

Research Day – Thursday November 16, 2017

The annual Research Day of the Ghent Centre for Global Studies aims to bring together all (junior and senior) researchers of its affiliated research groups, for an interdisciplinary dialogue on common research themes, different approaches and theoretical perspectives. The organizing committee of pre- and postdocs of the GCGS will offer **4 interdisciplinary workshops** (2 parallel morning and afternoon sessions) on the following topics:

1. **'Cheap nature'**: rethinking nature and society in Global Studies
2. **Gendering globalisation**: empirically, methodologically and epistemologically
3. **The global reconfiguration of labour**: redefining work in contemporary capitalism
4. **Engaging with the world**: Global Studies, action research and social impact

Keynote lecture

**After Rana Plaza:
Rethinking the Health and Safety of Global Garment Workers**

by Geert De Neve

Professor of Social Anthropology & South Asian Studies
Head of the Dept. of Anthropology, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

Venue and program:

Congrescentrum Zebrastraat, Zebrastraat 32, 9000 Gent – Thursday November 16, 2017

9.00-9.30 Welcome and registration

9.30-12.00 2 parallel sessions

Workshop 1 – ‘Cheap nature’

Workshop 2 – Gendering globalisation

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00-14.00 Keynote lecture

14.30-17.00 2 parallel sessions

Workshop 3 – The global reconfiguration of labour

Workshop 4 – Engaging with the world

17.00-19.00 Reception

Attendance is free, but registration is required:

<https://webapps.ugent.be/eventManager/events/GCGSGlobalStudiesResearchDay>

(no abstracts, proposals or papers required)

Deadline for registration: October 16, 2017

Co-ordination and contact: Julie Carlier (Julie.Carlier@ugent.be)

Organizing committee: Joachim Ben Yakoub, Dieter Bruneel, Jeroen Cuvelier, Sylvie Janssens, Rafael Pedemonte, Allan Souza Queiros, Sven Van Melkebeke, Eva Willems, Julie Carlier

Keynote lecture – After Rana Plaza: Rethinking the Health and Safety of Global Garment Workers – by Prof. dr. Geert De Neve (University of Sussex)

Since the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka in 2013 and a series of factory fires across South Asia, the global dynamics of outsourcing and subcontracting have come under renewed scrutiny by academics, activists, policy makers and governments alike. Focusing on the ‘health and safety’ of garments workers in South Asia, the lecture reviews recent interdisciplinary research on the well-being of workers producing garments for global markets.

It will argue for a novel approach to understanding risk, health and safety at work, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different initiatives that seek to improve workers’ health standards globally. The lecture will advocate the need to move beyond a narrow focus on physical work environments and building infrastructure towards a more comprehensive understanding of how health and well-being are experienced on a day-to-day basis by garment workers themselves. The international focus on building safety in the wake of Rana Plaza has left unaddressed the more diffuse, embodied, and politically sensitive concerns about workers’ health voiced from the shop floor. The lecture urges us to rethink this perspective by giving visibility to the health concerns of garment workers across the globe and by placing the whole spectrum of work-related health and well-being issues at the centre of analysis. The lecture will pay particular attention to the gendered experiences of work and health, relate shop floor health issues to the nature of the labour regimes produced by global supply chains, and draw some conclusions for the future of corporate self-regulation through voluntary codes of conduct.

Geert De Neve is a Professor of Social Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the University of Sussex in Brighton, United Kingdom. He is author of *The Everyday Politics of Labour: Working Lives in India’s Informal Economy* (Social Science Press, 2005). He has published widely on labour and ethical governance in India’s garment sector, as well as on various aspects of neoliberal transformation in South Asia. He is also a co-editor of *Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption, and Corporate Social Responsibility* (Emerald, 2008), and most recently, with Rebecca Prentice, of *Unmaking the Global Sweatshop: Health and Safety of the World’s Garment Workers* (Penn Press, 2017).

Workshop 1 – ‘Cheap nature’: rethinking nature and society in Global Studies

Key words: ‘cheap nature’, social movements, frontier-making, capitalism, nature-human divide

This panel wants to explore the (political) work of the ontological division between nature-society. Recently, Jason Moore has suggested that capitalism should be framed not so much as an economic or social system but as a way of organizing nature. More specifically, he discusses the creation of ‘cheap nature’, and its necessary appropriation for the accumulation of capital. Cheap nature (which includes food, labour-power, raw materials and energy) is no given: it is produced, controlled and managed within and for a political economy and ecology that puts nature to work ‘for free’. Similarly to what Anna Tsing argues, Moore sees (the production of) the frontier as a vital means to rearticulate subjects and objects along the nature-society divide so as to create ‘cheap nature’ and capital accumulation. The latter, he argues, is a precondition for nature’s exploitation: from the imposition of monocultures to genetic manipulation, from the control over the female reproductive capacities to dispossession of land and exploitation of prison labour.

