

URPE Panels at the Left Forum – 2012

1) Community Economic Development and Worker Cooperatives

Saturday 12 pm, Room W625

Al Campbell • Fred Rose • Djar Horn

– Sponsored by the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (SEN) and URPE –

When times get hard, people often are forced to create their own livelihoods. The current economic crisis has seen an upsurge, especially in poor and marginalized communities, of efforts to create worker cooperatives. This workshop will explore the potential of cooperatives to not only create jobs, but also to consciously contribute to community revitalization and inform alternative strategies of community economic development. This workshop will look at examples of cooperative development in low income communities from the Jersey Shore, NYC and Springfield, MA. We'll discuss lessons about replicating these models along with the economic and community impact of this work.

2) Occupying the Legal System? Practice, Critique and Resistance in the Neoliberal Era

Saturday 12 pm, Room: E309

Joel Kupferman • Thomas Murra • Rajiv Jaswa

This roundtable explores the development of legal institutions and ideas in the US and Europe during the neoliberal era as well as the role left-wing law projects can play in sustaining social movements and radical activism. New York City's mid-1970s fiscal crisis played a central role in enabling the emergence and entrenchment of core neoliberal institutions of urban governance. In October 2011, the Mayor's Office stated that NYC again faces a "dire financial situation," forecasting billion-dollar budget shortfalls for the next several years. Under the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg, fiscal concerns are being used to justify aggressively implementing neoliberal policies, all of which involve the privatization of public services, goods, and spaces – including the eviction of Occupy Wall Street from Zuccotti/Liberty Park. Our discussion will focus on the role of public interest lawyers as advocates for socially, economically, and politically marginalized populations whose interests are directly threatened by the neoliberalization of urban governance. We will address how environmental and land use laws, utilized in public impact cases, provide opportunities, albeit limited, to protect public goods and spaces in the urban commons from private usurpation. By bringing together economists, sociologists, legal theorists and practitioners, this panel will recognize and respond creatively to divisions of intellectual and political labour.

3) Fair Trade as Justice

Saturday 12 pm, Room E325

Tamara Stenn • Dean Cycon • Kerstin Lindgren • Renee Bowers

Fair Trade is loosely defined, made up of different individuals and institutions each with their own guidelines. It is a multi-billion dollar model of cooperation between producers, traders and consumers to create meaningful products that benefit all. It is environmentalism (supporting sustainable farming), human rights (fair wages, decent working conditions) and empowerment – "respect and dignity for all." Tamara Stenn will give an intro to Fair Trade and talk about her 15 years working in Fair Trade with women of the Andes Mountains and her ongoing academic studies on the effect of Fair Trade on indigenous women. Dean Cycon will speak of his model of direct trade – and how he develops long term, meaningful relationships with producers, without engaging a Fair Trade institution, and ensures higher than Fair Trade prices being paid for premium products. Kerstin Lindgren will speak about domestic fair trade (DFTA), the challenges to US farmers and farmworkers, and the DFTA model for uniting farmers, workers, businesses and NGOs under a common vision of a more just agriculture system. Renee Bowers will speak about the Fair Trade Federation, the largest association of fully committed Fair Trade organizations in the US, and the important work being done to improve conditions and lives for Fair Trade producers. She will address the ways in which Fair Trade goes beyond labor rights to address issues of economic justice. Time will be allocated for audience questions and participation.

4) The Impact of Tax Policy on Job Creation and Poverty

Saturday 12 pm, Room W504

Laura Ebert • Michelle Holder • Christine D'Onofrio

"The Payroll Tax Cut, Tax Policy, & Job Creation": The payroll tax cut became a highly politicized issue in 2011. What did it really mean for the average worker in America, and how does tax policy affect job creation in general? "Policy Affects Poverty: Taxation and the Poverty Rate": The talk will explain New York City's alternative poverty measure and how this alternative measure clarifies the role that tax credits currently play in offsetting poverty. "Tax Policy as Economic Ideology": what is the theoretical foundation of GOP claims that cutting taxes on corporations and rich people creates jobs?? – An overview of Say's Law –

5) The Struggle for Full Employment, Past and Present

Saturday 5 pm, Room W401

Trudy Goldberg • Chuck Bell • Helen Ginsberg

It has become clear that the issue of unemployment is the most important aspect of the current crisis to the majority of working Americans, surpassing the two other extremely important issues of home losses and bank malfeasance. Helen Ginsberg will explore New Deal job creation efforts and FDR's Economic Bill of Rights and the two major post-WAR attempts to secure full employment. Full employment, the presentation shows, will take a fundamental break with neo-liberalism and a reorientation of power from big business and Wall Street to middle- and working-class people and will require the full-scale social movement that both earlier struggles lacked. Trudy Goldberg will identify, explore and suggest means for dealing with nine specific political and strategic challenges to government job creation sufficiently large and well-targeted to cope with mass unemployment. The presentation will consider if and how Occupy Wall Street mitigates and modifies these challenges. Chuck Bell will speak on Building a Progressive Job Creation Agenda. The government has ceded the initiative it could use to champion a significant federal role in job creation to advocates of fiscal austerity. This presentation will review and critique current, pending job creation legislation, both small-scale and moving toward full employment. The presentation will also highlight opportunities to communicate a bolder vision, build cross-sectoral coalitions, educate the public and energize grassroots activists.

