**Politics & International Relations Undergraduate Research Conference**

*University of Manchester*

**Tuesday 18 May 2021**



Please register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwrdO2tqz8jHdI3W2bN-VGmv__3N0m3eYOC>

Draft programme

10am – welcome and opening comments: Professor Dave Richards, Head of Department, Politics; and Alexia Ozeel, Chief Editor, Juncture

10:15-11:15 **Panel 1: Climate crisis and greener futures**

* ‘Loss and Damage through a Climate Justice Lens’ Pooja Kishinani
* ‘Planting Carrots or Planting revolution; An analysis of Permaculture projects as an act of political protest’, Nathan Phipp-MacIntyre
* ‘Women for the Environment: Examining the Relationship Between Gender and Environmental Attitudes in a Legislative Setting’ Kaya Brown
* ‘Are European cities the future pioneers of a green covid recovery?’ Sarah Tegas

11:15-11:30 break

11:30-12:30 **Panel 2: Work, labour and resistance in contemporary capitalism** **[Chair: Martin Coward]**

* ‘Struggle and resistance as Wolt courier: How can workers and Trade Unions become more successful in organizing the gig-economy?’ Laura Dickinson
* ‘Labour Process Theory and Platform Labour: utilisation of the toolkit to settle the (mis)classification debate and to challenge the ‘Official Discourse’ of flexible work’ James Thompson
* ‘How can capitalist realism be challenged by a synthesis of ecofeminist and psychoanalytic critique? A case study of fast fashion’ Niamh Donovan
* ‘"If it cannot be measured, it cannot be improved": self-tracking technologies in the neoliberal everyday’ Sofija Ninkovic

12:30-1:30 lunch: break-out rooms on social/networking, journal publishing and academic careers

1:30-2:30 *Two parallel panels*

**Panel 3: Political ethics today**

* ‘To what extent do assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) reproduce and/or challenge gender norms?’ Tamara Szilágyi-Hajdú
* ‘The Dirty Hands problem: A democratic outlook - How is political morality shaped by the interaction of its (democratic) actors?’ Elli Fischer
* ‘A one man show: how political personalisation affected health behavioural compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis of Boris Johnson’s and Giuseppe Conte’s communication’, Claire Bracco

**Panel 4: International financial institutions and the Global South**

* ‘A fate worse with debt? Exploring why increasing levels of external debt impacts development for the African continent, in the case of Zambia’, Joshua Best
* "Structural Adjustment Programmes: useful economic catalysts or problematic welfare destroyers? An analysis of neoliberal IMF policies in Latin America", Luca Venga
* ‘How has IMF policy impacted Latin America since the Washington Consensus and beyond? An investigation into how Bolivia has fared after divorcing from the IMF, as a means to investigate the efficacy and justness of the IMF’ Montgomery Taylor-Proctor
* ‘Counters to neoliberalism: An exploration into the growing sector of alternative development in South America’, Markos Manolopoulos

2:30-2:45 break

2:45-3:45 *Two parallel panels*

**Panel 5: Race, ethnicity and insecure politics** [Chair: Elena Barabantseva]

* ‘Revisiting The Paranoid Style in American Politics’ Conor Sherry
* ‘“I am not America's nightmare, I am the American dream”: Empowerment, policy-making and Afrofuturism in contemporary America’ Gabrielle Pelet
* ‘What Explains 'Islamist' Radicalisation Among Young Males Within the United Kingdom?’ Beatrice (Lola) Towle
* ‘Can we move beyond conflict? Focusing on the context of the Kosovo conflict’ Zayed AlMarri

**Panel 6: Politicians, Parties and Institutions in British Politics**

* ‘British political satire and its effects on public trust in institutions and politicians’ Elizabeth Wallis
* ‘Do pre-parliamentary careers affect roles of committee members? A case study of the House of Commons procedure committee’, Nick Rice
* ‘The Road to Workington: Deindustrialisation and the effect it has on Labour's electoral prospects and losing ties to the party’, Matthew Suddart

3:45-4:00 break

4-5pm: *Two parallel sessions*

* Preparing for your dissertations? Voluntary session for second year students, *Liz Richardson*
* Publishing your work and editing a journal – the view from *Juncture*

**Titles and abstracts**

‘Struggle and resistance as Wolt courier: How can workers and Trade Unions become more successful in organizing the gig-economy?’

