ephemera
theory & politics in organization

Moscow, 6-7 May 2015

Whither emergence?

Speakers and abstracts

Whither
emergence?   :: an *ephemera* conference :: 6-7 May 2015 ::
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What is *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*?

ephemera is an independent journal, founded in 2001. *ephemera* provides its content free of charge, and charges its readers only with free thought.

theory
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. e*phemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.
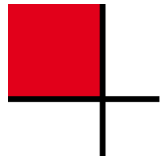
politics
ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization
Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.

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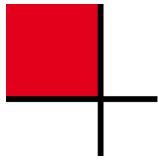
Petar Bachev, *University of Hull, UK*

abstract

What is the meaning(s) of 'emergence'? This preliminary question, which is central for all analyses, leads to a conceptual paradox. On the one hand, it requires a determinate, clear and comprehensible answer in order to preserve its own logic. On the other hand, it seeks to question the very foundation(s) on which we build any 'truthful' accounts. This complex problematization suggests that every question seeking an answer to what 'emergence' is paradoxically kills 'emergence' and creates binary oppositions (such as developing/developed, emerging/emerged) which seek to justify transcendental, categorical, calculable and quantifiable properties. All such attempts searching for a solid explanation of 'emergence' fall into what Alfred Whitehead (1925: 59) calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. In other words, what 'is' (emergence) presupposes a metaphysical concrete reality which needs to be scientifically discovered and logically explained. In contrast to this thinking, following the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1967), I argue that 'emergence', if it is anything at all, is not reducible to any metaphysical notion of being present, clear, distinctive and knowable. Derrida (1967) puts into question all sorts of metaphysical traditions and binary oppositions which seek to explain 'emergence' as a perceivable ontological essence.

Under Derrida's notion of deconstruction (see, for instance, Derrida (1981) for description), I would like to open up the debates and re-think what we mean by the concept of 'emergence'. This rather difficult task requires a critical examination of five problematic aspects surrounding our thinking and theorizing of 'emergence'. First, this suggests a radical re-assessment of the notion of emergence as a condition for possibility of foundational thinking (be it economic, political, or philosophical). Second, it seeks to trace how the meanings of 'emergence' are constructed and deconstructed. Third, it draws attention to the contradictions which make this an experience of a possible impossibility. Fourth, it explores how the notion of 'emergence' produces an inconsistency which unsettles any notions of ultimate truth, total knowledge, and final wisdom. And fifth, this requires a displacement of the conventional binary mode of thinking with one which is never at ease with metaphysical arguments. This means viewing 'emergence' as an open-ended process of production of differences and heterogeneity which is what Derrida (1981) calls deconstruction. In other words, emergence 'is' deconstruction.

Deconstructive thinking could serve as an 'alternative' way to conceive 'emergence' beyond simple logic, causality and reason. 'Emergence' as deconstruction could no longer

be described in any metaphysical logic because it has no beginning or end, it is always in-between, a process which points to differences, instabilities and endless possibilities. I will explore these theoretical aspects in the context of organizational and management theory and also provide an example from an empirical study seeking to explore corporate strategies for cross sector partnerships. As an unconventional approach, 'emergence as deconstruction' could help us challenge the commonsensical false binaries and inconsistent ideologies apparent in contemporary commercial thinking. Furthermore, it could allow us to explore how solid economic arguments and presupposed 'right ways of doing things' always lead to differentiation and instability.

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Conspiracy theory, culture and society: Ideology in the state of epistemic exception

Ole Bjerg, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*

abstract

The topic of this presentation is conspiracy theories, which challenge our ordinary conceptions of historical events. We shall be investigating what is the ideological stake in conspiracy theories and what are the effects and functions of designating certain questions and claims as a conspiracy theory. A conspiracy theory is not merely one type of theory among a series of other ways of explaining historical events such as world systems theory, sense making theory, discourse theory, psychoanalytic theory, etc. It is a highly charged concept, which may have significant consequences not only for the way that we approach the questions and explanations categorized as conspiracy theory but also for the person consequently marked as a conspiracy theorist. The designation of something as a conspiracy theory marks the boundary between legitimate, rational debate and illegitimate non-sense.

