



International Social Theory Consortium

16th Annual Conference

The Future between Progress and Regression:
From Philosophy to Critical Social Science and Back

www.socialtheory.org

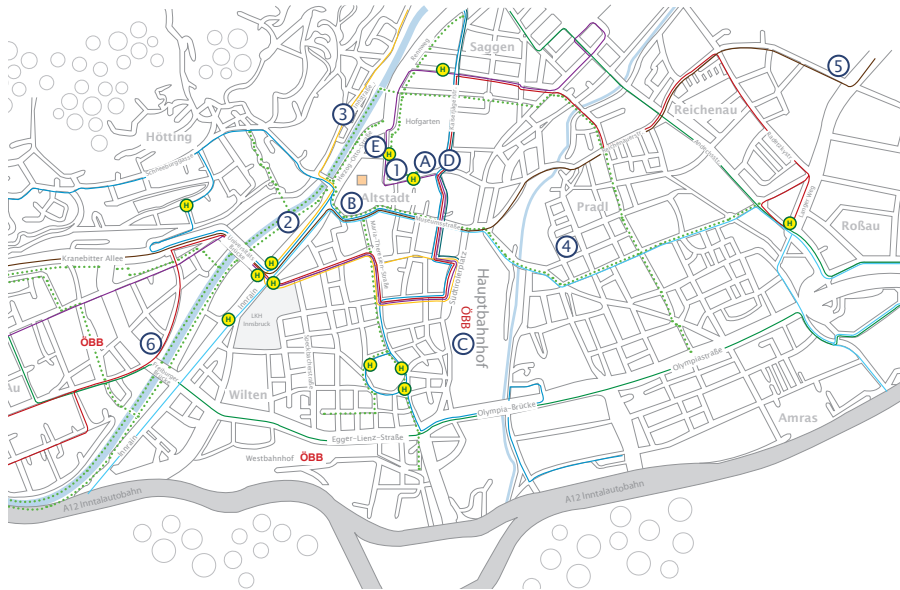
Program & Abstract Book

May 24-26, 2017

Social Theory Centre

University of Innsbruck, Austria

City Map of Innsbruck



- 1) Hotel Grauer Bär (Universitätsstraße 5-7; Sowi Campus)
 - 2) Basic Hotel Innsbruck (Innrain 16)
 - 3) Hotel Engl (Innstraße 22)
 - 4) Hotel Leipziger Hof (Defreggerstraße 13)
 - 5) Jugendherberge Innsbruck / Youth Hostel Innsbruck (Reichenauerstraße 147)
 - 6) Garni-Technikerstraße (Fischnallerstraße 26-28)
-
- A) SOWI-Campus (Universitätsstraße 15): conference venue
 - B) "Altstadt": Innsbruck's old town
 - C) Main railway station
 - D) Bus stop "Polizeidirektion" (Route 4, R, 502, 504, 502N)
 - E) funicular stop Hungerburgbahn (to Seegrube)

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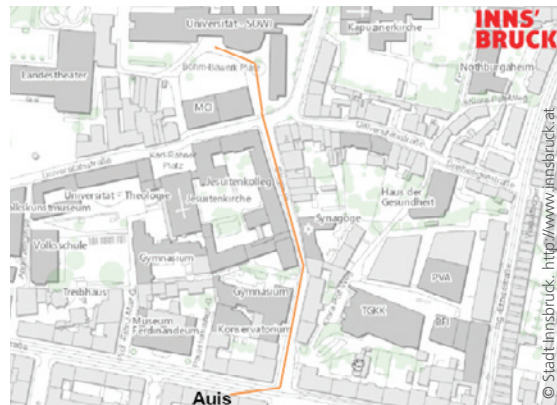
Schedule

	Wednesday, May 24	Thursday, May 25	Friday, May 26
08:30-10:00		1st session A/B/C (3rd floor)	5th session A/B/C
		<i>coffee break</i>	<i>coffee break</i>
10:15-11:45		2nd session A/B/C	6th session A/B/C
12:00-13:00		Plenary (ground floor)	7th session B/C (12:00-13:30)
		<i>lunch break</i>	<i>lunch break</i> (in-house restaurant)
14:30-16:00		3rd session A/B/C	8th session A/B/C
		<i>coffee break</i>	<i>coffee break</i>
16:15-17:45	registration	4th session A/B/C	Closing plenary
18:00-20:00	Opening plenary	Plenary (18:00-19:00)	Social Theory Summit
20:00-21:30	Welcome reception	19:00-19:30 KISS reception (Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar)	

13:00-14:30 – *lunch break on Thursday (public holiday)*

Join us for lunch at Auis restaurant (address: Museumsstraße 24; huge variety of delicious dishes: fish, steak, pizza, pasta, risotto, curry, wok, burritos ...)!