Laura Dickinson, <laura.dickinson-3@student.manchester.ac.uk>

This research examines how workers and Trade Unions can improve conditions in a gig-economy setting by applying findings from Wolt in Denmark. Typically, large Trade Unions have been associated with a low presence in the gig economy. Still, the example of 3F’s relationship with Wolt couriers provides an exception to this trend and has implications for workers and Trade Unions alike. By using ethnographic and auto-ethnographic interviews in the form of a worker's enquiry, through the framework of class-composition theory, unique findings regarding the political composition of Wolt could be applied to other gig-economy workplaces. This research proposes a semi-autonomous relationship between large Trade-Unions and groups of autonomous worker organisers as an initial and mutually beneficial organising step. If this were adopted in other gig-economy settings, it would fundamentally change and potentially improve how gig-economy workplaces are organised.

‘A one man show: how political personalisation affected health behavioural compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis of Boris Johnson’s and Giuseppe Conte’s communication’

Claire Bracco <claire.bracco@student.manchester.ac.uk>

In all crises, communication is an essential part of disaster planning, response and recovery. A clear, accurate and positive communication can be a changing factor in emergency situations, and it is necessary to give people the correct guidelines and hope. This research paper analyses speeches from two of the main figures of the current health crisis, Boris Johnson and Giuseppe Conte, in order to understand how their political crisis communication styles have affected behavioural compliance in Italy and the UK. Findings, based on the personalisation theories of communication applied to speeches given during the first three months of the pandemic, show that there is a clear link between Conte’s narrative of “us” and higher levels of compliance in Italy. On the other hand, Johnson’s discordant and vague initial response led to a decrease in public trust, compliance and consequently higher epidemiological levels.

‘To what extent do assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) reproduce and/or challenge gender norms?’

Tamara Szilágyi-Hajdú tamara.szilagyi-hajdu@student.manchester.ac.uk

Abstract: My research is concerned with modern ARTs – such as IVF, donor insemination and surrogacy – as performative of gender and race. I aim to show how ARTs cut through gender/sex/sexuality and race/ethnicity and produce intersectional experiences, inclusions and exclusions. I discuss how biomedical professionals, clients of fertility clinics and ‘clinical labourers’ (surrogates, sperm and egg donors) are each subject to gendered expectations while simultaneously reproducing and challenging gender norms in their daily performances. Science and the discursive nature of Foucauldian power/knowledge are central to my analysis in their production of structures of inequality and self-disciplining subjects. My main argument is that by locating gendered reproductive capacities, kinship bonds and reproductive desirability in biology current performances of ARTs appeal to a simplistic logic of biological determinism and inevitably reproduce hierarchies of gender/sex/sexuality and race/ethnicity. I develop this argument through a discussion of reproductive health services across the globe, which come together to form a transnational production line of babies. Crucially, I highlight that this industry produces more than (the prospect of) a child and is performative of gender/sex/sexuality and race/ethnicity, reinforcing a dominant white patriarchal ideology.

‘Can we move beyond conflict? Focusing on the context of the Kosovo conflict’

Zayed AlMarri Zayed.almarri@student.manchester.ac.uk

Moving beyond conflict can take place by various approaches in international politics. This essay will argue that liberal peace has failed to build sustainable peace and reach an emancipatory peace by having negative political, economic, and social impacts. Liberal peace has the potential to end disputes and establish a negative peace, but it failed to transform this into a positive peace. This makes the process of moving beyond conflict incomplete, and to complete it, emancipatory approaches should be considered during the conservative and orthodox process along with prioritising human security over state security, and local voices should be fostered in the peacebuilding process. Our practice will focus on the ethnic-nationalist Kosovo conflict that emerged in the 1990s. During the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo enjoyed high autonomy. However, the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic abolished Kosovo autonomy making it under the Serbian government control. Milosevic action faced opposition from the Kosovo liberation army, resulting in a confrontation with the Serbian forces. Milosevic responded by ethnic cleansing to the Kosovo Albanians producing around million refugees. NATO intervened in this conflict by diplomatic discussions and economic sanctions, followed by air force campaigns, which forced Milosevic forces to withdraw from Kosovo in 1999.