The paper relates to the issue of emergence as it is demonstrated how the negative connotations of conspiracy theories seem to apply particularly to conspiracies of 'Western' governments, while theories of conspiracies in emerging countries such as Russia or China are readily accepted as part of the normal functioning of the government of such countries. Conspiracies on any significant scale seem to be inconceivable in the West.

The paper is organized into two parts each aiming to answer a particular question. The first part explores the epistemology of conspiracy theories. The purpose is not to define and decide what is and what isn't a conspiracy theory. In turn, the research question is this:

What are the epistemological and ideological effects of designating particular questions and explanations as a conspiracy theory?

As we are going to see, the designation of something as a conspiracy puts into motion an intricate epistemological mechanism that is simultaneously logical and ideological. This part of the paper concludes in the conception of conspiracy theorizing as epistemic terrorism.

The second part of the paper looks into the psychology of conspiracy theorizing. While there is a whole genre of literature that analyses the psychological causes behind beliefs in conspiracy theories, there are few if any studies that look into the psychology of non-believers. Without refuting the fact that there are plenty of 'non-rational' reasons for people to believe in conspiracy theories, we would like to expand the domain of psychological inquiry to include the other side of the dispute around conspiracy theories. This part of the paper is concerned with the following research question:

Why do people not believe in conspiracy theories?

Our answer to this question hinges on a complication of the relation between knowledge and belief. It is straightforward to think of belief as a function of knowledge so that the things we are most certain about are also the things that are supported by exact knowledge. In contrast to this, we shall suggest that some of our most certain convictions are in fact not supported by knowledge. Revising such beliefs may have far-reaching implications for our general understanding of the world and they are thus prone to an inherent conservatism.

Emerging feminism(s): Sisterhood in the marketplace

Andreas Chatzidakis, Foivos Dousos, Olga Kravets and Pauline Maclaran

Royal Holloway, University of London, UK, and Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey
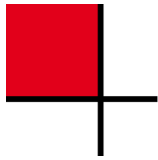
abstract

From a surge of social media hashtag campaigns and student feminist societies to media stars and Disney princesses speaking out against misogyny and encouraging women to support one another – we are possibly witnessing the emergence of the 'fourth wave' of feminism (e.g. Cochrane, 2013). There has been a flood of commentary on how the discussions about gender inequality in the workplaces, on the streets, and in the media have become topical again with a slew of celebrities now proudly reclaiming the 'feminist' label (e.g. Atkenhead, 2014; Magnanti, 2014). This recent re-emergence of feminism in popular culture stands in sharp contrast to what is called a post-feminist condition of the previous decade, when gender equality was thought largely achieved (at least in the West) with women's empowerment and freedom being facilitated by individual (consumer) choices (McRobbie, 2009). In this paper we explore the emergence of this newest wave of feminism after the 'end' of feminism, focusing on its material articulations in the market.

Echoing the criticism of the third-wave and its post-feminist aftermath, many observers are skeptical of the recent cultural 'trending' of feminism. Far from being re-emerging forms of sisterhood and female solidarity, campaigns for Ethical Underwear (endorsing Who Made Your Pants company), 'All for #MyGirls' (Adidas promoting female camaraderie), and Let Books Be Books (big publishers dropping the gendering of the children's books) are said to be nothing more than 'rebranding feminism' (Bainbridge, 2014), a market strategy in an increasingly socially-aware and online-connected world (e.g. Magnanti, 2014). In this paper, when considering the emergence of this new wave of feminism, we are not concerned with proving its existence beyond the market or describing its true, 'radically new' nature. Rather, following Groys (2014:10), we take emergence of the new as always a re-evaluation of 'already seen and known values' and explore how the different styles of gender politics and the divisions between waves of feminism merge and play out in the marketplace. In particular, we study the recent debates on gendered consumption along with the market campaigns for gender equality/gender neutrality to interrogate the potentialities and the limits of collective, politically-voiced activism within the realm of consumption, backed by the connective power of social media. In doing so, we critically reflect on the inevitability of the market, its logic and mechanisms, in the current re-emergence of feminism and the newly-found recognition for the feminist collectivist agenda within the global popular culture.

