

De-colonizing Disability Theory I: Crippling Development

International interdisciplinary conference organized jointly by the Department of Gender Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague, the Gender Research Office, University of Vienna and with support of the Czech Academy of Science and the Department for Development Studies, University of Vienna.

Dates: September 19-21, 2013

Venue: Czech Academy of Science, Prague

Proposal Deadline: June 30, 2013

Confirmation of acceptance: July 15, 2013

The organizers of the conference wish to provide space for critical dialogue between disability studies and studies of Central and Eastern Europe, postcolonial studies, global and development studies. This year's interdisciplinary meeting focuses on mapping out the ways in which development policies and strategies as well as the very concept itself allow for or contribute to upholding global inequalities.

For instance, a growing number of both disability scholars and activists is calling for a sustained and critical engagement with the ways in which disability policies and rights agendas carried out in the name of global development reinscribe the hegemony of the global North. This diagnosis however does not only apply to a presumed North/South axes. Similar critique has been directed at the narratives of development that frame the transformation of the Eastern and Central European countries from communism/socialism into capitalism (and their subsequent inclusion into the European Union); such narratives have served to reproduce the hegemonic notion of the "progressive West" and the "backwards Eastern" peripheries and were instrumentalized in transmission of neoliberal capitalism. These processes have had very specific impact on lives of people with disabilities, on their political/activist formations as well as on state disability policies and their recent austerity cuts.

Furthermore, on the level of the epistemological, conceptual and political foundations the field of disability studies is implicated in global hegemony. As Helen Meekosha phrases it, disability studies practice "scholarly colonialism" by leaving the spaces of the global South "assumed." As a result, the social and material realities of many disabled and crip lives remain under-theorized. Moreover, both in the post-socialist spaces and in the global South, the absence of disability identity-frameworks and recognizable (i.e. "western") political agendas is often perceived as a lack of political consciousness. Thus, a thorough engagement of disability theory with "southern disabled bodies" (Connell) and the "post-socialist crip" is long overdue.

In particular, the organizers seek work that engages with (but does not have to be limited to) the following questions and lines of interrogations:

What are the connections and contingencies between the concepts of development (but also backwardness, stagnation, chronicity), transnational capitalism and disability?

How do development agendas that arguably contribute to disability rights, politics of provision, nation building and crisis management, sustain or even exacerbate global redistribution of poverty and inequalities?

How does the ideology of development legitimize, and rely upon, processes of globalizing care and outsourcing care facilities towards the global South and/or Eastern Europe?

How do structures of neocolonialism inform relationships between the disabled subjects of the global North/West and the disabled subjects of the global South/East?

And what would it mean to embrace notions of chronicity, stagnation and debility (in this context)?

How would disability theory enriched with various forms of situated knowledges challenge scholarly colonialism and forms of North/Western hegemony?

Where are the spaces for disability critique? And how do these locations shape the thought and knowledge within respective disability theories?

What relationships develop between knowledge production and political activism/agency on the one hand and political institutions on the other hand?

What forms of epistemological and political alliances open at the intersections of various categories? What are the hurdles to such alliances?

And finally, what would disability/crip studies look like from the perspective of global “peripheries”? What forms of knowledge might be produced by these perspectives?

The organizers encourage intersectional work that engages with disability and cripness in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, class and other socially produced categories of difference and hierarchy. We will consider work that has import to the broader questions raised by the call, even if it does not address the concept of development in an explicit way.

The organizers wish to make the conference a non-hierarchical space of collegial support and we encourage junior scholars to apply. The conference language is English and the conference will be held in Prague.

So far, the confirmed speakers are

- **Darja Zaviršek**, Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, and
- **Mel Y. Chen**, Associate Professor of Gender & Women's Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

Please send a 500 Word abstract for individual presentation, a workshop or a thematic panel by June 30, 2013

to crippingdevelopment2013@univie.ac.at.

For more information visit the conference

website: <http://gender.univie.ac.at/crippingdevelopment2013>

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*De-colonizing Disability Theory I: Crippling Development wants to continue in
discussions opened by the conference Crippling Neoliberalism (2010; Prague).*