Labour Process Theory and Platform Labour: utilisation of the toolkit to settle the (mis)classification debate and to challenge the ‘Official Discourse’ of flexible work

James Thompson james.thompson-13@student.manchester.ac.uk

In the Platform Economy labour providers are denied basic worker protections due to their misclassified independent contractor status, leaving them in a state of relative insecurity. The Platform Economy is supported by business and governments in reference to a hegemonic ‘Official Discourse’ which sees only increased autonomy within the guise of flexible work. Legal challenges across the world have sought to demonstrate that the realities of Platform Labour entitle them to worker status; however, their success has been mixed, indicating a confusion over how to properly conceptualise the labour relationships on Platforms. The grant of worker status is predicated on the ability to demonstrate the working reality passes a number of multifactorial tests, which includes the levels of workplace control. In this paper I will put forward Labour Process Theory as providing a holistic theoretical framework to properly conceptualise Platform Labour. In this application the significant levels of control, exerted by the algorithm, will be demonstrated; this will serve to evidence the legal case for worker classification. The weight that Labour Process analysis provides to the misclassification issue exposes the inaccuracies of the ‘Official Discourse’, promoting critical examination of autonomy and job quality within flexible labour arrangements.

‘What Explains 'Islamist' Radicalisation Among Young Males Within the United Kingdom?’

Beatrice (Lola) Towle <beatrice.towle@student.manchester.ac.uk>

The threat of homegrown ‘Islamist’ terrorism was sown in the 1980s and has become an increasing problem across the West, especially for the United Kingdom. Despite a growing body of research, there is a concerning absence of empirical data and systematic analysis. With such inconclusively, dangerous misconceptions surrounding this phenomenon perpetuate, fostering the Islamophobia which continues to taint the Western world. Informed by postcolonial scholarship, this dissertation seeks to explain ‘Islamist’ radicalisation among young males within the United Kingdom. Via an extensive review of the literature and a systematic analysis of qualitative data, this dissertation highlights the complexity of the radicalisation process and discerns the factors which hold greatest causal power, before situating them within a wider theoretical framework. The greatest strength of this dissertation is the rich data set it rests upon. A collection of interviews with those working for the charitable organisations aiming to prevent such radicalisation. All of whom have engaged directly with radicalised individuals, who have had personal ties to violent extremists and/or are themselves de-radicalised.

‘Revisiting The Paranoid Style in American Politics’

Conor Sherry [conor.sherry@student.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:conor.sherry@student.manchester.ac.uk)

For my dissertation I am utilising Hofstadter’s (1965) seminal essays in ‘The Paranoid Style in American Politics’ in order to make sense of contemporary American politics. I make the case that Hofstadter’s original theorisation of the Paranoid Style, (a conspiratorial, suspicious and aggressive frame of mind preponderant across the electorate) shows continuation for the most part. However, I argue it has evolved and has new features today due to ‘new media’. I define new media as the political information an individual would access online (such as talk shows and fringe media) instead of traditional news on the television or newspaper. In order to demonstrate this I am undertaking both quantitative and qualitative research on a variety of media sources, with a focus on the prolific Alex Jones’ InfoWars. Therefore then, my research is valuable as it undertakes theoretical innovation and performs analysis on both primary and secondary data. This enables a re-application of Hofstadter's theory to the most volatile era in American politics. Fundamentally, the re-packaging of the Paranoid Style provides an alternative to the mainstream arguments of populism in America. Likewise, it demonstrates that those who seized Capitol Hill in January fit the description of Hofstadter’s’ ‘pseudo-conservative’, rather than the contemporary identifications of ‘conspiracists’ or ‘hyper-Republicans’. Thus, this research will provide a new framework to analyse and make sense of American politics.

