

**43rd Annual Conference on the
Political Economy of the World-System**
Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg, Germany

April 11-14, 2019

Conference Theme

De-Linking: Critical Thought and Radical Politics

Delinking as a counterstrategy in a structurally unequal world-system has featured prominently in different social science approaches to radical emancipatory politics, from dependency theory and world-systems analysis to decolonial thought. Understood as self-reliance or autonomous development of the peripheries (Amin 1992), as anti- or deglobalization (Bello 2004), as a choice between dewesternization and decolonization (Mignolo 2007) or, more recently, as a comprehensive move to “depatriarchalise, de-racialise, de-tribalise, decolonise, de-imperialise and democratise” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017), the notion of delinking has mobilized critical thought and political imaginations alike. At the same time, an overemphasis on delinking entails the risk of overlooking linkages and multi-directional interactions beyond the modern world-system, or the uneven dynamics of inter-imperiality (Doyle 2014). The 43rd annual conference on the Political Economy of the World-System revisits approaches to (de)linking and the concept’s past and present (re)formulations as economic, sociopolitical, epistemic and cultural paths to pluriversality and a polycentric world. It welcomes both theoretical and empirical treatments of processes of linking and delinking as well as methodological reflections on the terms’ potential for the political economy of the world-system.

1. The Caribbean as a space of (de)linking

The Caribbean has been the site of the most radical acts of delinking from the capitalist world-economy, the Haitian and the Cuban revolutions, both of which have been central to the political imaginary of dependency theorists and decolonial scholars alike. At the same time, more than half of today’s remaining colonies of Western Europe and the United States are located in the Caribbean, making the region the one with the longest colonial linkages in the history of the world-system. We invite papers that take Caribbean experiences as a starting point for exploring the tension between processes of linking and delinking at the level of political structures, epistemic projects, and socioeconomic transformation.

2. The Balkans’ inter-imperial linkages

Since the breakdown of Yugoslavia, the term ‘Balkanization’ has gained currency as a synonym for fragmentation and disaggregation, particularly of state structures, but also of social, economic, and religious orders. However, the *longue durée* of the region commonly stereotyped as ‘the Balkans’ is one in which inter-imperial linkages, economic and political position as buffer zones between pre-modern and modern empires, and the semiperipheral status of most of its economies have provided important nodes in the structure of the world-economy. We are interested in papers that zoom in on the experience of inter-imperial dynamics and

their impact on the Balkans as well as on the empires competing for dominance in the region.

3. Past and present of (de)linking in Africa

The notion of delinking was initially formulated against the background of the administrative decolonization of Europe's colonies in the wake of World War II, of which the emergence of independent African states was an important dimension. Parallel to processes of delinking through independence movements and state socialist governments in the latter half of the twentieth century, the African continent was being periodically and mostly forcefully (re)linked to former and emerging powers through projects such as Eurafrica in the 1950s and its discursive revival by the Sarkozy regime in the late 2000s, French military interventions, currency control, and political influence in its former and remaining African colonies, epitomized by the notion of *Françafrique*, and, more recently, massive Chinese loans, land purchases, and resource extraction from a growing number of African states. We invite papers that deal with the history, present, and prospects of (de)linking processes from an African perspective.

4. Migration as (de)linking

Forced or voluntary migration, particularly colonized and enslaved labor, has provided important material dynamics to inter-imperial and world-systemic linkages by transferring technology, innovation capacity and labor-power to emerging empires or upwardly mobile regions in the world-system at the expense of others. In turn, attempts at delinking such as the state socialist regimes of the 20th century drastically restrict, reduce, or redirect migration to the territories of political and trade allies, with various consequences in terms of economic, cultural, and educational exchanges. We are interested in papers that address the tension between linking/delinking through migration on the one hand and the potential of system stability vs. the emergence of a polycentric order on the other.

5. (De)linking as radical conservative politics

While delinking has been commonly envisaged as a strategy of the periphery, it has periodically been adopted by semiperipheral and core states to either stem a decline into peripheral status (as in the case of the socialisms of the 20th century) or to retain core privileges through protectionism and increased border securitization (as practiced by the world-system's hegemons in the past and a growing number of states in the present). Throughout the world-system, the result of core and semiperipheral states' delinking, dewesternizing, or deglobalizing has brought about growing populism, a retreat into nationalism, and a revival of racist, xenophobic, and anti-gender tactics, as current politics in the USA, UK, Brazil, Hungary or India vividly illustrate. We invite papers that take critical stock of these developments in both the short and the long term.

Conference organization:

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Paper proposals (around 500 words) should be sent by **November 30, 2018** to **pews2019@yahoo.com**. Please include institutional affiliations and contact information for all authors.