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Call For Papers

Uneven Development and Industrial Labour 12-13 June, 2020

Organizers: Christian Strümpell & Michael Hoffmann
Venue: Department of Anthropology, Hamburg University

Resurgent anthropological interest in Marxian approaches, to no small extent triggered by the 2008 financial crisis, has given a fresh lease of life to several older concepts and debates inspired by Marx and Marxists (Neveling and Steur 2018; Kalb 2018). Thus, as several authors have recently argued, a case in point is Trotsky's concept of 'uneven and combined development' that emphasises the inherently 'lumpy' and relational nature of capitalism (ibid.; van der Linden 2007; Ashman 2009; Mollona 2019). Hence, it provides a promising way to move beyond rather flat descriptions that conceptualise current global conditions with the term 'globalization', but that fail to give due weight to the spatiality and the temporality of capitalism as well as anti-capitalist struggles (cf. Cooper 2005: 91; Kasmir and Gill 2018).

The workshop follows the call for an ethnographically rooted, critical materialist engagement with the relationality of capitalism. It focusses on trajectories of extractive, heavy and consumer industries in different world regions. At the centre of our workshop stand industrial workers, and the ways they situate themselves within processes of uneven and combined developments. We encourage contributors to engage with ethnographies of industrial labour in specific locales, with the dynamics of their linkages with the global, with the strategies various actors pursue to take advantage of uneven and combined development, and what role class, but also gender, ethnicity, and caste play in this regard. We are particularly interested in the ways uneven and combined development shapes industrial settings in one or more of four ways:

- (i) How do, on macro and meso levels, strategies of accumulation pursued by capital (but also states) create terrains of uneven and combined development through the establishment of industries in 'frontier'/'industrially underdeveloped' regions, and the closure of industries elsewhere?
- (ii) How is uneven and combined industrial development understood at the 'point of production', within single factories or industrial sectors, e.g. how do workers, industrialists, and development agents frame and/or strategically use the uneven and combined nature of development to make claims and/ or legitimize practices?

- (iii) How do unions address forms of uneven and combined development to make claims on behalf of workers? How do discourses of uneven development feed into labor union politics, both in the everyday politics of a union and their long-term strategies?
- (iv) How do other dynamics of uneven and combined development (e.g. agrarian relations, urban real estate markets, military conflicts etc.) shape the trajectories of industries and the position of working classes in them?

We request that contributors submit titles and abstracts by 15 March 2020 and drafts of 4000-6000 words no later than 1 June 2020.

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