

Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) Sponsored and Co-sponsored Panels at the Left Forum – 2016

1) Climate Justice and Energy Democracy after Paris

Session 1. Saturday 10:00 – 11:50, Room 1.115

Brian Tokar • Sean Sweeney • Darcey O'Callaghan • Senowa Mize-Fox • Tadzio Mueller

While elite interests proclaimed the 2015 Paris climate conference a success, climate justice activists denounced near-fatal flaws in the process. The voluntary climate "contributions" announced by various countries are clearly far from adequate to prevent increasing climate chaos. We will explore the continuing responses by groups committed to climate justice, as well as the prospects for a more radical and forward-looking movement. Participants will share experiences and outlooks from international, labor, water protection, environmental justice and social ecology perspectives.

2) The Communalist Turn: Bookchin and the Quest for Confederal Direct Democracy

Session 2. Saturday 12:00 – 1:50, Room L.76

Eleanor Finley • Brian Tokar • Daniel Chodorkoff • Chaia Heller

We are standing at a most unique historical moment of crisis and opportunity. In the Middle East, while ISIS is assembling into a violent state-like formation, a multi-ethnic coalition led by Kurdish revolutionaries is exploring how to build a stateless democracy based on principles of self-governance, gender-equality, ethnic pluralism, and communal economy. Meanwhile, in Europe and the U.S., discontent is growing over the prevailing social order. Reform politicians such as Bernie Sanders and Bill DeBlasio in the US and Left-wing parties like Syriza and Podemos in Europe have successfully marshaled recent tides of dissatisfaction, yet are rendered structurally incapable of posing coherent and holistic solutions. We too can consider a social and ecological revolution toward popular assemblies. This panel presents and debates the politics of Communalism (a concept developed by the late Leftist philosopher Murray Bookchin and renewed in the emergent formulation of democratic confederalism by Kurdish political leader Abdullah Ocalan) from a historical perspective. What kind of institutions are necessary to bring about a society committed to ecology, anti-racism, gender equality, and a non-capitalist economy? How do we address seemingly disparate social issues while working to provide a holistic and democratic alternative? Please join us as we approach these challenging and dynamic questions.

3) Reprimarization: Implications for the Environment and Development

Session 3. Saturday 3:30 – 5:15, Room 1.115

Paul Cooney • Terisa Turner • Terran Giacomini

There has been a tendency throughout Latin America, in recent decades of the expansion of activities associated with reprimarization. The latter refers to all activities of extractivism, such as mining and petroleum, as well as agricultural activities, such as cattle and soy. These are linked to the strong growth of the commodities markets and the amazing growth of China. This paper examines the implications for both the environment and development, in general, and considers the currently active development trajectories critically and presents alternative trajectories of development for the region. In examining the shift to reprimarization in Latin America there are a range of key impacts on the environment. The following issues are very much connected to the shifts toward reprimarization: (1) deforestation of the Amazon Rain Forest linked to, lumber, cattle and soy; (2) air, water, and soil pollution linked to the use of pesticides, and mining; (3) soil erosion as a result of mining and soy. There are also major socio-environmental issues around the issue of hydroelectric dams, strongly tied to mining. Many progressives are calling into question this extractivist model of development. Beyond the environment, major concerns are with respect to industry, wages, informal work, and the

perennial problem of being just primary goods providers to the first world, rather than seeking a means by which a serious alternative development trajectory could be pursued.

4) Crisis of Neoliberalism and Opportunities for the Left

Session 3. Saturday 3:30 – 5:15, Room 8.67

Al Campbell • Robert Chernomas • Ricardo Fuentes-Ramírez • David Kotz

Neoliberalism emerged around 1980. It is widely held by liberal and radical commentators and researchers that neoliberal capitalism is currently in some sort of crisis. This panel explores how neoliberalism has worked and the nature of the crisis of neoliberal capitalism that began in 2008. In particular, it also addresses the issue of the opportunities for the left that come out of the nature of the current crisis.

5) Climate Change, Environmental Movements and O'Connor's Second Contradiction of Capitalism

Session 4. Saturday 5:20 – 7:10, Room 1.115

Paul Cooney • David Schwartzman • Joel Kupferman

One of the main contributions that link up global capitalist expansion and the impact on the environment was made by James O'Connor. He argues that as a result of the second contradiction of capitalism, there are devastating environmental consequences, but also impacts threatening the viability of capitalist firms, if not capitalism itself. He has argued that this contradiction is tied to the growth of environmental movements, which can come to challenge the sustainability of the capitalist system. In addition to a discussion of O'Connor's original contribution, the importance of environmental activism in struggles related to large-scale mining, hydroelectric dams, and climate change is presented. A stimulating ecosocialist contribution on solar communism and fossil fuel dependence is also presented in light of O'Connor's work and the debate over climate change.

6) Coops in Socialist Cuba: a Major Social Change

Session 4. Saturday 5:20 – 7:10, Room 1.103

Ricardo Fuentes-Ramírez • Isaac Saney • Al Campbell

The general blueprint for Cuba's economic updating (reforms) calls for a large-scale extension of workers coops from agriculture to the majority non-agricultural sector of the economy. Typical for Cuba, this process has begun with experiments, and following the evaluation of these experiments and the resulting improvements in the process, the development of non-agricultural coops is projected to be strongly promoted. This panel will consider where this process is at, what it means for Cuba's economy, and what it means for Cuba's project to build socialism.

7) Expanding the Fightback against Neoliberalism

Session 6. Sunday 12:00 – 1:50, Room 1.125

Cyrus Bina • Bill Goldsmith • Peg Rapp • Barbara Garson

Neoliberalism's world-wide weak economic performance since its 2008-9 Great Recession has led to deteriorating conditions of life for much of humanity. This panel considers specific proposals for expanding the fightback against neoliberalism internationally, in US cities, and from the perspectives of gender, race and class.