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(Non-)emerging from the corporate underworld of cleaning

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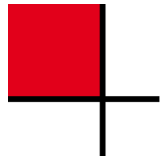
abstract

In this article I seek to explore the ways in which '(non-)emerging' entails being or not being recognized and seen in everyday life. Drawing on an ethnographic study of cleaning at Potsdamer Platz, a privatized designed utopia of a micro-city within the city of Berlin, I explore how cleaners seek to emerge, rise and come forth from and yet also remain invisible, hidden and submerged in the underworld they live and work in. I do this by studying the cleaners' subject position in the city's social, cultural and economic architecture. In particular, I describe how in their daily working lives they move from the under-world into Potsdamer Platz's upper-world occupied by its residents, office workers, tourists and consumers: at dawn, this in-between time of no longer night, not yet morning, cleaners, along with other workers preparing for the upper-world's new day, conquer the otherwise empty streets. In the course of their working lives cleaners enter the upper-world's spaces, the corporate labyrinths, shopping malls, and private apartments as well as the dark spaces of garbage below and beyond open-plan lobbies, shiny malls and fancy apartment complexes.

The cleaners movement in and out of the upper-world, is also a form of emergence and non-emergence from the under-world. Like the dirt their work centers on (Enzensberger, 1968), cleaners are everywhere and nowhere, visible and invisible, inherently part of yet also remain outside of the upper-world. For the cleaners, this (non-)emerging involves the hope to rise and be recognized (Honneth, 1995, 2008), the despair of remaining stigmatized (Goffman, 1963) as well as the sense of not even being seen and representing some kind of 'non-person' (Goffman, 1959). Non-emergence is felt as being trapped and stuck in the under-world, yet the under-world can also be a shelter and a refuge from the lack of recognition of the upper-world. In drawing attention to the cleaners' working lives, I show how emergence is tied to an on-going struggle with the gaze of others within particular social and cultural contexts.

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The emergence of mobile money in Kenya: A critical account

Matilda Dahl, *Uppsala University, Sweden*

abstract

The succes story of mobile money on the African continent, and in Kenya in particular, is widely known of. When told it sounds almost like fairytale. Mobile money is presented, by the corporate global voices, as the solution of many problems and as miracle win-win invention: money transfer service to the poor, growth of markets, boost of economy and great corporate gains. Indeed, the emergence of mobile money and the stories told globally about this emergence are quite uniform: mobile money is depicted as immense success and sometimes even as a solution of how to elevate poor people from poverty. These stories are not untrue, but as with all strong stories, there are other stories that are not told. The problem is that the global, corporate story-telling is so loud that it sometimes hinders, or at least risks over-shadowing, other stories about mobile money.

This paper is an attempt to retell the story of mobile money from within and from below. In a quest to understand the organization of trust, the Kenyan mobile money system, 'm-pesa' (m for mobile and 'pesa' means money in the local languane swahili), was studied for 6 months, in Nairobi. The method is ethnographic: the author spent time observing and interacting with people in the m-pesa chain (users and providers of the service). The study shows that m-pesa is about many other things than 'money' and 'mobility'. It is about the street-economy of Kenya, it is about trust (and dis-trust) in persons and in systems. But foremost it is a story about people, rather than about mobile phones or money. About people that stand in small 'm-pesa shops' and act as human cash machines under – sometimes – quite harsh circumstances. About a whole web of controllers, agents, people that supervise and people that make money.