All this has catastrophic effects on our socio-ecological system, ranging from global climate change over the dropping life expectancy of women, growing inequality in access to food and clean water, to a deepening wealth gap. As noticed this past decade this making of ‘cheap nature’ does not go by unchallenged, but is marked – as Tsing (2005) illustrates – by friction as it becomes entangled with specific local agency. The Indignados, the global women’s march, the water protectors at Standing Rock and other indigenous communities around the world, are all telling examples of how the continuing creation and appropriation of ‘cheap nature’ is formed in friction, putting pressure on, while simultaneously transforming, existing capitalist relations. These protests often inscribe themselves in universalising rhetoric through which they contest this capitalism’s globalising epistemology, while they struggle to transform capitalist relations and create new ways of living from its ruins (e.g. Tsing 2015). But are protests and their projects of transformation really forming alternatives to capitalist relations or are they merely mitigating the devastating effects without profoundly altering them?

This workshop aims to look, firstly, to the ways in which ‘cheap nature’ is produced, and, secondly, to how its production is constantly contested, refuted and/or reformed by asking the following **key questions:**

- What regimes of knowledge-power – both contemporary and historic – have you encountered in your field of research that are/were instrumental in the making of ‘cheap nature’?
- Can your field of research be described as a frontier, how so? And in what ways is ‘the frontier’ critical to the making of ‘cheap nature’?
- How is (the making of) ‘cheap’ nature contested? What kind of alternatives are presented?
- How are local protests organized around or do they integrate ‘the global’ (building relations of solidarity, appropriating languages of justice, etc.)?
- How can this activism inform theory? How can non-Euro-American, non-capitalist epistemologies inform Global Studies?

Suggested reading:

- Bogaert, K. (2016), *Imider vs Cop22: Understanding climate justice from Morocco's Peripheries*: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/25517/imider-vs.-cop22_understanding-climate-justice-fro
- Moore, Jason W. 2015. "Putting Nature to Work: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and the Challenge of World- Ecology." In *Supramark: A Micro-Toolkit for Disobedient Consumers, or How to Frack the Fatal Forces of the Capitalocene*, eds. Cecilia Wee, Janneke Schönenbach, and Olaf Arndt. Gothenburg: Irene Books, 69–117.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2003. "Natural Resources and Capital Frontiers." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29 (Dec.5): 5100–5106.

Other suggested sources:

- Interview with Jason Moore on his book 'Capitalism in the Web of Life'
<https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/09/28/capitalism-in-the-web-of-life-an-interview-with-jason-moore/>
- Interview with Anna Tsing on her book 'Friction'
<https://soundcloud.com/sianml/camthropod-ep4-lt-2016>

Coordinators: Sylvie Janssens (Sylvie.Janssens@ugent.be) and Dorien Vanden Boer (Dorien.VandenBoer@ugent.be)

Workshop 2 – Gendering globalisation: empirically, methodologically and epistemologically

Key words: (economic) globalisation, feminisation, gender, race, class, power, agency, intersectionality, relationality, feminist geography, global-local, formal-informal, production-reproduction, North-South

Globalisation is inherently gendered. As Hawkesworth has aptly pointed out, “it positions and affects men and women differently, and it produces new modes of gender power and disadvantage” (2006: 2). Nevertheless, gender analysis has remained largely marginal in mainstream global studies, especially in macro-analyses of economic globalisation and global governance. Many of these mainstream accounts, which are often characterized by a high degree of economic determinism, suffer from gender-blindness. They emphasise the importance of macro-structural forces as drivers of globalisation, and foreground the role played by formal political and economic structures and institutions in the “intensification of global interconnectedness” (Inda & Rosaldo 2008: 4). Meanwhile, feminist research into globalising processes has often remained limited to micro-analyses at the local level, with a lot of attention being paid to the ways in which women workers are inserted into the global economy. According to Freeman, this situation has led to the emergence of an “implicit, but powerful, dichotomous model in which the gender of globalisation is mapped in such a way that global: masculine as local: feminine” (2001: 1008). While the ‘masculine global’ has come to be associated with space, capital, agency and progress, the ‘feminine local’ has been connected with place, culture, passivity and tradition (Freeman, 2001; Eschle 2002; Nagar et al. 2002). The result is a gendered definition of “the local as contained with, and thus fundamentally defined by, the global” (Freeman 2001: 1012) and of local actors as bereft of agency.

