

Call for Papers: National Borders in the 21st Century

XXXVth Conference of the Political Economy of the World-System

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The social sciences historically developed under the premise that societies are delineated by national boundaries. Nation-states and their governments are believed to be the primary sites of social action, thus processes within and interactions between them became the cornerstones of social-scientific analysis. Yet ongoing transformations in the ways national boundaries both shape and are shaped by economic, political, and cultural forces challenge perspectives that continue to see nationally bounded space as the only relevant one for societal and political action. As we begin the second decade of the 21st Century, this conference will consider new ways of thinking about national borders – the analytical and empirical challenges, as well as the normative and political issues. How is law, work, identity, and community being affected by shifting meanings of borders? To what extent does social change, social justice, and collective action unfold inside (or outside, or across) national borders? This conference calls for papers under this general theme and that qualify under the following interrelated sub-themes:

Sub-Theme #1: Rule of Power or Rule of Law? State Sovereignty and Global Governance

Will the 21st Century become a post-national era? While arguments surrounding the decline of the nation-state and the subordination of state sovereignty are not new, others claim that global processes are reasserting the importance of national borders. To what extent do territorial boundaries still determine the primary source of jurisdictional authority, the centralized means of violence, and the fundamental identity of individuals? Is the sovereignty based model of international law becoming superseded? In favor of what? Is there a future for transnational solidarity or effective democratization beyond the nation-state?

Sub-Theme #2: Crossing Borders: Global Inequality and the Migration of People and Communities

According to the United Nations, close to 200 million people reside somewhere other than their country of origin; in the United States alone over 12 percent of current residents were born elsewhere. The unprecedented multidirectional movement of people around the world involves new patterns of transnational migration, identity, and community. At the same time many rights claims are about crossing borders – rights to mobility, rights of migrant labor, rights to economic opportunity, or to political asylum. What are the potential effects of migration for receiving as well as sending countries? How are states and other institutions regulating migration flows? What are the impacts for national politics as well as international economic inequality?

Sub-Theme #3: Citizenship, and Human Rights

While citizenship previously existed only in the context of a national polity, human rights are increasingly being discussed as having a universal property. How is this dilemma – the innate human rights of people everywhere and the exclusive social rights of citizens of sovereign states – being renegotiated today? How are new forms of belonging and association operating on global, national, and local scales? How are new modes of inclusion and social closure operating in different geo-political contexts and under the aegis of a transnational Human Rights Regime?

Sub-Theme #4: New Global Flows and Predicaments

To what extent are social problems, and activism mobilized to solve them, taking place in “debounded spaces?” How are intensified flows of illicit global commodities – drugs, arms, toxic waste, counterfeits, trafficked people – challenging the legal boundaries and property institutions of the nation-state system? Similarly, how are global environmental threats – warming, deforestation, pollution, food and water shortages – challenging the ability of self-interested nation-states to respond? Are new forms of political mobilization and transnational activism leading to transformations in cross-border communities and civil societies?

Please submit proposals electronically to Timothy P. Moran (timothy.p.moran@stonybrook.edu). Submissions should include a one-page proposal and full contact information for all authors by **December 19, 2010**. Accepted papers will be considered for a planned edited volume. Conference proceedings at Stony Brook University, SUNY with accommodation in quaint Port Jefferson Village, New York.