For further information please see: <http://www.ais.at>



Program

WEDNESDAY (May 24) 18:00-20:00 (ground floor, HS1)
(Sowi Social Sciences building, University of Innsbruck, Universitätsstraße 15)

16:30	Registration
18:00	Opening Plenary (Welcome address & keynote lectures)
Welcome address	<i>Harry F. Dahms (ISTC, Director)</i>
The Neglect of the Future in Social Theory	<i>Frank Welz (Innsbruck)</i>
Planetary Sociology: Social Theory and the Challenge of the Psycho-Social	<i>Harry F. Dahms (Knoxville)</i>
20:00	Welcome reception

THURSDAY (May 25) 8:30-10:00

(1A) The Future (or End?) of Progress (chair: Ralph Leck)

Benjamin & the Bodhisattva: Negative Theology & Neoliberalism *Ralph Leck*
Nationalism and Nihilism as the Sources of the Resurgence of Authoritarianism *Olga Brusylavska*
Anticipating Worlds that are 'Yet-to-Arrive': Hope and Becoming-Minor in Social Theory *Valia Theofilopoulou*

(1B) „Luhmannomics“: Futures of Social Science Above and Beyond Economy and Society I (chair: Carlton L. Clark)

A systems-theoretic perspective on corporate social responsibility *Vladislav Valentinov*
Social theory above and beyond economy and society. A form-theoretical approach *Steffen Roth*
The Collapse of Socialism from an Economic and Luhmannian Perspective *Bruno Schoenfelder*

(1C) Variations of Critical Theory (chair: Andrew Buchwalter)

Universal Human Rights, Interculturalism, and the Idea of a Global Public Sphere *Andrew Buchwalter*
Reasoning, Reason, and Critical Theory *Patrick O'Mahony*
Critical Theory and Regression: Crisis of Critique, Symptoms of Decline and the 'New Anthropological Type' *Christos Memos*

Coffee break

THURSDAY (May 25) 10:15-11:45

(2A) Europe and Prospects of Progress (chair: Tracey Skillington)

Dogmatic Ideology and Critical Thought *Natalia Matveeva*
The impact of the changing world on Europe. The role of Europe in a changing world
Adele Bianco
Ineliminability of the Idea of Progress Omid Payrow Shabani

(2B) „Luhmannomics“: Futures of Social Science Above and Beyond Economy and Society II (chair: Steffen Roth)

Political instability, anti-globalization, and the law in the early 21st century:
A Luhmannian analysis *Carlton L. Clark*
ELF without English – „System“-Semantics in World Society *Alexander Imig*
Function and failure in post-Fukushima protest movements *Andrew Mitchell*
Retrieving the Critical in Systems Theory *Jan Overwijk*

(2C) The Future of „Democracy“ (chair: Eva Klinkisch)

Thinking Populism *Brian C.J. Singer*
An Application of Bourdieu’s Crisis of Doxa for Social Movement Theory *Claudia Schütz*
Knowledge, critique and sociology: a cosmopolitan from below approach *Vando Borghi*

THURSDAY (May 25) 12:00-13:00 (ground floor, HS1)

Plenary: Technological Change in Contemporary Capitalism: A Symptom of Disease Rather Than A Cure *Tony Smith (Ames)*

THURSDAY (May 25) 14:30-16:00

(3A) Between Utopia & Dystopia (chair: Mark J Smith)

Towards a practical utopianism: reactionary and progressive formations *Mark J Smith*
Hedonism and Spaces *Amrita Das Dutta*
Individuals, Labor, Community. The Utopian Model of Adriano Olivetti
Francesca Colella and Giovanna Gianturco

(3B) Theorizing Modern „Society“ as System: Adorno, Luhmann, and Beyond

(chair: Laurindo Dias Minhoto)