There is a longstanding tradition of critical global studies, especially critical geography, that has fundamentally challenged the inherent dichotomies and blind spots of these mainstream economic macro-analyses by focusing, instead, on the relationality and co-construction of the places, spaces, scales and subjects of globalisation. Even though critical global studies and feminist studies of globalisation both propose a rereading of the local and the global as co-constitutive, and although they both focus on the way in which local agency shapes global processes, until now, these two fields of research have remained largely separate and have not yet entered into a sustained dialogue. This workshop aims to discuss possible feminist (re)readings of globalization, based on the common ground with this critical tradition: a relational approach to globalisation. This means that globalisation is considered as socially constructed, rather than as an inevitable or even natural economic force. Or as Nagar et al propose (2002: 263): “Our feminist approach builds a relational understanding of global capitalist processes through an analysis that starts from the lives of those who are marginalized by globalisation – and the informal spheres that are key to their lives. This analysis not only reveals how multiple oppressions constitute the contemporary system, but also suggests new openings for change”. What can a gender and intersectional approach to the places, spaces, scales and subjects of globalization offer (critical) global studies – empirically, methodologically and epistemologically? We will discuss the objects, methods and concepts of ongoing research in the Ghent Centre for Global Studies and explore the possible added value and/or pitfalls of these feminist and critical perspectives.

Key questions:

- How do you conceptualise the relationship between the global and the local in your own research? And how might this relationship be implicitly gendered, racialized and class-based?
- Can you discern the presence of the abovementioned dichotomies and hierarchies in your field of study / discipline? Or, have they already been deconstructed by more relational and social-constructivist approaches? And, does gender factor in these dichotomies and/or their deconstruction?
- What are the subjects, scales, spaces and places of globalisation in your own research? And what does it mean or would it imply to approach them from a relational and intersectional perspective?
- What are the political implications of our present empirical, methodological and epistemological choices and framework?

Suggested reading:

- Richa Nagar, Victoria Lawson, Linda McDowell, Susan Hansson. 2001. Locating Globalization: Feminist (Re)readings of the Subjects and Spaces of Globalization, *Economic Geography*, 78: 257-284.
- Catherine Eschle. 2004. Feminist Studies of Globalisation: Beyond Gender, Beyond Economism?, *Global Society*, 18 (2): 97-125.
- Carla Freeman. 2001. Is Local: Global as Feminine: Masculine? Rethinking the Gender of Globalization. *Signs*, 26 (4): 1007-1037.
- Ina, Jonathan Xavier, and Rosaldo, Renato. 2008. Tracking global flows. In: *The anthropology of globalization: A reader*: pp. 3-46.

Coordinators: Julie Carlier (Julie.Carlier@ugent.be) and Jeroen Cuvelier (Jeroen.Cuvelier@ugent.be)

Workshop 3 – The global reconfiguration of labour: redefining work in contemporary capitalism

Key words: capitalism, labour relations/conditions, labor rights, precarization and feminization of labor, trade unions and resistance

The aim of this workshop is to reconsider work, employment and labour relations in a global economy. With the spread of capitalism 'new' divisions of labor have emerged. Not only in an international division of labor between the Global North and the Global South, but also in a 'new' division of labour in communities absorbed by the capitalist world economy.

In the North-Atlantic countries, the era of welfare-state capitalism promoting social protection and labor de-commodification (especially for white male wage workers) alongside the industrial citizenship based on standard employment appears to be crumbling since the spread of neoliberal economic policies in the early 1980s. With the liberalization of labour markets and flexibilization of production regimes, precarious forms of employment have been normalized.

By contrast with the North, welfare and labour protections have been an exception for most of the global working classes. Historically, the major shift in labour relations on a local scale was one of changing reciprocal labour relations and patron-client ties into the spread of chattel slavery, peonage and sub-contracting. With the spread of capitalism, wage labour – which already existed for a long time – did expand as well, but was for the large masses of workers just restricted/nominal/marginal/peripheral. This phenomenon is referred to as 'the partiality of wage labour': the large majority of workers have been historically excluded not only from wage income but also from its associated entitlements and protections. The norm has thus been 'super-exploitation, accumulation through dispossession and what might be called "permanent primitive accumulation"' (Munck, 2013:752).

Nonetheless, non-commodified and subsistence work continue to be part of people's strategies to cope with precarious situations. On the other hand, unpaid labour has been an essential part of capitalist reproduction. It produces 'cheap labor', it creates part of the surplus, and it absorbs part of the costs (of care and reproduction). The role of women in both waged and non-waged, productive and reproductive labour, has been and still is pivotal, but is often overlooked.

The pressing globalization of neoliberal policies seeking to create new spaces of capital accumulation leads to the reconfiguration of work situations and labour relations worldwide. It can rightly be argued that feminization and precarization of work are even more outspoken than in the past. These processes combine gendered and racialized class relations with differentiated forms of inequalities and vulnerabilities. But they are often responded with different forms of resistance, solidarity and collective action. In this workshop, we want to tackle related issues in the world of work from different perspectives, levels of analysis and geographies seeking answers to **key questions** including:

- How did/do workers react, adapt and/or resist (as individuals or organized) to changing labour relations? What are the (transnational) union responses to the reconfiguration of labour relations, working and employment conditions?
- How do employers provoke precarity in specific organizations? How does the regulation of the state shape and institutionalize new insecurities in the labour market?
- How has the relationship between workers, state and capital changed in the last decades?
- How do gender and race come into play in relation to class? How are labour regimes gendered and racialized?

