



**16th Annual Conference**  
***International Social Theory Consortium (ISTC)***  
**University of Innsbruck, Austria\***

## **Call for Papers**

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become “second nature” of sorts for social theorists to be reluctant to address explicitly the future of western societies, capitalism, modern democracy, and human civilization. After postmodernist critics in the social sciences and the humanities, had highlighted the affinity between utopianism and forms of totalitarianism, social theorists began to refrain from recognizing as part of their distinguishing responsibility efforts to refine existing and to delineate new perspectives on the future. The emphasis shifted to avoiding the kind of ideations that could be construed to be conducive to the types of socially, politically and economically induced catastrophes as they characterized social, political, and economic change during the twentieth century, in different parts of the world, at different times.

Today, however, under conditions of globalization and neoliberalism, the imminence of change has pushed itself aggressively to the forefront of social-theoretical concerns. The inevitability of change is undeniable, and its centrality to modern civilization increasingly disconcerting. Many working assumptions that informed concerns of social theorists during the twentieth century, and especially since the 1950, have become questionable. Totalitarianism is rearing its ugly head again, on all continents. Popular support for democracy has been on the decline for decades, especially among younger people. Ecological and climate crises demand strategies for addressing intended and unintended consequences that democratic processes and institutions do not appear to be able to develop, not to mention implement. Another wave of automation is taking shape threatening to lead to mass unemployment. The list goes on and on. Thus, the imperative to engage in informed and critically reflexive discourses about the kind of world we will, should, or might live in, continues to intensify rapidly. At the same time, proliferating economic and financial crises appear to lead to greater public and critical awareness. While some interpret these crises as indications of the prospects of revolutionary change "improving society" (e.g., Occupy Wall Street), many more appear to be drawn to authoritarian “solutions” to imminent problems.

This conference will provide a venue for engaging in interdisciplinary constructive and critical exchange regarding the future – in a field of tensions defined by conflicting forces pushing and pulling for and against progress and regression, utopia and dystopia, social justice and proliferating inequalities.

*\*The conference will begin on Wednesday, May 24, at 6:00pm, and end on Friday, May 26, at 6:00/10:00 pm.*

*Organizers:*

Harry F. Dahms, Sociology, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, USA

Frank Welz, Sociology, University of Innsbruck, Austria

The organizers welcome proposals on any topic in social theory, and request submission of abstracts (between 150-250 words), 5-page outlines, papers, or proposals for panels.

**LIST OF POSSIBLE SESSION TOPICS:**

(final structure of sessions will reflect submissions received)

**A. The Future between Progress & Regression**

- The Future (or End?) of Progress
- Between Utopia & Dystopia
- “The End of History” Revisited
- Feminist Futures
- Postcolonial Critiques
- End of Work in Philosophy & Social Science

**C. The Future of Political Economy**

- Capitalism and Neoliberalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy
- Globalization or Empire?
- Resurgence of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism
- Trump
- The Future of “Democracy”

**B. Philosophy and/of Social Science**

- Affinities and Tensions between Philosophy and Social Science
- Theorizing Modern “Society” as System: Adorno, Luhmann, and Beyond
- Critical Theory: The Problem of Praxis
- “Luhmannomics”: Futures of Social Science Above and Beyond *Economy and Society*

**D. The Future of Humanity**

- Social Justice under Attack
- Environmental Challenges and Social Theory
- Planetary Sociology
- Critical Theories and Intersectionality: Race, Class, Gender
- European Integration: Failed Experiment or Continuing Promise?
- Post-Humans and the End of Nature

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

**MARCH 31, 2017**

*Early submissions strongly encouraged!*

- Acceptance decisions will be made on a continuous basis.
- If acceptance notifications are needed prior to the official submission deadline, please contact Harry F. Dahms directly, at [hdahms@utk.edu](mailto:hdahms@utk.edu).
- Papers accepted for inclusion in the program will be considered for publication in *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* (ed. Harry F. Dahms)
- [Abstract submission](#) (deadline: 31/03/2017)
- For submission of proposals and inquiries, email [istc2017@socialtheory.org](mailto:istc2017@socialtheory.org) or consult <http://socialtheory.org> for submission website and information about registration, [hotels](#), conference site, dinner arrangements, etc.

