

Other Worlds are Possible: Identity and Agency at the Grassroots

Dorothy Holland

ABSTRACT

How is it that people sometimes move, against the grain, toward a world in which late capitalism and its headlong momentum for differential profit taking, hyper-consumerism, and climate change, are subdued?

In this talk I begin from situated and relational theories of change and transformation especially that of the feminist geographers' Gibson-Graham in *A Postcapitalist Politics* and to a lesser extent Spinoza, et al's *Disclosing New Worlds*. I pay particular attention to a politics of the post-consumerist subject and draw upon colleagues and my anthropological versions of social practice theory to conceptualize the effects of movements and activism on subjectivity and identity and to understand the importance of local communities of practice. Data and results from two of large NSF projects provide empirical cases of recent anti-consumption relevant activism: the development of environmentalist identities in two regions of the US in the late 1990 and the emergence of local food activism in North Carolina in the 2000s.

My talk, informed by social practice theory, research, and my own efforts to develop university/community partnerships, addresses the complexity and significance of grassroots activism for a transition to a post-consumerist society.

* * *

Goal of the SCORAI Colloquium: To build a knowledge base for greater understanding of how a transition beyond our contemporary consumerism-based culture and economy might take place.

Approach: The colloquium examines and synthesizes theories and empirical experiences of social change from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. The aim of the seminars is to bring together scholars and practitioners concerned with social change into sustained and free-flowing interaction.