



Call for papers for an *ephemera* special issue on:

## Whither emergence?

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The theme of this special issue was inspired by the location of our 2015 conference, which took place in Moscow, the capital of a country that is often referred to as ‘emerging’. What does it mean – we thought – and (how) can it be mobilized to mean something else?

When we speak of an ‘emerging’ country/market/economy, ‘emerging’ – a politically correct version of what previously was called ‘lesser developed’ – refers to an entity that has supposedly opened its doors to growth-oriented capitalism and is catching up with the ‘developed’ countries of this world. Such ‘emergence’ is problematic in at least two ways.

First, it creates divisions and maintains a hierarchy between them – ‘developed’ vs ‘emerging’, where the latter is positioned as lagging behind. Be it some mainstream business magazine or a critical left-wing journal, such divisions are constantly reproduced: developed – developing, First World – (ex-)Second/Third World, North – South, West – East. There are, of course, geo-political and cultural differences that have implications for analysing certain areas separately (e.g. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Gorbach and Salamanyuk, 2014), as well as for epistemologies to do this from, without succumbing to the global coloniality of knowledge (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Castro-Gómez, 2007; Tlostanova, 2012). However, ‘the “West” [‘developed’, ‘First World’, ‘North’] – that damned word! – names this disjunction’ (Badiou, 2008: 60),

suggesting the replication of and aspiration towards the path it has taken as the only possible option for humanity. At this conference we propose to problematize these divisions and explore how they have come to be instituted.

Second, the meaning of ‘emergence’ here functions as capitalist teleology. However, facing ecological, economic, social and political crises, the ‘vanguard’ countries of this world seem to have an unpredictable vector. While more and more vitality is squeezed out from human lives, austerity, rising precarity (Standing, 2011) and inequality (Piketty, 2014) are given in return. The countries that have stepped on the path of such emergence, having adopted some forms of neoliberalism locally, are not necessarily in bloom either (Dale, 2011). Furthermore, it is no secret that such emergence takes place at the expense of certain localities and groups of people (Escobar, 1995; Badiou, 2008).

Ironically, one of the crucial issues arising in the world that has ‘emerged’ in such a way is whether there are any alternatives to it. However, even though ‘anti-emergence’ (similarly to ‘anti-development’) seems to be the only response to ‘emergence’ in capitalist terms, we do not want to discharge the word itself. Perhaps the notion of emergence – if understood differently – can help us (re-)imagine alternatives.

Emergence – coming from Latin *e-* ‘out, forth’ + *mergere* ‘to dip’ – suggests openness, undecidedness and multiple potentialities. For example, it may be defined as ‘the process of becoming visible after being concealed’ (Oxford dictionary, online). This opens a myriad of ways to think about emergence, which is exactly what we would like to invite the conference participants to do. As a philosophical notion ‘emergence’ can actually prevent the division between the social world and the world of nature (e.g. Gare, 2002; Pueyo, 2014), which characterises the dominant ways of knowing. Or Agamben’s (2005) elaboration of Benjamin’s (2003) concept of a ‘real state of emergency’ might be used to ‘expose, demystify and unwork the mystical foundations of authority, freeing human beings to be what they are and do what they will’ (McQuillan, 2011: 97).

Alternative understandings of emergence can be searched within both places that have ‘emerged’ in capitalist terms and places that are ‘emerging’, having not yet become as locked into the modern ‘iron cages’ of capitalism. Or can they? Should these be searched for within or outside the political? Another way to explore the meanings of emergence would be to ask what modes of thought and forms of organizing are not emerging or not allowed to emerge in the world of growth-oriented capitalism. What did not emerge in the past (e.g. Gare, 1993; Shubin, 2006)? Alternatively, it is precisely utopia(nism) and its representations (for example, in art and literature) where inspiration for another understanding of ‘emergence’ – not constrained by the crude realities of our lives – could be sought.

In this special issue, we call for problematization of all sorts of divisions of the

world and exploration of how they come to be instituted. We also suggest to reclaim the notion of ‘emergence’ by thinking what it might mean if detached from the aims of capitalist renewal and how it can be mobilized to (re-)imagine a world that is worth striving for.

Possible topics include, but are by no means limited to the following:

- Problematization of all sorts of divisions – geographical or epistemic
- Institutionalization of geographical and epistemic divisions
- Problematization and meanings of the notion of ‘emergence’
- Genealogy of the notion of ‘emergence’
- (Non-)emerging forms of being and organizing
- (Non-)emerging modes of thought
- (Past) failed attempts of emergence
- The politics of (non-)emergence
- (Real) state(s) of emergency
- Emergence and utopia
- Emergence in art and literature

### **Deadline for submissions: 31 October 2015**

All contributions should be submitted to the issue editors: Ekaterina Chertkovskaya (ekaterina.chertkovskaya@fek.lu.se), Konstantin Stoborod (ks302@leicester.ac.uk) and Christian Garmann Johnsen (cgj.mpp@cbs.dk). *ephemera* encourages contributions in a variety of formats including articles, notes, interviews, book reviews, photo essays and other experimental modes of representation. Information about some of these types of contributions can be found at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/call-for-papers>. The submissions will undergo a double blind review process. All submissions should follow *ephemera*'s submission guidelines, which are available at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit>. For further information, please contact one of the special issue editors.

This special issue is associated to the *ephemera* conference ‘Whither emergence?’ that took place at the NCCA Moscow, Russia, 6-7 May 2015. Conference participants as well as contributors that did not participate in the conference are encouraged to submit to the special issue.

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