“I am not America's nightmare, I am the American dream”: Empowerment, policy-making and Afrofuturism in contemporary America

Gabrielle Pelet, [gabrielle.pelet@student.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:gabrielle.pelet@student.manchester.ac.uk)

Why are African-Americans portrayed in mainstream media and pop culture so negatively? And what are the impacts of such a negative portrayal on American policy-making? These are the questions that initiated my dissertation project. In the wake of Black Lives Matter, footage of aggressions of African-Americans saturated social media and television, adding to the long history of negative representation, invisibilisation and fetichisation of this community in pop culture. I thus wondered what impact could a positive and empowering representation of African-Americans in pop culture have on policy making? To do so, I researched the artistic and increasingly political movement of Afrofuturism, embodied by singer and actress Janelle Monae. Through the lyrics and aesthetic of her “emotion picture” Dirty Computer, Monoae offers a stage and a voice to the African American community, setting an example of inclusivity for society. In my dissertation, I aim to show how this Black fictional future could coincide with the major demographic changes taking place in the United States, that is predicted to become a majority-minority country by 2044. Using intersectionality as my theoretical framework, I thus ask myself what lessons policy makers can take from Afrofuturism in order to empower African-American women.

‘British political satire and its effects on public trust in institutions and politicians’

Elizabeth Wallis <elizabeth.wallis@student.manchester.ac.uk>

My dissertation explores the effects of British political satire on public trust in institutions and politicians and on people’s ability to participate in politics. Using an experimental design based on previous research conducted in the US, I test whether satire influences people’s political trust and confidence after being exposed to satire. The main themes discussed in my dissertation are: satire as a force for good through accountability and protest, satire as a source of learning and engagement and finally, discussing whether satire challenges trust in government or breeds cynicism and apathy in the public. Ultimately, I will attempt to answer the question of whether satire makes a difference in British politics and to what extent that influence has a positive or negative effect on democracy in the UK.

‘The Dirty Hands problem: A democratic outlook - How is political morality shaped by the interaction of its (democratic) actors?’

Elli Fischer Elli.fischer@student.manchester.ac.uk

Exploring political ethics is vital in understanding the politicians' role regarding justice and apprehending the democratic public's normative responses to their representatives' conduct. In this paper I will rely upon the Dirty Hands problem (DH) as the practical application of the politicians’ special moral rules, *par excellence*. Acknowledging the genuine character of the DH cases, would help enrich our understanding and appreciation of the political moral experience. Indeed, an integral part of the citizens' judgements is informed by the decisions and policies of their representatives. Consequently, research in political morality ought to supply citizens the tools to better evaluate their representatives' actions, ascribe responsibility, and proclaim democratic transparency and accountability. Although much work has been conducted to seek and understand the nature, justifications and implications of the politicians' special moral rules, there is arguably less literature regarding the interplay between the democratic politicians and the citizens. Through the method of reflective equilibrium, this research project seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Is the democratic dirty hands problem genuine? (2) how does the relation of the democratic citizenry to its leadership ultimately shape political morality? (3) are violations upon democratic conditions the only legitimate constraints to the free exercise of the politicians' (special) powers?

‘A fate worse with debt? Exploring why increasing levels of external debt impacts development for

the African continent, in the case of Zambia’

Joshua Best, <joshua.best@student.manchester.ac.uk>

This thesis argues that Africa’s continued underdevelopment is attributed to the regions increasing reliance on debt and foreign aid. The adoption of structural adjustment programmes for many countries within the continent following the global debt crisis in 1980s, was the beginning of debt traps that many if not all African countries have yet to escape from. Therefore, this research aims to add to existing discussion around developmental discourse in relation to Africa’s underdevelopment, by focusing on the significant role that debt plays in compounding the continent into an impoverished condition and also emphasises the power relations between the global North and

South. As a result, the main argument for this thesis proposes that debt reliance has contributed and more strikingly exacerbated Africa’s underdevelopment. Drawing on the analysis within literature from the debt crisis in the 1980s that forced many SSA countries to adopt structural adjustment programmes, the 2008 recession and recent economic crisis in 2020 will provide an empirical basis to support this argument. Moreover, the significance of my thesis in the context of existing literature is to showcase how debt burdens and reliance in itself can be detrimental for nations within the continent, particularly when situated in economic crises as seen in the 1980s, 2008 and 2020. It also hopes to show that in spite of solutions to extend borrowing periods and restructure debts from Africa’s creditors, this is insufficient as the sheer scope and size of Africa’s debt is unstainable.