If we search for other stories than the obvious ones about 'finance and markets' (widely told) we find another pieces of reality. If we see mobile money as a way to outsource the problem of the poor to the (financial) markets from the government, where does that lead us? The purpose of the paper is not to evaluate mobile money but to critically account for it, attempting to move beyond or in between all the 'emergence and success stories' that point at a mobile money as 'the best thing that ever happened [to Kenya]'.
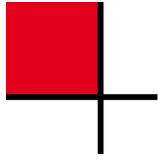
'This phone would be even fairer if…': Micro-political struggles over sustainability and entrepreneurship in a contemporary organization

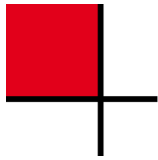Christian Garmann Johnsen, Bent Meier Sørensen and Lena Olaison

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

abstract

This paper offers an analysis of the Dutch start-up Fairphone that have tried to produce a smartphone that reconciles economic values and green values. Tapping into discussions on the company's large and interactive webpage over the problems facing corporations working in the contested terrain of sustainability and entrepreneurship, the paper shows how the organization itself becomes a site in which contradictory political views clash. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ontology, we show how Fairphone's online community takes the form of a social plane that produces structures of desire that foster conflicting modes of subjectivity. As a result, we see the emergence – understood as 'openness, undecidedness and multiple potentialities' – of micro-political tactics for coping with the problem of reconciling economic values and green values. Rather than shifting the perspective to political economy, we argue that the debate around sustainability and entrepreneurship in organization studies should pay more attention to the micro-political struggles that takes place in the boundary space between the contemporary organization and its surroundings. We conclude that Deleuze and Guattari provide a fruitful framework for exploring the lines of flights but also the fantasies that are produced within the micro-political struggles over sustainability and entrepreneurship taking place within contemporary organizations. The paper also reflects on utopian ideas that emerge in the attempt to transgress the divide between economic values and green values.

The emergence of economic institutions

John Harvey, *Nottingham Trent University, UK*

abstract

Economic anthropology has suffered for the past century because of a failure to resolve the debate between formalists and substantivists. In many respects this tension comes from the struggle between methodological individualism and methodological holism, but both in a sense take a reductive approach to the ontology of the economy by privileging either individual agency or monolithic social structures. Many of the 'postmodern' attempts which followed the debate attempted to transcend the structure and agency issue by positing the two as one inseparable entity. However, the so-called 'third way' approaches, such as those advocated by structuration theorists (e.g. Giddens, 1984), are guilty of a form of conflation between agency and structure. More often than not they provide evidence for social morphostasis without ever theorising the possibility of change within the social order. This approach is problematic because it leads to issues of analysis when theorising how institutions change or indeed form in the first place.
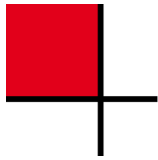
The theory of *emergence* has been widely adopted by social scientists, but the classical theorists of 'strong' emergence rejected the possibility that emergent phenomena can be articulated and argued, they must be accepted as brute fact (e.g. Broad, 1925). The argument for emergentism is a simple one, put forth in various guises, but almost all specify that whole entities must be understood as being distinct from their individual constituent parts. The advocacy of emergentist philosophy has grown and waned at several points over the past 150 years, occasionally due to cynicism that the concept involves mysticism. Much of this cynicism stems from the use of terms whose meanings have been interpreted to be vague (e.g. Bergson's *Élan vital,* 2003).

This paper draws on theories of *relational* emergence as advocated by critical realists (Archer, 1995, 2003; Bhaskar, 1975; Elder-Vass, 2010) as well as philosophers such as DeLanda (2011) to propose a method for examining economic institutions. Unlike strong emergentists, the relational emergentists argue that inquiry into ontological transformation may yield explanatory power. The reason for this distinction is a specific epistemological position regarding the ontological relationship between whole entities and constituent parts. The relational emergentist argues that the autonomous powers of wholes relative to their parts is ensured because they may affect those parts in a limiting or enabling manner; but *also* insofar as they may interact in a way that isn't reducible to their parts i.e. a simple explanation of interaction detailing component parts would be reductive and thus redundant (DeLanda, 2006). The notion of morphogenesis has been

extremely influential to account for social change, but thus far has had relatively little attention when considered in an economic sense. By drawing on theories of economic 'goods' as advocated by *new institutional economists* (e.g. Ostrom, 2003; Ostrom and Hess, 2007; Ostrom, 2011), this paper argues that such an approach must ultimately be based on realist social theory and thus can only be understood through a relational understanding of objects and reflexive subjects.

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Keynote lecture. What emerges after ignorance?

