



Global Imaginaries of Economic and Aesthetic Values – Launching seminar

The research environment Imaginaries of Value, financed by the Swedish Research Council 2023-2028, will be launched with an open seminar on April 24. The seminar will explore the key ideas that prompt our specific inquiry into imaginaries of value. It will inquiry into the intersection between imaginaries of value and globalization, especially in relation to the worlds of contemporary art and design. It wishes to tackle how the intersection has produced tensions between speculation and material reality of aesthetics, work, and everyday life when global and local processes intertwine. Its presumption is that we live in an imagined global village, financially and aesthetically, and this has fundamentally transformed the understanding of the arts, economics as well as subject formation. Yet, although subject formation, aesthetics, and economics have changed, old hierarchies of value persist.

The seminar will introduce and explore the key ideas that prompt our specific inquiry into imaginaries of value. To think about imaginaries of value is to bracket off both the subjective and objective definitions of value in order to consider collective yet divisive perspectives, shared yet contested images, which are the lived reality of value in an uneven system of global “coeval coexistence” (Massey 2005). The seminar will thus inquiry the intersection between imaginaries of value and globalization, especially in relation to the worlds of contemporary art and design. It wishes to tackle how the intersection has produced tensions between speculation and material reality of aesthetics, work, and everyday life when global and local processes intertwine. Its presumption is that we live in an imagined global village, financially and aesthetically, and this has fundamentally transformed the understanding of the arts, economics as well as subject formation. Yet, although subject formation, aesthetics, and economics have changed, old hierarchies of value persist.

In the arts a central imaginary in the Western world is that we live in times of globalization-from-above of art and design (Petersen 2017). This, in the form of an institutional and discursive curatorial ideal that favors global international art events (Philipsen 2008) that call on trustworthy themes that circulate between large, globalized art and design scenes (Carroll 2007). In economics since the fall of the Berlin wall, until the recent comeback of protectionism, the dominant imaginary has been the good of global market liberalism and the growth of speculative financialization. It has also meant that the distinction between aesthetics and economics, speculation and material reality has morphed and been blurred. Also, David Lloyd shows that “aesthetic culture itself” is a dominant social imaginary - the racial regime of representation - that “constitutes the formal principles of racist discourse” insofar as racism relies on “a distribution of values” (Lloyd 2019) that aesthetic philosophy provides and continues to maintain.

As Marina Vishmidt (2018) argues, the arts have seen their space of possibility expand, territorially and institutionally, through their creative and speculative dimension. Speculative subjectivity has at large intensified and is increasingly affirmed in the figure of the entrepreneur that shapes the tense intersection between global and local and uses imaginaries of value aesthetically and economically in her entrepreneuring. In the arts, this has both been affirmed and questioned through speculative practices that aim to create critical breaks between subjectification and reification.

Likewise, the economy, not the least through financialization made possible by deregulations and networked technologies have expanded territorially across the global and through how it has become fundamental to financing everyday life; peoples housing, education, and pension. Its speculative dimensions, viewed as creative, when gathering, just like interdisciplinary artists, diverging “empirical” phenomena into supposedly profitable derivatives, has led to intensified risk governance of work and welfare and the intensification of pure exchange value over use value. In its wake it has transformed people’s subjectivity, and the role of art, assigned an instrumental use value while also being a pure exchange value. What unites art and financialization is that they are practices and processes of speculative self-valorization and self-expansion as well as their imagined institutional autonomy from everyday life.

The format and the speakers

The seminar is organized in three dialogues, inquiring into imaginaries of values in the uneven system of global “coeval coexistence”, in which they are produced aesthetically and economically and whose aesthetics and economics they produce.