Women for the Environment: Examining the Relationship Between Gender and Environmental Attitudes in a Legislative Setting

Kaya Brown <kaya.brown@student.manchester.ac.uk>

In general, there is agreement in the literature that women in the general public tend to exhibit more proenvironmental attitudes and behaviours than their male counterparts. Given that even today many legislatures around the world are comprised of majority men, it suggests that if these pro-environmental attitudes do persist in women at a legislative level, that it could further strengthen the case for increasing the number of women that represent us. Looking closely at the UK as a case study I have found that female MPs are overwhelmingly more likely to vote for measures to prevent climate change. By looking even more in depth, the data suggested that this was true of all political parties, except the Conservative party where male MPs were more likely to display pro-environmental attitudes in votes. This raises questions about the role of gender socialisation and how this interacts with political ideology. Overall, these results have implication for the role that female representatives play in governance and makes the case for increased numbers of female representatives in legislatures in order to further climate change preventative political agendas.

"Structural Adjustment Programmes: useful economic catalysts or problematic welfare destroyers? An analysis of neoliberal IMF policies in Latin America".

Luca Venga [luca.venga@student.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:luca.venga@student.manchester.ac.uk)

The 1982 debt crisis ushered in the Lost Decade for many Latin American countries. Economies stagnated, and conditions deteriorated rapidly. Political upheaval in the context of the Cold War further worsened the situation, and countries from Chile to Cuba became key ideological, if not outright physical, battlefields for the great superpowers. In this context, the IMF/WB-backed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), resting on the cornerstones on privatization, liberalization, and the balancing of payments took on ideological undertones, and were therefore deployed across the region as a near-universal solution, one that promised to reignite ailing economies and create lasting growth for the benefit of all. Yet their impact has been contested, with critics pointing at increased levels of poverty and inequality, whilst defenders claim the benefits of sustainable balance sheets and reduced inflation. This paper seeks to analyze the impact of SAPs on Latin American countries, in order to evaluate whether or not they can truly be considered a useful tool for economists and government officials, or whether they require a comprehensive reform. The results, after a review of the literature and some primary data analysis, are mixed and not conclusive, if slightly negative in the overall impacts of SAPs.

‘Counters to neoliberalism: An exploration into the growing sector of alternative development in South America’

Markos Manolopoulos [markos.manolopoulos@student.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:markos.manolopoulos@student.manchester.ac.uk)

This paper highlights the numerous alternatives to neoliberal development. I will initially highlight some of the key debates surrounding neoliberal development, as well as demonstrating the importance of breaking its’ cultural hegemony over development practices. I will then present the development of alternatives to neoliberal development in South America, focusing on Escobar’s work concerning ‘alternative modernisation’ projects and ‘de-colonial’ projects. These two base strands of thought will be explained in depth and applied to South America’s ‘turn to the left’, particularly focusing on the Buen Vivir movement and its’ effect when re-writing constitutions, helping to propel society toward ‘post-capitalism’, ‘post-liberalism’ and ‘post-statism’. Finally, I will use the case study of EcoSwell to highlight how Escobar’s base ideas can interlink on the micro-level in order to create unique development practices.

‘How can capitalist realism be challenged by a synthesis of ecofeminist and psychoanalytic critique? A case study of fast fashion’

Niamh Donovan <niamh.donovan@student.manchester.ac.uk>

My research combines ecofeminist analysis with psychoanalysis to assess the effects and implications that capitalist realism has had on fashion, and the consequential exploitation of women and the environment. I explore the desire and advertising of fast fashion through this synthesised critique looking particularly at commodity fetishism and libidinal economy, and the ways that fetish and fantasy play in gendered identification and enjoyment. As well as this, I use the concept of disavowal to analyse the perpetuation of unsustainable fashion markets as a result of capitalism. I propose a way forward from here, in traversing the fantasy and transitioning to a repair and trading based economy of fashion. Ecofeminism proposes an ideal counter-libido to fast fashion, which would prioritise ethical and equal work for women, as well as sustainability to prevent more substantial environmental degradation.

‘Are European cities the future pioneers of a green covid recovery?’

