

SUMMARIES PROKLA 185, Vol. 46 (2016), No. 4

PROKLA EDITORS: The Global Capitalism in State of Exception. In recent years, the political development of global capitalism has been accelerating enormously. Catastrophic incidences and new crises demanding our daily attention and reflection are taking turns at rapid pace. As a journal for critical social science and a political project of the left, it has become more and more difficult for PROKLA to keep up with the most recent developments and offer in-depth analyses that are 'up to date'. With this article, we take up one of the journal's earlier traditions and publish an extensive discussion held among the editors on this matter. Building on the many contributions to Marxist crisis theory that have been published in PROKLA since the early 1970s, we try to bring seemingly disparate developments together and discuss topics such as the financial crisis of 2008, the rise of new right-wing movements and parties in Europe and the Americas, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and the devastating effects of eco-imperialism within one framework.

Ulf Kadritzke: Middle Class as wishful thinking. The Present in the Light of Class Studies of the Past (Part 2). In public opinion and the social sciences, German post-war society has been interpreted as a 'society beyond classes', regardless of the fact that the class structure had not changed to a significant degree since the times of the Weimar Republic. This positive self-image was scientifically confirmed by Theodor Geiger's study *Society in the melting pot* (1949) and Helmut Schelsky's concept of a *Leveled middle class society* (1953). Even though in the last decades the level of inequality has risen, the mainstream of social and economic research in Germany keeps focusing on the income, living conditions and 'anxieties' of a widened and vaguely defined middle class – instead of reflecting the class structure of contemporary society as a whole. This kind of research and sociological thinking tends to focus on the distribution of wealth rather than the causes of inequality stemming from the capitalist mode of production. Criticizing the dominant conception of middle classes on the basis of current examples, the author underlines the importance of a class-related concept of modern capitalist society. The main groups of employees, even the more qualified ones, belong to the majority class of wage earners, not to an opaque 'middle class' unduly mixed of small business people, freelancers and dependent labour force. What is needed is a closer look at the changes in class structure and the growing influence of gender, habitus, milieu and 'ways of life' – but not at all the ideological and political segregation between the allegedly 'old' working class and the allegedly 'new' middle classes.

Jason W. Moore: On the Origins of our Ecological Crisis. The Anthropocene has become the most important environmentalist concept of our times. In contrast to this I argue that we have to speak instead of the Capitalocene. I want to address three questions: 1) What is the character of 21st century ecological crisis? 2) When did that crisis originate? and 3) What forces drive that crisis? Therefore, I analyze the revolutions in the technics of appropriating Cheap Natures, especially the Four Cheaps of food, labor, energy, and raw materials in Europe as well as via imperialistic dominance in overseas territories since the 15th century. Cheap Nature reveals as a system of domination, appropriation, and exploitation. Capital, power, and nature entwine, and this development started much sooner than with the Industrial Revolution in Europe. We have to conceptualize the global transformations of human and extra-human natures, enabled by the emergence of new ways of seeing and organizing the unpaid work of humans and the rest of nature over the past five centuries.

Lukas Oberndorfer: State of Emergency in Europe and France? – The Authoritarian Enforcement of Competition. In France, the state of emergency (declared in the aftermath

of the terrorist attacks of November 2015) has been used against the Nuit-Debout- and the strike movement: fundamental rights were set aside in order to push through the deregulation of the labour market. An approach informed by hegemony theory can demonstrate that these developments and their point in time are articulated with the political and economic position of France within the European ensemble of state apparatuses. Because of its Eurocentric and liberal set-up, mainstream state theory tends to identify authoritarianism only in the periphery or as a threat connected with right wing populism. But an authoritarian turn is already happening within Western liberal institutions. The crisis has pushed the neoliberal mode of integration into a crisis of hegemony. The status quo can no longer be maintained through consensus and is instead upheld through coercion and racism.

Franziska Schutzbach: The Heidi Complex. Gender, Feminism and the Disgust of „Egalitarianism“. Since about 10 years we are experiencing a strengthening of conservative and right-wing parties and movements in Europe. Part of this development have been increasingly antifeminist politics: Constant attacks against feminist demands, activism and protagonists, while reclaiming traditional, biologicistic family models and gender roles. More recently, the conservative targets have shifted from antifeminist assaults to a criticism of the concept of „gender“. This new form of attack does not argue against women's rights or women's equality, but rather against the so-called ideology of „genderism.“ They construe „genderism“ as a new dangerous ideology that – after the historical success of feminism – intends to destroy all gender-rules, including gender binaries and heteronormativity. The articles elaborates on this discursive shift.

Ingo Schmidt: Capitalist Crises With and Without Systemic Challenge: A Comparison of the Stagnation Periods of the 1930s and of Today. This article draws on Marxist theories of crises, imperialism, and class formation to identify commonalities and differences between the stagnation of the 1930s and today. Its key argument is that the anti-systemic movements that existed in the 1930s and gained ground after the Second World War pushed capitalists to turn from imperialist expansion and rivalry to the deep penetration of domestic markets. By doing so they unleashed strong economic growth that allowed for social compromise without hurting profits. Yet, once labour and other social movements threatened to shift the balance of class power into their favor, capitalist counter-reform began. In its course, global restructuring, and notably the integration of Russia and China into the world market, created space for accumulation. The cause for the current stagnation is that this space has been used up. In the absence of systemic challenges capitalists have little reason to seek a major overhaul of their accumulation strategies that could help to overcome stagnation. Instead they prop up profits at the expense of the subaltern classes even if this prolongs stagnation and leads to sharper social divisions.

Christian Siefkes: The Development of the Productive Forces as an Element of Crisis and a Promise. The 'Fragment on Machines' from Marx's Grundrisse is often cited as an argument that the internal forces of capitalism will lead to its doom. But the argument that the progressive reduction of labor must doom capitalism lacks a proper foundation, as a comparison with the 'Schemes of Reproduction' given in Capital II shows. The latter, however, aren't fully convincing either. In reality, more depends on the private consumption of capitalists than either model recognizes. Ultimately, most can be made of the 'Fragment on Machines' by reading it not as an exposure of capitalism's internal contractions, but as a discussion of a possible communist future where labor (or work) will play but a minor role.

Zu den AutorInnen

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Dr. Christian Siefkes, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter in dem interdisziplinären Forschungsprojekt Die Gesellschaft nach dem Geld: Eröffnung eines Dialogs (VW-Stiftung, seit 2016), Softwareentwickler und Autor; lebt in Berlin.

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