mobilities in 'neo-liberal' Europe", *European Journal of Social Theory* (2014)

FEB

- 1 "The Fourth Freedom": population mobilities beyond the critique of "neo-liberalism" [led by Adrian Favell] ;
Background reading: Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944); Jack Goldstone (2012) 'A theory of political demography' [+ further references to be suggested]
- [8 No meeting this week]
- 15 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
- 22 Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*
- 29 William Morris, *News From Nowhere*

MAR

- 7 Petr Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow*
- 14 Friedrich Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*
- 21 André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class (Au delà du socialisme)*

APR

- 11 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State* (1998)
- 18 Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (1994)
- 25 Luc Boltanski and Eva Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999/2007)

MAY

- 2,9 Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights* (2006)
- 16, 23 Thomas Piketty, *Capital* (2013)
- 30 Final discussion: on 'Political ecology' with ref. to Tim Jackson, *Sustainability Without Growth* (2009) and Giacomo D'Alisa, Federico Demaria & Giorgios Kallis et al, *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era* (2014)

The Discussion Group is Open to Allcomers. Drop-Ins any week/time always welcome.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE GROUP PLEASE EMAIL...

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