Notes on Luhmann, Adorno, and the critique of neoliberalism *Laurindo Dias Minhoto*
Nothing but mediated? Mediation as a key concept to reflect on recent social challenges
Eva-Maria Klinkisch
The Necessity of a Dialectical Concept of Concept for a System Theoretic Formulation of Meaning Constitution *Christina Weiss*
Between Stasis and Dynamis: The Paradox of Antagonisms in Adorno’s Social Theory
Thomas Mario Hirschlein

(3C) The Future of Social Justice: Honneth’s Critical Theory

(chair: Patrick O’Mahony)

Justification and Social Pathology: Combining Boltanski and Honneth to evaluate normative orders *Jacob Didia Jensen*
Recognition and the Immanent Critique of Capitalism: On the Limits of Axel Honneth’s Moral Economism *Yotaro Natani*
Social Conflict Between Recognition and Freedom: Shifting Notions of a Key Concept in the Critical Theory of Axel Honneth *Martin Steinlechner*

Coffee break

THURSDAY (May 25) 16:15-17:45

(4A) Postcolonial Critiques (chair: Verena Erlenbusch)

Genealogy and the Coloniality of Power *Verena Erlenbusch*
Reconstructing the Master/Slave Dialectic in the Colonies: Travelling Theories and Misplaced Ideas within Critical Theory *Mariana Teixeira*
From Spencer to Orwell: The Idea of Progress and Social Inclusion of Indian Indigenous People in „Mainstream“ Society *Arani Basu*

(4B) The Future of Sociology (chair: Eric Royal Lybeck)

What is Civic Sociology? *Eric Royal Lybeck*
Professions as Politics: the Medical Profession and its End in the United States, 1783-1860 *Jacob Habinek*
Ethical Reasoning and the Sociological Curriculum: or Why Sociology Programs Should teach Ethics *Ruben Flores, Ryan Burg*

(4C) Environmental Challenges and Social Theory (chair: O. I. Ollinaho)

Cumulative change or the way the world changes à la business as usual *O. I. Ollinaho*
Ecology: a utopia for a time of crisis? Reflecting on its risks and potentialities *Alice Dal Gobbo*
Relations of domination across generations - toward a critical theory of intergenerational justice *Tracey Skillington*

THURSDAY (May 25) 18:00-19:00 (ground floor, HS1)

Plenary: The Exhausted Futures of Neoliberalism *Jens Beckert (Cologne)*

19:00-19:30
Reception – kindly offered by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS, Bhubaneswar)

FRIDAY (May 26) 8:30-10:00

(5A) The Past and Future of Social Theory: Persistent Challenges, Promising Prospects

(chair: Claudia Schütz)

Social Relationships and Relationality. Learning from quantum mechanics *Sam Whimster*
Social Differentiation and Critical Social Science *Philip Walsh*
Social Theory as Project and Institution *Craig Browne*

(5B) The Future of Political Economy (chair: Dan Krier)

Reproduction through change – subjectified crisis management under activation and social investment *Roland Atzmüller*
Windup Worlds. Paolo Bacigalupi's works in the context of selected problems of modern capitalism *Adrian Zabielski*
Automation, Work, and Ideology: The Next Industrial Revolution and the Transformation of „Labor“ *Anthony Knowles*

(5C) Planetary Sociology between Ecology and the Challenge of Anarchism

(chair: Karin Stögner)

Simmel's Ecological Thought *Mark Featherstone*
Getting from Here to There with Planetary Sociology and Foresight *Emily M. Medley*
Insurrectionary anarchism – theory, practice and praxis *Marek al Sofij Han Ardabili*

Coffee break

FRIDAY (May 26) 10:15-11:45

(6A) Money, the Metropolis, and Modernity: Messages from Simmel

(chair: Mark Featherstone)

Money and Metropolitan Life after Modernity: The Past, Present, and Future of Simmel's Philosophical Sociology of Cultural Forms *Thomas Kemple*
Simmel on Excess *Olli Pyyhtinen*
'Being Social In Relation' - A Relational Approach to Simmel's Three A Priori Conditions for Society to Be Possible *Natàlia Cantó-Milà*
Simmel on Circles, Groups and the Geometry of Social Forms *Claudius Härpfer*

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) established in 1993, has been working relentlessly for the upliftment of the underprivileged indigenous community (known as tribal in India) by empowering them through education. At present 25,000 poor children from the indigenous community are provided with food, accommodation, healthcare, skill development courses (Vocational), excellent sporting facilities and education from Kindergarten to Post Graduation, all under one roof absolutely free. Jobs after completion of education, excellent facilities and top class coaching have helped these tribal children and youth to excel. More than 10,000 students have graduated and impacting many more lives in the community. World class bodies like UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, US Federal Government, Australian Embassy, British Council and Bernard van Leer Foundation are associated with KISS along with various other academic and non academic bodies in various projects.