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abstract

People find ever new ways to close their eyes in midst of traumatic circumstances, to deny their wrongdoings and to ignore things that might go against their well being. Sigmund Freud took negation as an opening of something new. Can we have on the level of the social as well as on the level of the individual an optimistic look at ignorance? The lecture will explore various forms of negations, denial and ignorance that we observe today and propose ways to understand why people do not have passion for knowledge but rather passion for ignorance and what might emerge out of this passion.
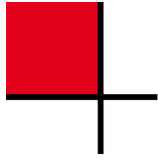
Afrikological aesthetics: Spectres of becoming and combat breathing as irruptions in the prosthetics of empire

Sacha Knox, *Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa*

abstract

This paper turns on modern sovereignty as a state of emergency through which the postcolonial neocolonised world (Spivak in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013: 3) is constituted and through which the law of politics becomes the law of death. As Agathangelou makes explicit, 'the tensions that guide the production and regeneration of an interstate, colonial (and racist) structure... [is] a political ontology that depends on gratuitous violence in which a body is rendered dead flesh to be expended repeatedly' (2011: 221). It is proposed that this rendering operates through instrumental, mimetic theories of representation – that central to projects of modern 'nation' building is 'imperso-nation', which produces subjects as citizens through the construction of their bodies as whole and totalised; through the creation of prosthetic bodies: 'pre-given vessels in which the nation may reside' (Axel, 1999: 55). In response to these suffocations, these annihilations, this paper takes up the aesthetics of Afrikology and proposes spectres of becoming and Fanon's 'combat breathing' (1967: 65) as transformative forms of politics concerned with altering ontology, with irrupting integration into suffocating forms of political sovereignty. It is proposed that these Afrikological strategies (Nabudere, 2011) operate beyond given modes of political representation (Agamben, 1993, 1998), that they constitute forms of emergence that turn in face of such logics of mastery and domestication: in deconstructing the prosthetics of empire they choose, instead, to wrestle for the vitality of life (Agathangelou, 2011).

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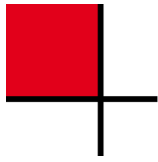
The idea of 'emerging' India – unraveling the institution, exploring possibilities

Srivatsan Lakshminarayan, *SOAS, University of London, UK*

abstract

[Initially]... There was no foreign portfolio investment in emerging markets. In fact the name was designed to give a more uplifting feeling to what we had originally called the third world fund.

Antoine van Agtmael, former Investment Officer, The International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Invented as an idea in the IFC over 3 decades ago to elevate a potential but fledgling asset class to a new standard worthy of attention from international banks, fund managers and capital providers, the term 'emerging market' transcends economic, political and public policy spheres and is pervasive in the lexicon of English speaking economists, academics, analysts, businessmen, executives, fund managers as well as the print and electronic media in India. उभरते हुए बाजार (meaning emerging markets) pronounced 'ubharte huwe bazaar' is commonplace in Hindi (India's national language spoken by over 400 million people). The notion of an 'emerging India' interacts deeply with social construction and national identity. Emergence now transcends mere description of India's economic predilections and represents a lens through which Indians increasingly view their achievements in fields as diverse as sports, performing arts and education.

The rise of the 'emerging market' is a remarkable exemplar of a transnational idea originated and socialized in Western financial markets which has since gained wider normative status with respect to a set of beliefs that motivate specific policy choices on macro-economic management, industrial development and financial sector reforms. This centers attention on 'the process through which principled ideas ('beliefs about right and wrong held by individuals') become norms ('collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity') (Jepperson et al., 1996: 54) which in turn influence the behavior and domestic structure of states' (Risse et al., 1999: 7). A structure oriented, institutional examination (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) of this rapid transition from an idea to a globally
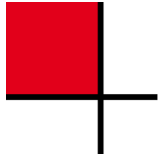
homogenous set of expectations as regards behavior and action from state and non-state actors reflecting increasing isomorphism, could be explained, at least in part, by (the need) to conform to global cultural norms (Finnemore, 1996). An important relevant factor, however, is the role of local actors and their prior normative beliefs and practices in the assimilation of transnational ideas. In particular, the contestation, adoption and localization of norms consistent with such transnational ideas is contingent upon its reconstruction by local agents in light of regional practices and beliefs and the appeal that such transnational norms and ideas hold with respect to perceived redeeming and desirable features that elevate prior local institutions and beliefs (Acharya, 2004).

