

Call for Papers

**Capturing the Moving Mind:
Management and Movement in the Age of Permanently Temporary War**

**An ephemera conference on the Trans-Siberian train (Moscow–Novosibirsk–Beijing),
10-20 September 2005**

www.ephemeraweb.org/conference

In September 2005 a meeting will take place on the Trans-Siberian train from Moscow via Novosibirsk to Beijing. The purpose of this meeting is a ‘cosmological’ one. We would like to gather a group of people, researchers, philosophers, artists and others interested in the changes going on in society and engaged in changing society as their own moving image, an image of time. Spatially moving bodies and bodies moving in time (through the different time zones) could create an event, a meeting that not really ‘is’ but ‘is going on’.

Today it is impossible to restrict production to the closed time and place of the ‘factory-office’. Production has become spatially boundless and temporarily endless: the factory-office and its borders have dissolved into society, into a multitude of productive singularities whose productivity cannot be reduced to actual production, to any actual mode of existence, to any historical time. The labour force has rather increasingly detached from its spatial, physical and biological aspects and become a ‘mental category’. The generic human capacities – intellect, perception and linguistic-relational abilities – which make human beings ‘humans’, have replaced machinery and direct labour in the core of value creation. The mental labour force does not have strict spatial and temporal coordinates; it rather moves in time and unrolls over the boundaries and hierarchies of space. To understand the changed dynamics of creation and the social cooperation at its centre we must perhaps move beyond the borders and beyond the immediately visible.

Yet the constitutive political problem in today’s knowledge society, or knowledge economy, is not that different from what it was in industrial capitalism: how to govern, organize and control the labour force. But it is impossible to organize, control and locate cooperation between minds through the place it belongs to and through the deeds it does. The new forms of organization and control, like the permanently temporary war, arise precisely from the insufficiency of power in a situation where institutionalized modern forms of power confront ‘unclassified’ people: moving people, people in trains, singularities, individuals whose actions and orientation cannot be figured on the basis of their belonging to this or that community, or on the basis of performing this or that task; that is, when power confronts human beings as bare humans. To be able to organize and control human beings as *bare* human beings, the new forms of control cannot afford to be withheld or slowed down by any particular institution and their particular tasks, but they must target the possibilities of life in general (both corporeal and incorporeal).

By opposing traditional disciplinary conceptions of power and the concept of control, it is possible to say that power operates on particular actions and subjects in space. Its target is the physical or biological human being. Power seeks its justification from particular institutions and

their functions (the factory produces goods, the hospital takes care of illness, research is done in the university, the army takes care of war). Control, instead, operates on the bare conditions of action, on the possibilities of life in general. Unlike the modern logic of power, which always needs an institutional context and a normal state to justify itself, the new form of control avoids committing itself to any particular institution and its particular task. It rather seeks legitimacy from public opinion and the ethically right: ethics and obscure 'public opinion' replace formal law and its institutions as the basis of legitimacy. Control does not have any external reason to refer to, no fixed point of reference or legitimacy (like formal law or a particular task of an institution). It does not have any particular task or specific boundary (of an institution and its task). There is rather 'no sense', 'no reason' in it: it is uncontrolled by fixed reason or faculty of judgment; it is lacking in restraint. It is full of sound and fury and signifies nothing.

But there is method in this madness. Through this method, the human body, which constitutes the fundamental natural resource of the 'knowledge society' and reproduces the productive power of human intelligence, is used and kept from moving by means freed from any political or legal constraint. Movement has always its corporeal aspects: movement is movement of bodies and bodies in movement. It is here that we may begin to understand the exchange relation between a barrel of oil and a child killed in Iraq, between privatisation and destruction of human community: the new formless form of war, the mad war, as a non-state, non-institutional form of intervention, is the logical 'form' of organization and control within an economy that has become biopolitical. The permanently temporary warfare and its 'enduring freedom' constitute a new political economy that tries to make bodies usable as mere living organisms on a world scale. The immaterialization of the labour force is intimately connected to the raw materialization of the human body.

We call for proposals for papers, interventions, works of art and other ideas that try to cross fixed boundaries and are open to the contaminating influences of the continents we will be passing through during our journey. The experiment begins in Moscow where the current Russian condition is laid before us in bare by some of the most critical Russian intellectuals. This will be followed by a three-day seminar on the Trans-Siberian train as it moves towards Novosibirsk, our next stop in Siberia, where the meeting will be hosted by the department of Economics at Novosibirsk State University for one day. The party goes then on to Beijing where a final roundtable with Chinese social scientists will be held (the meeting is planned to take place at Qinghua University, Beijing).

Please submit proposals (500 to 1000 words) to Demola Obembe (aoo5@leicester.ac.uk) by 31 January 2005. Notification regarding acceptance will be given by 28 February 2005. Unfortunately, the number of participants is limited due to the nature of this project. The participation fee is estimated to be around 1000 Euros (including travel from Moscow to Beijing, accommodation and boarding in Moscow, Novosibirsk and Beijing). Alternative ways to participate in the project are possible and should be discussed with the organizers.

For further information, please contact the organizers at www.ephemeraweb.org/conference

The conference is supported by:
ephemera: theory and politics in organization
Ground Zero: Conflitti Globali