6) Transformative Strategies in a Time of Capitalist Austerity

Sunday 10 am, Room E305

Michael Meeropol • Chris Rude • Sara Burke • Mario Candeias • Ken Zinn

The dramatic failure of accountability – even the appearance of accountability – on the part of governments and the financial sector, which failed to grasp the historic injustice of saving banks at the expense of people, and which responded with calls for harsh austerity, culminated in 2011 and propelled the globalization of social protest, realized in revolutions in the Arab region and North Africa and in the Occupy Movement in Europe, Israel/Palestine and North America. The Occupy movement is a democratic truth-event, a call for radical equality. The movement has allowed those who previously had no voice in formal political discourse to be heard on their own terms by breaking with and dissolving the coerced orthodoxy that there are no alternatives to capitalist democracy. By exposing and questioning the stupefying inequity of existing social relationships, it has placed the possibility of a radical transformation of capitalism on the agendas of the Left, for progressives, radicals and revolutionaries of many tendencies. This panel seeks to raise a number of questions that are strategically important to the movement about a) the inequity and inequality that characterize contemporary capitalism, b) how the Occupy Movement's revolutionary potential can be realized in practice, c) what is unique about today's revolutionary practice and d) the role that rank-and-file workers as well as trade unions might play in this process.

7) Occupy Wall Street, and Main Street, and the White House, Not just Physically, but Socially: Design Socialism!

Sunday 12 pm, Room E327

David Laibman • Al Campbell • Renate Bridenthal • Dario Azzellini

– Sponsored by Science & Society and URPE –

Even in periods when the political forces necessary to begin building socialist societies do not yet exist, the careful envisioning of socialism -- methods of coordination, principles of decision making, exact plans to raise solidararian consciousness, increase meaningful participation and overcome long-existing divisions – is hugely important. Thinking grandly, but also rigorously, about alternatives to capitalist polarization and crisis helps the 99% do what needs doing in the present. It is time we begin comparing, critiquing and aligning our visions of what a post-capitalist society can and should be. This panel is presented in conjunction with the appearance of a Special Issue of Science & Society: "Designing Socialism: Visions, Projections, Models," Vol. 76, No. 2, April 2012.

8) Iran: Current State of Affairs

Sunday 12 pm, Room W610

Hamideh Sedghi • Tom O'Donnell • Hamid Zangeneh • Reza Ghorashi

Four panelists will discuss current social, political, economic, and international affairs of Iran.

9) Occupy the Economy! Building a Solidarity Economy for People and Planet

Sunday 3 pm, Room W602

Emily Kawano • Craig Borowiak • Al Campbell • Ana Margarida Esteves

– Sponsored by the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (SEN) and URPE –

Occupy the economy! The time is now to push for an economy that serves the 99% instead of the wealthy and powerful elites. This workshop will provide an introduction to the solidarity economy – a growing global movement to build an economy that puts people and planet front and center. It is grounded in principles of solidarity, equity in all dimensions (race, class, gender, etc.), sustainability, participatory democracy and pluralism (ie. not a one-size fits all approach). The solidarity economy builds on many existing practices and policies – both mainstream and alternative - and seeks to strengthen and connect these stepping stones to a just and sustainable economic system. The solidarity economy believes that it is critical to both build and resist – that is, build and strengthen solidarity economy practices such as worker cooperatives, community land trusts, or social currencies and also resist the oppression of corporate-dominated capitalism. This workshop will provide an introduction to the conceptual framework, the global movement

including the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, and concrete examples of the solidarity economy.

10) Understanding the Essential Economic Role of the New York Times

Sunday 3 pm, Room W603B

Preeti Paul • Robert Chernomas • Ian Hudson, Chris Spannos

The New York Times can credibly be considered the most influential newspaper in the United States, and arguably the world. The standard debate over its nature concerns its "bias," with some claiming that it is left wing or liberal and others arguing that it is right wing or conservative. This debate misses (and in fact obfuscates) its essential nature, supporting long run profitability for U.S. business, which involves both liberal and conservative policies in different contexts. This panel will discuss and document this essential economic role through a careful examination of the Times' star commentators, and its coverage of the issues of macroeconomics, regulation, foreign policy, and the 2008–2009 economic crisis. Robert Chernomas and Ian Hudson will both develop the above argument, drawing on their book that thoroughly details it, "The Gatekeeper: 60 Years of Economics According to The New York Times." Chris Spannos will present on Unspinning Occupy Wall Street and the Struggle for Economic Justice. The session will allocate time for audience questions and participation.