In this backdrop, I explore 'emergence' in contemporary, post reform India and its meaning for a cross-section of Indians across academia, industry and policy. I reconstruct its epistemic evolution through an analysis of discourse evidenced in public statements of Indian policy makers, industrialists and finance sector representatives. Combining insights from an eclectic set of primary and secondary sources and historic analysis, I analyze the institutionalization and implications of emergence and conclude by examining whether any counter-currents are visible in the political and policy spheres in the search for alternate meaning.

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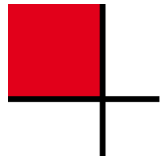
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Whither 'institutions'? Economy and democracy in Russia

Ilya Matveev, *European University in Sankt Petersburg, Russia*

abstract

The notion of 'institutions' is one of Lacan's 'stitching points' in the discourse of 'emerging economies'. 'Institutions', clear and transparent rules of the game as opposed to arbitrary use of power, informality, and corruption, are supposedly both an end-goal and a condition of success of developing countries. Such 'insitutions' are greatly desired by elites and social constituencies engaged in the project of 'modernisation' of the country's economic and political system, yet the precise meaning of this term is unclear. Indeed, it is deeply ambivalent. Does this notion designate norms and rules set by the authorities for people and businesses in the context of Zakaria's 'liberal authoritarianism', where private property is respected but democracy does not function? Or do the 'institutions' refer to the norms and rules of democracy itself, hence the term 'democratic institutions'? My paper deals precisely with these ambiguities. I study the important instances of the use of 'institutions' in the liberal discourse in Russia in order to reveal the multiple meanings of this term, using the methodological arsenal of critical discourse analysis. Then I look into the theoretical paradoxes of the very term 'institution', which means both a static structure and a process. Finally, I emphasise the democratic component of the term 'institution', using Cornelius Castoriadis' notion of an autonomous society.

Indigenous movement and politics in *Bolivia*: An emergent way of governance in the XXI century
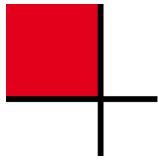
Ingrid Berns Pavezi, *University of Oldenburg, Germany*

abstract

It is at the beginning of the XXI Century that many countries in South America have experienced, for the first time, left wing governments. This has been expressed in different ways, according to the specific configuration of each country. This is a new phenomenon, due the fact that during the past centuries, the stereotype of people in politics in the region was the heterosexual, white, middle-age upper-class man, who usually performed in power of coloniality (Quijano, 2007). People who are not included in this stereotype – women, black, indigenous, homosexual, young and poor – were automatically excluded from politics and from public sphere.

As Spivak mentioned, the subaltern cannot speak (2008), and this muteness is also extended to the political representation. It is possible to argue that politics and public policies in South America, for centuries, were made by white men for white men. It started to change in the last decade, in some countries shyly and in others more vigorously. One taboo in the region that remains until nowadays is the presence of indigenous people in power. The indigenous people are present and settled across the continent, but they still do not have power or political representation in the majority of South American nations.

This paper shall analyze the political changes in the only country in South America that has an indigenous as president, and one of the few that has been trying to adopt indigenous principles in laws and politics: Bolivia. What does the adoption of indigenous cosmologies and principles in Bolivian politics mean? How does it operate? Does it mean better quality of life for its indigenous peoples? Is it a case of decolonization (Mignolo, 2009) in politics, or just one more step in the effectiveness of the western democratic institutions? These are some of the questions that this presentation intends to raise, using Bolivia as a case study.