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Bhubaneswar- 751024, Odisha. India, Telefax: +91 674 2725386, Website: www.kiss.ac.in, Email: contactus@kiss.ac.in



(6B) Capitalism and Neoliberalism in the 21st Century (chair: Roland Atzmüller)

Economic Theology in Contemporary Capitalism: Four Ways of Western Power *Dan Krier*
Capital, Desire, and Neurasthenia *Arthur Bueno*
The Normative Error of Neoliberalism *Inga Fuchs-Goldschmidt*

(6C) Critical Theories and Intersectionality: Race, Class, Gender (chair: Craig Browne)

Intersectionality of Ideologies - Nationalism, Antisemitism, Sexism and the Relationship of the Universal and the Particular *Karin Stögner*
Finding Feminism through the Frankfurt School: Exploring Self and Subjugation with Critical Theory *Rhiannon A. Leebrick*
„Female Agency“: Suppressed or Championed by Bourdieu and Butler? *Arokya Swamy Savariyappan*
(Un)real woman. Commercial as a medial space which stabilizes social relations of power *Michał Bomastyk*

FRIDAY (May 26) 12:00-13:30

(7B) Posthumanism, Systems, and STS (chair: Martin Steinlechner)

Artificial intelligence vs. collective intelligence: two social systems models *Roberto L Ferrer Serrano*
Ethics and A.I. *Edmondo Grassi*
Ontologies in practice. Case of male anorexia *Piotr Maro*

(7C) Author Meets Critics: Jens Beckett's Imagined Futures (chair: Frank Welz)

Jens Beckett, Max Planck Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, Cologne
Harry F. Dahms, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Veronika Eberharther, University of Innsbruck
Teresio Poggio, Free University of Bolzano

FRIDAY (May 26) 14:30-16:00

(8A) Critical Theory and the Problem of Praxis (chair: Inga Fuchs-Goldschmidt)

Between Flow and Suspension: Social Practices as Irreversible Processes *Christoph Kircher*
Scientific evidence and criminal procedure. Reflections of sociology of law *Deborah De Felice*
Critical Spatial Practices *Carl Leigh Fraser*

(8B) Capital, Capitalism, and Consumption (chair: Veronika Eberharther)

Four categories of action to revisit Economic Sociology and Political Economy *Stephen Shirlaw*
The Engine of Contemporary Capital: Asymmetric Debt and the Privilege of Incorporation *Kevin S. Amidon*
Rationality and vicarious consumption: the case of Mukbang (Eating show) *Danqing Yu*

(8C) Nature, Culture, Art, and Society (chair: Natàlia Cantó-Milà)

Sociology and Nature: From Denial to Re-embrace *Zohreh Bayatrizi*
From Nature to Culture: The Emergence of Normativity *Heinz-Jürgen Niedenzu*
Utopia and dystopia in art and society. Is contemporary society producing Utopia? *Ilaria Riccioni*

Coffee break

FRIDAY (May 26) 16:15-17:45 (ground floor, HS1)

Closing Plenary

Past, Present, Future: Restating the Challenge for Social Theory
(chair: Harry F. Dahms)

The lessons of theory: the death and birth of great world systems *James Block*
The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of America *Lauren Langman*



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Welcome to Innsbruck!

Dear Guest,

The higher you climb, the more that you see. In Europe, severe imbalances between the North and the South and a not-ending list of societal problems have been accumulating since 2008, when the global financial crisis struck. For seriously discussing 'The Future between Progress and Regression' with regard to European and other democracies, research in social science cannot remain at the surface of labeling well-known phenomena. Rather than participating in the proliferation of various designations such as the financial, debt or Euro crisis, or, even worse, in joining the alternative avoidance-strategy of discussing any so-called migration or refugee 'crisis' or the popular indignation about misguided groups of voters in European (and other) elections, social theory is in demand. It has been and it still is the task of social theory to explore the theoretical underpinnings of the significant questions of historical change. It requires a collaboration between different disciplinary perspectives.

