



Call for Papers

Conference Emotions and Capitalism

Berlin, 27 – 30 June, 2012

Is there a nexus between emotions and capitalism? Following recent debates on the financial crisis or consumer capitalism, "yes" becomes the likely answer: greed is generally identified as the reason for the disastrous developments in the global finance system; craving, artificially created longings as much as fear and envy are said to lie at the foundation of mass consumption. In this strain of public discourse, emotions appear as an innate drive, something irrational and ravaging. Yet, the underlying explanatory model of cause and effect remains largely unclear: while some define human drives and emotions as the originators of capitalism, others claim that destructive emotions are evoked by capitalism in the first instance.

Besides these contemporary discussions, there is an older line of thought in which capitalism is on the one hand associated with the emergence of a specific emotional culture. On the other hand, the idea that certain emotional practices were constitutive for the development of capitalism is not new either. For over 250 years these questions have been discussed in disciplines like philosophy, economics and sociology. What these debates have in common is not only a skeptical stance towards emotions, but also an understanding that emotions are "natural", "universal" entities. This understanding has been challenged lately: emotions have become a lively object of current research in the humanities and the social sciences; this research has highlighted the fact that emotions are culturally coded and therefore subject to change in history. Research on capitalism has undergone similar revisions as a consequence of several "turns" in the humanities: the homo oeconomicus no longer counts as a compelling explanatory model and the traditional conceptualizations of capitalism, its types and phases have been rethought - a process from which new research agendas have emerged taking capitalist cultures as a conceptual point of departure rather than "capitalism" as an allegedly homogeneous phenomenon.

However, the question how emotions were and are shaped in capitalist cultures and vice versa: how capitalist cultures are shaped through emotional discourses and practices is still widely under-researched. The conference on emotions and capitalism wants to help to fill this gap: the aim is to offer a platform for new perspectives on the intimate connections which exist between emotional and capitalist practices. To approach this agenda, five major foci have been set for the conference:

In a first step, the conference will analyze the hitherto produced *meta-narratives* of capitalism and the assumptions they produced regarding the relationship between emotions and capitalism.

The following three sections will be concerned with the interdependencies of emotional and capitalist practices in three central loci – the *market*, the *work place* and the field of *consumption*.

The last section on *subjectification* and *habitus* asks about the modes and contents of becoming an emotional being in capitalism.

We invite researchers (PhD level or advanced) to a productive exchange among the disciplines of history, sociology, ethnology, economics, culture and literature studies as well as all others who want contribute on the matter. The conference is organised by Sabine Donauer and Anne Schmidt in cooperation with Christoph Conrad (University of Geneva) and will take place at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in **Berlin from 27 to 30 June 2012**. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the Max Planck Institute for Human Development.

Interested applicants should send a short CV and a paper proposal (max. 700 words) to capitalism@mpi-berlin.mpg.de until 15 July 2011.

All applicants will receive a reply by 15 September 2011.