Sarah Tegas <sarah.tegas@student.manchester.ac.uk>

Abstract: Covid-19 has proven to be one of those disruptive moments in history that shakes our societal cherished values and encourages us to reflect on the predicament we have left the Earth in. The idea to ‘rebuild better’ became prevalent and made the case possible for a green recovery. Climate action has been depicted as a victim of previous economic crises but the current pandemic might have come at the right time to press the reset button on our destructive systems. Urban areas also appear to be increasingly relevant to the debate as they are in the frontline of the effects of both the pandemic and climate change. This dissertation argues that European cities have taken the opportunity to rethink their mobility, infrastructure and economic systems to pioneer climate action as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. Amsterdam, Milan and Paris are explored in comparison to their national and (European) supranational counterparts on the effects of the covid crisis on the diffusion of green policies. Overall, the research will consider the fact that the pandemic is a recent event with multiple responses still unfolding, leading to a certain degree of uncertainties. The actions taken will therefore be considered during the early stage of the pandemic and its initial triggers.

‘How has IMF policy impacted Latin America since the Washington Consensus and beyond? An investigation into how Bolivia has fared after divorcing from the IMF, as a means to investigate the efficacy and justness of the IMF’

Montgomery Taylor-Proctor <montgomery.taylor-proctor@student.manchester.ac.uk>

The IMF has intervened in many nation-states since the late 1970s, using SAPs they have enforced their neoliberal policies on countries in exchange for emergency loans needed to avoid economic collapse. In this paper I focus my research on the impacts of these policies on Latin America, giving significant attention to Bolivia’s experience of IMF intervention. I perform a case study analysis of Bolivia to assess the efficacy and justness of IMF policy, by comparing the economic and social impacts of policy in 1977-2005, when it was heavily influenced by the IMF, to post-2005, when Evo Morales was elected and shifted the direction of towards political and economic independence from the IMF. I then assess the variance between the IMF’s claims that they are acting in the interests of creating economic growth and improving development in lower-income countries, and the reality of the poor economic and social consequences of their interventions for low-income countries, as well as the growing inequality between countries over the past 40 years. Next, I perform a moral assessment of the IMF’s interventions, and then investigate how and why the global economy should be justly ordered, consulting Thomas Pogge’s negative duty towards the global poor in support of my claims.

‘Loss and Damage through a Climate Justice Lens’

Pooja Kishinani <pooja.kishinani@student.manchester.ac.uk>

The international response to climate change has focused primarily on mitigation and adaptation. The issue of 'Loss and Damage' (L&D) - the climate-related impacts that cannot be avoided through mitigation or adaptation - was formally recognised within the UNFCCC in 2013, after more than two decades of campaigning by Small Island Developing States and non-state actors. However, despite the inclusion of a separate article devoted to L&D in the Paris Agreement, the issue of L&D remains politically contentious. In particular, Parties have held conflicting positions over demands for compensation and liability, and concrete funding mechanisms to address climate-related losses.

Focusing on the evolution of the L&D agenda through a climate justice lens, my paper asks the following question: how have the core justice demands of L&D been accommodated within the UNFCCC? I argue that although L&D was proposed to challenge structures of global inequality, the key justice demands within L&D have been stripped of their subversive meaning through its institutionalisation within the international climate regime. Furthermore, the case study of L&D highlights a more general request for climate justice which the UNFCCC has not yet addressed.

‘Do pre-parliamentary careers affect roles of committee members? A case study of the House of Commons procedure committee’

Nick Rice Nicholas.rice@student.manchester.ac.uk

The roles our MPs take in the House of Commons matters greatly for representation and the functioning of Parliament. There is no prescribed routine or single mould for MPs which gives them considerable flexibility in what they do, meaning that whilst there are 650 MPs there are 650 different ways of doing the same job. Each individual MP’s priorities and experience will shape what kind of MP they are and what role they take up. This research takes a look at whether the career an MP has before being elected to Parliament affects the role they undertake in the Commons. Subsequently, using analysis of contributions in the House, it explores how the role an MP takes affects their behaviour. This research builds on Donald Searing’s influential Westminster’s World where he categorised backbench and leadership roles in the Commons. In exploring this question, I focus on backbench roles, specifically the ‘Good House of Commons person’ subtype and their role on the Procedure Committee. The importance of Parliamentary roles and this research is that it provides the ability to predict and explain behaviour of MPs, which is important for representation and accountability in a well-functioning democracy.

