

## MODEL IMAGINARIES

Models shape the world we live in. As tools for reducing complexity, models are designed to reveal patterns of interaction that remain hidden to the naked eye. Abstracting, simplifying, condensing, or miniaturizing can be ways of making the world intelligible. But models also serve more than heuristic purposes. Models can be designs for something new, blueprints for building or redesigning the world around us. And when models are put to use, they enter into and may alter the world they model. Models are then not external to but part of what they seek to explain. They can become self-fulfilling prophecies, entering into feedback loops with the world, blurring the distinction between models *of* something and models *for* something.

This blurring of boundaries between model and world occurs not least in the discipline of economics, which exerts singular influence over policy decisions. From the normativization of John Stuart Mill's pared-down model of "economic man" to the performativity of financial models as "engines, not cameras" in financial markets today, economic modeling has long exemplified the ambiguity of models as mediating mechanisms between the real and the ideal, description and prescription, showing and shaping. While the power of models to shape our world depends on their use by institutional actors, their widespread use depends on their aesthetic and cultural appeal. The "elegant simplicity" of models is a criterion for their success. Models of economic behavior are only performative when people conform to them, and for people to conform to them they need to be made attractive. The performativity of models is greatest when they take on a life of their own, when they circulate in cultural form independently from the methods and material interests that gave rise to them.

This conference inquires into the role that culture generally and literature more specifically play in mediating between models *of* and models *for* something. With a particular interest in economic modeling and model economies, we ask: How are model abstractions made accessible and circulated in cultural form to the public? How does literature embody or provide intimate experiences of models? What genres, modes, or styles engage in modeling practices and what models of knowledge do they generate? How are models narrativized or narratives modeled, and what happens in the space between model and narrative? How does literary remodeling or countermodeling provide alternative forms of—or challenge what counts as—economic knowledge? How does literature model models? And how do literary models reflect on or redress the biases and blind spots of economic modeling?

SUPPORTED BY:

John F. Kennedy-Institut  
für Nordamerikastudien



DFG Deutsche  
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## THURSDAY, JULY 4

Room 340

2:00 - 2:15 pm Welcome and Introduction

2:15 - 3:45 pm Panel 1

### Economic Models & Literary Forms

Chair: Katharina Fackler (University of Bonn)

→Natalie Roxburgh (University of Hamburg): "Defoe's Modeling of a Modern Credit Economy"

→Caroline Kögler (FU Berlin): "Tracing Global Forms: Pigafetta's Logbook of Magellan's Circumnavigation, 1519-1522"

3:45 - 4:15 pm Coffee Break

4:15 - 5:45 pm Panel 2

### Models of Work

Chair: Regina Schober (HHU Düsseldorf)

→Karin Hoepker (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): "*Severance* - Modeling, Office Space, and the Return of Organization Man in Contemporary Workplace Series"

→James Dorson (FU Berlin): "Cultural Models of the Project Form"

5:45 - 6:00 pm Coffee Break

6:00 - 7:00 pm Keynote

Mark Seltzer (UCLA): "Temporalities: Or, 'The Void-Like Space of a Transition'"

7:00 pm Reception

## FRIDAY, JULY 5

Room 203

9:30 - 10:30 am Keynote

Emily Rosamond (Goldsmiths, University of London): "Entrapments: Models, Affects, and Cultures of Asset Manager Society"

10:30 - 11:00 am Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:30 pm Panel 3:

### Economic Criticism in Theory and Practice

Chair: Caroline Kögler (FU Berlin)

→ Joanna Rostek (Giessen & Leipzig University): "Literary Economics, Economic Criticism and the Economic Humanities: Mapping the Field of Econo-Literary-Cultural Research in the 21st Century"

→ Melissa Kennedy (Pädagogische Hochschule Oberösterreich and University of Vienna): "Modelling the Care Economy: Up-Lit and Nice-Core Narratives"

12:30 - 13:30 pm Lunch Break

13:30 - 3:30 pm Panel 4

### Modeling (Beyond) Capitalism

Chair: Julia Faisst (University of Regensburg)

→ Marlon Lieber (Goethe-University Frankfurt): "Modeling the Future: On Socialist Calculation Debates and Utopian Fictions"

→ Simone Knewitz (University of Mannheim): "'Possibility Gathering': Models of Collective Agency in Contemporary Anti-Capitalist Poetry"

→ Simon Schleusener (FU Berlin): "Models of Temporality: Popular Culture and the Neoliberal Condition"

3:30 - 4:00 pm Coffee Break

4:00 - 6:00 pm Panel 5

### Modeling Climate Economies

Chair: Julie Dickson (FU Berlin)

→ Julia Faisst (University of Regensburg): "The Color of Climate: Aesthetic Economies of Katrina Narratives"

→ Stefanie Müller (Goethe-University Frankfurt): "Modeling Sustainable Futures in *Our Shared Storm*"

→ Katharina Fackler (University of Bonn): "Models, Economies, and Ecologies in Indigenous Thought and Literature"

6:30 pm Conference Dinner

## SATURDAY, JULY 6

Room 340

10:00 - 11:00 am Keynote

Paul Crosthwaite (University of Edinburgh): "Prediction, Prophecy, Performativity"

11:00 - 11:30 am Coffee Break

11:30 - 1:00 pm Panel 6

### Model Selves & Affects

Chair: Simon Schleusener (FU Berlin)

→ Carolin Benack (Independent Scholar): "Economizing the Self; Or, Why We Should Talk About Choice"

→ Regina Schober (HHU Düsseldorf): "American Fiction and the Attention Economy: Modeling Intermediality as Affective Transaction"

1:00 pm Concluding Remarks