Un(desiring) Europe: A strategy for countering the perpetual emergence state

Veda Popovici, *University of Arts, Romania*

abstract

> 3. Dis-identify. Whenever identification is possible or presents itself as an opportunity, refuse it. You are not European, nor will you ever be.
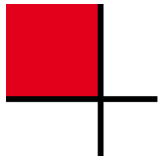
> (point 3. of the Undesiring Europe programme)

After 1989, Romania, as part of Eastern Europe, was granted allowance to the elite space of Europe. A long lost sister, so it may have seemed from the liberal perspective. But what was presented as an emerging actuality, was actually only a promise. And through this promise, an extensive set of political, social and economical changes were endorsed, all facilitating the rampant precarization and fragmentation of society through shock strategy capitalism.

But the lure of the promise to be part of Europe was not new, it was forged at the core of 19th century nation-state project and was kept carefully alive by intellectual elites during the communist 'absence from history'. This last phrase is typical of the anti-communist ideology that prevailed during the post-89 becoming-European period. The definition prescribed to this period, the transition, actually meant the suspension from political existence and recognition of a society and state. This I call the perpetual emergence state, best described as an existential condition of never-being-quite-there, situated in an in-between space (between Europe and Orient) and time (between latest stage of Western progress and a pre-modern backwardness). Condemned to repeat Western history, this society's ability for revolution is neutralized as comedy. Mimicry and buffoonery become the dominant tropes in which politics are discussed. A sense of 'it is never as good as' permeates every reflection of any counter-hegemonic political event. A pattern of representation has formed in the public sphere and it is applied to any major political event: the not-really, not-true, not-yet-there. The condition of the approximative, of the never-quite-as is a typical colonial condition of subjectivation. Though fundamental for the architecture of the Romanian identity, the perpetual emergence state has been heavily reified after 1989. As a basic feature of collective identity, we see this state as being a major factor against any radical transformation in Romanian society.

To counter this state, a strategy of efficient interventions in the field of subjectivity representation has to be employed. This strategy may be developed by reconfiguring the perpetual emergence state and using it for new emancipatory practices. Such an intervention is the 10-point programme of Undesiring Europe in which the field of representation is viewed as a battlefield of desire, agency and of the constitution of subjectivity using a decolonial critical framework.

This lecture performance addresses both the possibility of a subject of Eastern European re-identification from a decolonial perspective and the issue: in what way can art/discursive intervention facilitate such a subjectivity. It will consist of two parts: first, a short history of the recent past as the hegemonical establishment of a political subjectivity produced by the perpetual emergence state and second, the Undesiring Europe programme for the future of such a subjectivity.

Emergence and reflective practices

Alexander Paulsson and Stephan Schaefer, *Lund University, Sweden*
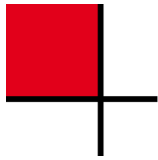
abstract

Drawing inspiration from Heidegger's philosophy we investigate how practices unfold, new ones emerge and previous ones continue. Heidegger's widely acknowledged ideas on 'absorbed coping', 'readiness-to-hand', 'presence-at-hand' and 'breakdowns' conceptually grasp 'the realization that the human does not start with insight ('Erkenntnis') but with practice' (interview with Ruediger Safranski, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 23.03.2015). 'Absorbed coping' denotes how individuals use equipment ('Zeug') for practices without much reflection. It is only when our practices break down that we take a step back to reflect upon them and obstacles we have encountered. Complexity and uncertainty pose constant challenges to our absorbed coping and thus we tend to reflect often. We thus find that there is a constant shifting between emergence of new and altered practices as well as a fall back on absorbed coping. With regard to organizations switching between emergence and fall back raises interesting questions: what are the frames which determine emergence and/ or fall back and where do these originate (Heidegger poses this question in his essay: *What is metaphysics?*). Using different conceptions concerning (professional) practices such as Schön (1983) and Sennett (2008), we discuss these questions with a view to Heidegger's philosophy.

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Rediscovering woman as a citizen in contemporary art

Anna Zhurba, *Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia*

abstract

Representation of women in culture was widely problematized during the last half of a century and is still a highly relevant issue, though it already became something of a common place for critical studies and cultural theory and therefore partly lost its original impetus.

There is no use in this case to follow all the transformations that the attitude towards the depiction of women went through thanks to the struggle of the feminist-activists. Instead, I would like to consider the drastic change that happened in terms of the position from which women are speaking today in the specific conditions of the so called 'developing' countries and how their voices constitute themselves in the field of contemporary art.

