

Racial Capitalism: Marxism meets Postcolonial Studies

5./6. Oktober 2023, University of Kassel, Germany

In recent years, racial capitalism has become a much-debated concept. The Black Lives Matter movement has provided a context to discuss the relationship between racism and capitalism anew. Racial capitalism now shapes discussions in numerous social fields and disciplines of critical social science. However, the frequent reference to the term is often overshadowed by unclear to contradictory argumentation: Is the entanglement of racism and capitalism contingent or logically necessary? How are racism and capitalism respectively defined and historically classified? How does the relationship between racism and capitalism differ in different world regions and time periods? And how can the relationship of domination between racism and capitalism be overcome?

These questions are not new, of course, and connect to intense debates of the 1980s as well as earlier debates within and between anti-colonial movements. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that classic works of the so-called Black Radical Tradition (WEB Du Bois, CLR James, Claudia Jones, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Angela Davis, and others) are being re-read and re-interpreted to understand, critique, and overcome contemporary forms of domination. Starting from Marxist categories and as a critique of a Eurocentric Marxism, these authors have elaborated the relevance of racism and (post-)colonialism for capitalist development. Moreover, beyond the concept of racial capitalism, these debates are of utmost relevance for a critical social theory and practice.

At least since the 1990s, the tension between Marxism and Postcolonial Studies has overshadowed corresponding discussions in academia and social movements. At times, the fronts have hardened to such an extent that the two critical perspectives see the other as an antagonist. In such a context, theoretical, methodological, and political differences appear insurmountable. Most recently, this has been evident in the heated debate that Vivek Chibber's *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* has provoked. In contrast, current discussions on racial capitalism provide promising starting points for research that does justice to both perspectives.

Against this background, the Department of Development Policy and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Kassel would like to offer a space to intensify these debates together with (activist) scholars from different contexts. In addition to keynote speeches by Gargi Bhattachayya (University of East London) and Kolja Lindner (Université Paris 8, Vincennes-Saint-Denis), a panel discussion and the presentation of contributions, there will be opportunities for peer-discussions in smaller groups, in which, for example, conceptual controversies, methodological challenges, or strategic questions can be debated in depth.

We welcome theoretical and empirical contributions that examine the relationship between racism, (post-)colonialism, and capitalism. Ideally, these should attempt to fill current research gaps and present innovative syntheses of different research programs. PhD scholars are especially asked to present their research projects.

Contributions can be submitted on the following topics and questions:

- **Marxism and Postcolonialism**
 - Is a Marxist postcolonialism or a postcolonial Marxism possible and necessary?
 - How do postcolonial and Marxist approaches explain the entanglement of racism and capitalism?

Call for Papers

- What ontological, epistemological, and politico-strategic tensions arise from historical materialist and poststructuralist explanatory approaches and how can these be overcome?
- **Racism and Capital Accumulation**
 - How is the relationship between racism and capitalism articulated in contemporary societal relations?
 - What role do state apparatuses (e.g. the police, border and migration regimes, authoritarian-racist governments) play in securing the racist-capitalist modes of (re)production?
 - What role does racist oppression play in processes of capital accumulation and vice versa (using historically and geographically specific analyses)?
 - How do trends of financialization and digitalization change patterns of racist oppression and exploitation?
- **Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism in International Relations**
 - To what extent are geopolitics, imperialism and neo-colonialism shaped by and through racism today?
 - How does this interconnectedness manifest itself in international cooperation/development policy?
 - What is the significance of counter-hegemonic forums of international political economy (e.g. in the tradition of Bandung, Tricontinental, New International Economic Order)?
- **Global Value Chains and International Division of Labour**
 - What is the significance of racism in global value chains?
 - How does the international division of labor reproduce both economic (super-)exploitation and racist oppression?
 - What contradictions arise from this for the organizing labour and how do class struggles become anti-racist?
- **Race, Class and Gender**
 - To what extent are regimes and crises of social reproduction as well as gendered division of labor and patriarchal domination permeated by racism?
 - How is racism experienced in everyday life and what role do class and gender play in this experience?
 - What perspectives do feminist political economy approaches offer for thinking Marxist and postcolonial research perspectives together intersectionally?
- **Climate Justice**
 - How are the escalating climate crisis, fossil infrastructures, strategies of a green economy, and struggles for climate justice shaped by and through (anti-)racism and (anti-)capitalism, respectively?
- **Political Strategies of Social Movements**
 - Which questions and insights does political practice/organizing of emancipatory social forces have for the questions above?
 - What practical consequences result from a synthesis of historical-materialist and postcolonial research?
 - Which contradictions and possibilities result from this for international solidarity, labor struggles and strategies of social movements (identity politics, inclusive class politics, etc.)?

Abstracts (max. 400 words) can be submitted to racialcapitalism@uni-kassel.de until **May 21, 2023**. Feedback on submissions will be sent in mid-June.

More information will be soon available on [our website](#).