Dialogue 1 – *Art, work and imaginaries of value*

Costas Lapavistas and Dave Beech will discuss imaginaries of value related to art and work

Dialogue 2 - *Racial Capitalism and Cultural Expression*

Jordanna Matlon and Erling Björgvinson will engage in a dialogue on the relationship between racial capitalism, gender and popular culture. Matlon’s research probes how

“Blackness” operates as a signifier, intersects with gender norms, manifests in popular culture, and illuminates our understanding of political economy in urban Africa and the African diaspora. She uses history and ethnography to theorize racial capitalism and the political economy of patriarchy in the production of Black masculinity. Björgvinsson is currently working on preparatory work related the service and campaign geared at young adults and their reproductive health and future gains in Ghana. He is interested in how the design company IDEO, Marie Stopes Kenya, and Marie Stopes International, who developed the service and campaign, activate imaginaries related to the political economy and gender are shaped by Western humanitarianism, humanitarian design, and racial capitalism.

Dialogue 3 – Digitally valuating: Art, scarcity and NFTs

Elena Raviola and Valeria Ferrari will discuss how sociotechnical imaginaries value and aesthetics intersect in new digital infrastructures, like NFTs. Ann Ighe will respond to the dialogues and moderate a final discussion, closing the seminar.

Bios

Costas Lapavitsas is a Professor of Economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is a member of Research on Money and Finance (RMF), which has had considerable impact on the European debate and policy making. His longer-term research interests, however, have been on the financialisation of capitalism, its characteristic trends, variable forms and manifold implications for contemporary society. His previous publications include *Social Foundations of Markets, Money and Credit* and *Political Economy of Money and Finance*.

Dr. Jordanna Matlon is Associate Professor of Global Urban Studies at the School of International Service, American University, and a visiting fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse. Her multiple award-winning book, *A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism* (Cornell University Press) investigates the relationship between masculinity, work, and globalization in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. Her new book, *Blackness as Being: Black Survival in the Age of Climate Catastrophe* (under contract, Polity Press), bridges literatures on surplus populations, climate change, and racial capitalism to theorize the possibilities and precariousness of species-survival in the Anthropocene. It offers Blackness as an analytic to think with the paradox of precarious possibility – of past and present modalities of survival and of futures alternatively devastating or liberatory.

Erling Björgvinsson is Professor of Design at HDK-Valand, Gothenburg University. His research focuses the dynamics of power and change as they are imagined and carried out in art and design through historical and material practices that enable, direct, and restrict ways of being and imagining. Currently he is heading a six-year long practice-based research project titled *Imaginaries of Value: Site and Mobility in Globalised Art and Design Practices Through Their Creative and Administrative Uses of Paper*. Recently he worked on the research project *PLACED: Accommodating refugees and asylum seekers and the spatial production of hospitality and otherness* where he focused on imaginaries of possessive

whiteness, Othering, and racial banishment in relation to asylum seekers and minoritized citizens in Denmark.

Dave Beech is a Reader, an artist and the author of a series of academic books that have transformed the field of the political economy of art. As an artist he has exhibited at the Venice biennial, the Liverpool biennial, the Guangzhou biennial, the Istanbul biennial and the Liverpool biennial. He has also organised many artist-led events and institutions including curating major exhibitions in New York, London and Manchester.

Elena Raviola is Torsten and Wanja Söderberg Professor in Design Management at HDK-Valand, and director of Business and Design Lab (HDK-Valand and the School of Business, Economics and Law). She has a long experience with ethnographic studies in creative industries in different countries and has written extensively about negotiations of value in organizations and institutions. Her wide network in the organization and management scholarly community will allow the research environment to make artistic research relevant for other scholarly communities, interested in imaginaries of value.

Valeria Ferrari is affiliated researcher at the Institute of Network Cultures and a member of the collective Slutty Urbanism. With the latter, she explores provocative digital rituals to contrast the hegemonic imaginary of platformisation through systemic errors and glitches. She is founder and former editor of the Glossary of Decentralised Technosocial Systems hosted by the Internet Policy Review. During her PhD at the University of Amsterdam, within the Blockchain and Society Policy and Research Lab, she investigated policymaking discourses around digital platforms and decentralized technologies, focusing on payment and value systems.

Ann Ighe is a senior lecturer in economic history at University of Gothenburg, a writer, critic and the editor of cultural journal Ord&Bild.