These countries represent a specifically complex social and political context that to a great extent determines lives of their citizens. In such circumstances even the problem of the objectification of female body recedes into the background, while the most common mode of the portrayal of the woman is her representation as a victim of male-driven violence, passive subject of external forces.

However, one can trace a very different historical line that brings the woman to the forefront of the struggle as an active political actor. Here just a few examples might spread from fictional / historical figures as biblical character of Judith, Joan of Arc, French Marianne to our contemporaries such as Angela Davis, Aung San Suu Kyi and many others.

It is interesting to observe how feminism – having started as an emancipatory struggle for basic human rights, against discrimination and violence and that was for quite a long time specifically centered on women reclaiming their rights, their own bodies, their socio-economic position in the first place – transformed into more universal struggle for communality. In its turn this opened up an opportunity for women to represent larger groups of society such as their nation or community. This resulted into a whole new wave of contemporary art made by women artists, which focused on the relevant political

issues but mostly on some specific problems that vary depending on artist's identity and cultural background. Represented by such artists as Regina Jose-Galindo, Tania Bruguera, Milica Tomic, Teresa Margolles and many others, this art has mostly manifested itself through the performative practices that occupy the public space so that it can be heard and has a potential of real social transformations.

Self-representation of these artists is based on the notion of citizenship and civil consciousness rather than any specific gender-related problematics. Embracing the oeuvre of previous generations of feminist artists they appear to be active subjects, however finding a new way of employing the vulnerability of female body as a universal metaphor for oppression and injustice experienced by people under the rule of capital or/and undemocratic political regimes.

Keynote lecture. Delinking from progressivism, or emergence as re-existence: Some non-Western remedies against the rhetoric of modernity

Madina Tlostanova

abstract

The term 'emergence' has become a milder Aesopian manifestation of typically teleological developmentalist modern thinking grounded in taxonomizing and ranking countries and regions, people and cultures, languages and knowledges (all of which are automatically branded as more or less modern or traditional because modernity translates spatial characteristics into temporal ones) according to the rhetoric of modernity with its persistent underlying logic of coloniality dividing the world into humanitas and anthropos (Nishtani, 2006), those who belong and those who do not belong to modernity, those who are rational subjects and those who stand closer to nature and lack the ability to think. These divisions are still organized around the two main modes of interpreting the other – the Orientalist exclusion and absolute othering and the presumably more humane and inclusive progressivism that prescribes the others what to do and how to change in order to start climbing the universalized ladder of modernity never hoping but always aspiring to catch up with its elusive zone of sameness. This logic is grounded in the hubris of the zero point (Castro-Gomez, 1995) that is an arrogance generating from a secure vantage point from which the Western observer looks at the world. This Archimedean point is taken out of the observed world making it impossible for the observer to be observed and thus hiding the geo-political and body-political circumstances of the Western (as any other) point of view (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2012), theory, vision, or sensibility. The sanctification of disembodied progressivism as one of the powerful tools of modernity has naturalized 'emergence' in its monosemantic negative (for those who have not yet emerged) understanding, particularly painful for the post-Socialist world that has largely been transferred from its previous semi-periphery or second-world status to more and more subaternized societies who have been struggling with various emergence models for the last 25 years to no avail and today gravitate more and more in the direction of the global South or in the post-Soviet case, some paradoxical versions of the South of the poor North (Tlostanova, 2011). However one can at least attempt to interpret 'emergence' outside the progressivist modern thinking (and consequently not as a way of building oneself into the existing modern hierarchy) and look at possible ways of delinking from the rhetoric of modernity (Mignolo, 2007)

performed from non-Western epistemologies and cosmologies previously disqualified by modernity, such as the Amerindean principle 'sumak kawsay' (Vasquez, 2011) or the re-existence model as opposed to negative resistance (Alban-Achinte, 2006). These and other ways of delinking from progressivism and reimagining emergence from a critical border perspective (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006) will be touched upon in my talk.

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