‘Planting Carrots or Planting revolution; An analysis of Permaculture projects as an act of political protest’

Nathan Phipp-MacIntyre nathan.phipp-macintyre@student.manchester.ac.uk

This paper explores the role of prefigurative political action within the case study of Gaskell Garden Project (GGP), a permaculture group based in South Manchester. This analysis was born out of an interest in the ways in which political activity has expanded into areas of the everyday life. As well as this it sought to highlight the increased attention which I argue should be shown to permaculture as a tool to bring about social change. The current literature regarding this research is analysed in order to highlight the lack of academic work which surrounds this field, In particular analysis of permaculture. Connections between social movement theory are used in order to ground this paper within political discourse by utilising the concept of prefigurative politics. This is assessed by discussion with participants, Co-Ordinator’s and founders of the Gaskell Garden Project gathered using semi-structured interviews. The Framework of prefigurative politics, in particular the categorisation by Yates 2015, is used to assess how activities become political in order to separate everyday behaviour from political action. The assessment of Permaculture and GGP concludes with a reflection on the radical, political potential which was found to be present in both the theoretical foundation of permaculture theory and the work of Gaskell Garden Project.

The Road to Workington: Deindustrialisation and the effect it has on Labour's electoral prospects and losing ties to the party

Matthew Suddart <matthew.suddart@student.manchester.ac.uk>

In the early hours of the 13th of December, news filtered through that the historic Labour-held seat of Workington, had been gained by the Conservative Party. The Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson had promised to ‘Get Brexit Done’ and this chimed well with the constituents of Workington who had in 2016, voted to leave the European Union by 61% to 39%. Workington had featured in the election as a bellwether seat which would determine the Labour Party’s fate in the upcoming plebiscite. This was largely due to gaining the honour of achieving a political caricature like ‘Essex Man’. The term ‘Workington Man’ was christened by the Centre-Right think tank Onward as a key target demographic for the Conservative Party to win the 2019 election. It referred to an ‘imagined 45-plus northern leaver, ex-Labour voter and rugby league fan, without a university degree. Whilst this demographic was key to winning the election for The Conservative Party, what about the youth (18-24) cohort of the election demographic in Workington? As a Workington resident and former Local Councillor in Workington, the characterisation by some academics and political commentators in the aftermath of the 2017 and 2019 elections which stated that the new emerging youth electorate (18-24) were young metropolitans and enthused by the values of liberalism, is an incorrect characterisation when referring to towns like Workington. I have used Workington as a case study because I believe it is representative of many other seats which Labour lost at the 2019 election, in that its ethnic minority population is very low (Workington is the whitest constituency in England), it had been a Labour seat for decades and has faced the crushing effects of deindustrialisation. For my research I have conducted interviews with Ian Lavery MP for Wansbeck, Baroness Sue Hayman, who was the MP for Workington between 2015-2019, Lord Campbell-Savours, who was the MP for Workington between 1979-2001, Cllr Alan Smith, former Labour Leader of Allerdale Council and former steelworker, Cllr Laura Smith, Former MP for Crewe, and Prof Will Jennings who has published extensively on the 'Red Wall'. I have also surveyed young people in the constituency on various issues. There is a gap in research on the effect that deindustrialisation has on voters' ties with The Labour Party- What is also key is that due to looser cultural and social ties due to deindustrialisation, what effect this has had on younger people found in 'Red Wall' seats as the pulls that would encourage people to vote for Labour, are now completely different.

‘"If it cannot be measured, it cannot be improved": self-tracking technologies in the neoliberal everyday’

Sofija Ninkovic [sofija.ninkovic@student.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sofija.ninkovic@student.manchester.ac.uk)

In the absence of spatiotemporal structures that organise our productive lives, people are increasingly turning to self-tracking technologies to document, track and organise their productive capacities. This research paper will argue that these technologies serve to uphold the neoliberal order through abstractions – naturalised representations of the capitalist domination which permeate our everyday. To do this, I will use Lefebvre’s conceptualisation of the everyday as the spatiotemporal arrangement where all the mundane activities happen. The everyday is seen as mundane and boring, and thus subordinate to ‘higher’, productive activities. However, for it to be successfully subordinated, individuals must first internalise the logic of capitalist production through abstractions – naturalised representations of market society. Next, I will show how quantification and individualisation are two such abstractions, particularly neoliberal abstractions. Self-tracking technologies are embodiments of both, and thus permeate and organise our everyday lives. Finally, I conclude that although framed as liberatory, self-tracking technologies cannot free us from the homogenisation of neoliberal abstractions.