

Debt, Game and Death: Squid Game in World Politics

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In Hwang Dong-Hyuk's **Squid Game**, heavily indebted Koreans are enticed to compete in children's games for large cash prizes, with losers being killed. Squid Game portrays the nexus of debt, game and death within hyper-capitalism and neoliberalism. According to the show, life under capitalism is a zero-sum 'game' defined by a winner-take-all dynamic where there are no real rules. Some argue that this show shines a light on the plight of marginalised groups in Korea (and everywhere) – migrant workers, refugees, the unemployed or those with health issues.

Populations have been exposed to structural, direct, indirect, slow, and/or fast death globally for years through visible and invisible mechanisms. The gap between those who are closer to death than life and those who are watching the games from their expensive 'lounges' is getting bigger. The wealthy are encouraged to find ways to exponentially grow and protect their earnings, while the poor have to work with poor quality of life which is in many ways determined by chance. Internationally, it looks like the status of being an 'indebted nation' is an eternal curse, as developing states are always in debt, which keeps multiplying. Moreover, systemic crisis like pandemic-related dependency (on vaccines or medicine for instance) and climate change expand both the amount of debt and numerous forms of violence. All these in turn lead to more dependency of those who are in need to potential creditors.

Revisiting concepts like Mbembe's '**necropolitics**' and Nixon's '**slow violence**' and building upon them by using a wide-array of literature on '**debt**' in world politics, **this workshop aims at investigating the link between the debt, games and death.**

Main points of discussion will be:

- What is the link between capitalism (neoliberalism) and death?
- How is death and practices leading to death normalized and justified?
- In what ways, can debt be deadly? And how is this sort of violence normalized and justified?
- How do innocent-looking practices such as World Cup or other projects lead to different forms of violence?
- In what ways (temporary or informal) do economic migrants (workers) and asylum seekers face death in their daily lives?
- In what ways do climate change and Covid-19 enhance the necropolitics and necrocapitalism especially for the poor?
- What are the impacts of asymmetrical power relations between Global South and North, especially regarding debt and being a developing nation in the former?
- What is the role of colonial relations in the reproduction of dependencies and inequalities?
- What visible and invisible practices do exist in designated or hidden spaces concerning work, games, debts, credits and survival?
- What tools, mechanisms or venues do exist to address and resolve the issues of slow death and structural violence?
- What is the role of the movements of resistance and solidarity in dealing with economic violence?