Biannual meeting of the Working Group on Geographical Development Theories — Arbeitskreis Geographische Entwicklungstheorien (GAE):

“Utopias and Dystopias of Global Development: Labor, Migration and the Anthropocene”

Date and venue: June 25th (14:30pm) - 27th (13:00pm) 2020, Department of Geography and Regional Research, Vienna

Organizers: Marion Borderon (Vienna), Johanna Kramm (Frankfurt), Raffaella Pagogna (Vienna), Nadine Reis (Mexico City), Patrick Sakdapolrak (Vienna), Gunnar Stange (Vienna), Harald Sterly (Vienna)

Background: Geoengineering vs. Climate apocalypse; Trading for Development vs. New Economic Imperialism; Smart Cities vs. Planet of Slums; Digital Economies vs. Surveillance Capitalism: These “grand narratives” of global development and the future are shaped by contradictory expectations, diverging normative backgrounds and conflicting discursive practices. In addition to the utopias of (unilinear?) development towards a fundamentally better, more livable future, increasingly pessimistic and dystopian visions of the destruction of the natural foundations of life, growing inequality and increasing influence of tech giants, transnational corporations and the new right are emerging.

At this year’s GAE meeting, we want to discuss to which extent geographic development research needs grand theories, and in how far its analytical-theoretical foundations are based on such, which societal paradigms and economic imperatives are currently of particular importance, and what development geography contributes to understanding and resolving the current multiplicity of crises. Key themes refer to the spatial, social and temporal disaggregation of "development", the different practices of "future making" and the political economy of global development narratives such as climate change adaptation and global value chains.

We invite all interested researchers in development geography and related disciplines to present their current work. Junior scientists are especially encouraged to present their research. In addition to paper sessions, there will be two keynote presentations and half-day workshops on the topics below. Texts for readings for the workshop will be announced in due time.

Structure: The meeting will consist of 3 modules:

1. Scientific presentations on development research from geographical and interdisciplinary perspectives;
2. Interactive Workshops “Dystopias and Utopias of Global Development”, with special foci on the areas of Labour, Migration and The Anthropocene;
3. Discussion: “Quo vadis geographical development research?”
Call for Papers — GAE meeting, 25-27 June 2020, Vienna: “Utopias and Dystopias of Global Development: Labor, Migration and the Anthropocene”

Workshops

1. Dependency theory and super-exploitation (“Labor”)

(organized by Nadine Reis, El Colegio de México; Oliver Pye, University of Bonn; Johannes Jäger, FH Wien)

One of the most elaborated versions of dependency theory was developed by Ruy Mauro Marini in his seminal work “Dialéctica de la dependencia” in 1973. At the core of his work is the concept of ‘super-exploitation of labor’, which re-grounds the ‘secret of unequal exchange’ in the production process and in Marx’ theory of value. Marini argued that with the inclusion of Latin America in the world market during Imperialism, an accumulation structure was created in the periphery that is based on the super-exploitation of labor. While in central capitalist countries the capital owners pay labor at the socially necessary cost of its reproduction, in peripheral countries labor is paid below the cost of reproduction, i.e. below subsistence. This accumulation structure continued and intensified during the period of Import-substituting Industrialization (ISI) policies. A recently emerging strand of scholarship in international political economy argues that super-exploitation of labor continues to be the key feature of (dependent) capitalism and the structuring principle of center and periphery in the current global economic system. The aim of the workshop is to introduce the original and recent debates on dependent development and super-exploitation and discuss to which extent they can be useful for current research in critical development geography.

2. Global development, vulnerabilities and migration: Implications of refugia and open borders (“Migration”)

(organized by Patrick Sakdapolrak & Gunnar Stange, University of Vienna)

Unequal global development, socioeconomic and structural inequalities, the uneven distribution of the impact of environmental and climate change as well as armed conflicts are important drivers of domestic and international migration. Therefore, the conditions, effects, management and policing of migration have become central themes in development research. In public and policy debates, the current and future role and impact of migration in this ever-globalizing world is increasingly framed in highly antagonistic ways. On the one hand, the destabilizing force of migration is highlighted, for example in the context of the spread of international terrorism, the loss of national identity or the prospect of the flow of hundreds of millions “climate” refugees from the Southern to the Northern hemisphere. On the other hand, the potentiality of migration is being highlighted and migration is portrayed as a silver bullet to solve multiple problems such as unequal development, protracted conflict situations or vulnerabilities against climate change. At the same time, the ever increasing public and political focus on migration obscures the by far larger amounts of left behind, trapped, and immobile populations in the Global South. Against this backdrop, the workshop will discuss
utopian perspectives on migration such as open borders (Jones, 2019), no borders (King, 2016) or refugia (Cohen & van Hear, 2017) and address their ethical, practical, theoretical, and socio-political implications for the understanding of migration in the context of global development.

3. Social-ecological transformation, planetary boundaries and the Anthropocene (“Anthropocene”)

(organized by Johanna Kramm, University of Frankfurt; Harald Sterly, University of Vienna)

It is evident that the presently dominating growth-oriented, extractive and fossil-fuel based economic development model is at its limits. This has been reflected in various concepts and theories in the past decades that have also found their way into paradigms and theories of development (e.g. most notably the Sustainable Development Goals). In the workshop we will focus on the concepts of Social-Ecological Transformation, Planetary Boundaries and the Anthropocene. We will discuss the practical and heuristic value of these concepts against the background of the global ecological crisis, what conclusions can be drawn from them for geographical development research, and what geographical development research can possibly contribute here (we believe that Geography can do so substantially). We also want to take a critical look at these concepts (e.g. to what extent the "Anthropocene" contributes to the depoliticization of the ecological crisis or to what extent discourses of scarcity are a form of neo-Malthusianism), explore what suggestions can arise from them for the analytical-scientific program of development geography, and reflect on what normative conclusions can be drawn from them.

Registration

Papers from all disciplines can be submitted until 15 April 2020 (title und abstract 150 words). Junior scientists are especially encouraged to present their research. Please register and, in case you would like to present a paper, upload your abstract here: https://population.univie.ac.at/GAE-2020

In order to prepare the workshops accordingly, please indicate at which workshop you would like to participate.

Please refer to Gunnar Stange (gunnar.stange@univie.ac.at) for further questions.

Conference languages are German and English.

Sign up to the GAE mailing list (gae.geographie@lists.univie.ac.at) here: https://lists.univie.ac.at/mailman/listinfo/gae.geographie