- Which dimensions of precarity have been neglected/can be identified in specific, local contexts?
- What are the consequences of new social/labour policies for workers' rights and households (i.e. activation policies, unemployment insurance and another state benefits)?

Suggested reading:

- Van der Linden, M (2016), "Dissecting Coerced Labor" in: *On Coerced Labor. Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, edited by Marcel Van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, Leiden; Boston: Brill, pp.293-322
- Munck, R (2013) "The Precariat: a view from the South", *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), pp.747-762
- Lautier, B (1990) "Wage relationship, informal sector and employment policy in South America", *Journal of Development Studies*, 26(2), pp.278-298.

Coordinators: Allan Souza Queiroz (Allan.SouzaQueiros@ugent.be) and Sven Van Melkebeke (Sven.VanMelkebeke@ugent.be)

Workshop 4 – Engaging with the world: Global Studies, action research and social impact

Key words: social impact and societal value creation in Global Studies, participatory action research, co-creation, stakeholders, civil society, policy influence

Science is real! This was one of the slogans carried by protesters during the global march for science in April 2017. In more than 600 cities around the world, thousands of academics took the streets and marched to defend their role in society. The march for science sparked a worldwide debate on the contested relation between science and politics. As research on climate change convincingly showed, science-based policies are increasingly under attack (Hoffman 2013). On the other hand, science funding increasingly depends on effective impact plans – moving beyond merely academically relevant outcomes. Both these developments urge us to look into the failure and success of the academic communities to effectively relate to non-academic stakeholders and society at large (Hoffman 2013). For, connecting academics to the broader society is an important if not necessary precondition for societal change.

Ghent University recently launched its policy plan on societal value creation (SVC) of research. It defines SVC – as “the process of creating an added value to scientific knowledge and expertise outside the realm of science aimed at, or is of specific importance to, a community of external stakeholders.” From 2.0 communication strategies, over general contributions to public debate and policy advice to participatory research, new ways to facilitate the valorization of scientific knowledge in society are explored. Researchers are increasingly exploiting different resources – not only social media, but also innovative new digital platforms or exhibitions – to diffuse their views and findings. Beyond the exploration of new communicative strategies that connect science to society, this workshop wants to address the relation between both from the vantage point of deeper methodological questions. For most engaged research in the field of Global Studies the interrelation between reflection and action, science and society is no secret, as both seem to be strongly mutually imbricated in a certain praxis. Nevertheless, the relation between both is seldom made explicit. How can Global Studies research be redesigned methodologically to be of (social) value to the broader society (as well)? How can we move from research communication towards research in co-creation with stakeholders?

To address these questions in Global Studies research we would like to take our cue from a longstanding research tradition that revolves around the fundamental relationship between theory and practice: participatory action research. Participatory Action Research first emerged in the Global South in the 1970s (Colombia, Brazil, Tanzania) through the praxis of influential scholars such as Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda (Hall 2005) and build up to the research strategy it represents today. More than a methodology, action research can be understood as a research strategy that builds theory through its response to a problematic situation, with the intention of changing this situation in cooperation with the actors and groups involved (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2003). Participatory Action Research has explicit emancipatory goals, as it can be understood as a mutual learning process between the researcher and its subject with the aim to change social reality (Coenen & Khonraad, 2003). Through this process of transformation, scientific knowledge is being developed that strengthens the position of different stakeholders involved.

Key questions:

- What kind of academics do we wish / need to be in contemporary society?
- How do we create social value in Global Studies research? How do we choose relevant research topics to change the society we study?
- What are the promises and pitfalls of co-creation with non-academic actors? How can researchers establish sustainable and valuable collaboration with non-academic societal sectors?
- How does action research inform theory? How can action research with local communities inform global studies? How can/do global societal problems inform the way we design action research?
- What could the University, and/or the Ghent Centre for Global Studies do to support its researchers in their ambition to reach beyond academia?

Suggested reading:

- Hall, B. L. 2005. In from the cold? Reflections on participatory research from 1970-2005. *Convergence*, 38 (1): 5-24.
- Haraway, D. 1988. Situated knowledge: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3): 575-?-599.
- Somekh, B. and Ken Zeichner. 2009. Action research for educational reform: remodelling action research theories and practices in local contexts, *Educational Action Research*, 17 (1): 5-21.

Coordinators: Joachim Ben Yakoub (Joachim.BenYakoub@ugent.be), Eva Willems (Eva.Willems@ugent.be) and Rafael Pedemonte (Rafael.Pedemonte@ugent.be)