We have to dig deeper. And for enabling this, we will climb higher. We hope you will enjoy your social theory discussions at the University of Innsbruck including our closing "Social Theory Summit" on Friday night at 1905 meters height. We are glad to have you here. Welcome to the Alps!

Frank Welz

Local organizer, University of Innsbruck
President, European Sociological Association

Conference organization

Social Theory Centre

School of Social and Political Sciences

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Harry F. Dahms
ISTC director, Knoxville



Anna Larl
Conference assistant, Innsbruck



Frank Welz
Conference host, Innsbruck

16th Annual Conference The Future between Progress and Regression International Social Theory Consortium (ISTC)



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.



Abstracts

Marek al Sofij Han Ardabili
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun (PL)

Insurrectionary anarchism – theory, practice, and praxis

In „Utopistics“, written in 1998, Immanuel Wallerstein describes a process of bifurcation that the capitalist world-system will have to deal with -- a difficult transitional period which, according to this American sociologist, will last for about fifty years, and may end with better, more just solutions to problems in world politics and economy, or, on the other hand, with even worse inequalities and more authoritarian politics. He also suggests that in an age of transition, it is easier for different actors to change its direction.

All over the world, we may observe mass discontent with current the political and economic situation; however, often it seems to be general discontent and -- with a poor understanding of conditions, or simply due to lack of faith in a large-scale change -- it may easily be employed by populists of different kinds. Should this happen, paradoxically, anti-systemic intentions may help the system to regain its stability. Either way, the transition between one world-system and the another one will not be easy and peaceful.

I want to take a closer look at one of the anti-systemic movements, i.e., the anarchist movement, and more specifically one of its most radical branches – insurrectionary anarchism with its theory and practice, or – using it’s own categories, „praxis“/“black praxis“. My goal is to briefly present its history since its beginning in the late seventies and present main ideas that stand behind actions which for many may seem unsuitable for political struggle. Finally, I will attempt to situate this movement within the Wallersteinian framework of world-systems analysis.

Kevin S. Amidon
Iowa State University, Ames (US)

The Engine of Contemporary Capital: Asymmetric Debt and the Privilege of Incorporation

The privilege of incorporation as developed since the mid-nineteenth century in the Western/Northern political-economies has created asymmetries in the conceptual space surrounding debt that propagate broadly into the grounding of contemporary capitalism. Debts accreted to embodied persons are often morally loaded; debts accreted to incorporated institutions (or

persons) are rarely morally loaded, and failure to discharge them can in fact become a mark of „success“ in „entrepreneurship“ or „disruptive innovation.“ Building on recent work by Krier and Amidon that explores embodiment in Marx’s Capital, this paper discusses how Marx’s conceptual scaffold contains both gaps and markers (that recent readers like Jameson, Zizek, Harvey, and When perhaps raise, but don’t pursue) that can be addressed by positing an „incorporated“ aspect of the subjectivity of the capitalist that is released from the embodied stakes of debt through the mechanisms of incorporation. It appears that the privilege of incorporation can be read as a kind of originary risk-pooling apparatus developed to support capital accretion that predates the welfare state, but that escapes the moral loading of embodied debt. The preliminary conclusion is that Marx’s vocabulary can be refigured and expanded to address these asymmetries of incorporation by positing the emergence of a kind of „(dis-)embodiedness fetishism“ in contemporary capitalism that is supervenient upon commodity fetishism.

Roland Atzmüller
Johannes Kepler University Linz (AT)

Reproduction through change – subjectified crisis management under activation and social investment

Under the domination of austerity-focused strategies of crisis management, the polarized fragmentation of European welfare systems between workfare/activation and emerging social investment strategies is deepening within and between countries. Rather than constituting an alternative to the former social investment concepts, which are widely debated as a promising strategy to reconcile competitiveness with social demands, rather constitute a search process and struggle to establish new mechanisms to tackle the contradictions and crisis of capitalist social formations and to foster their transformation. Under such conditions, the reproductive dynamics as materialized in modern welfare states cannot be conceptualized as a process in which the capitalist relations of production are reproduced as self-identical. Rather, reproduction through innovation and change becomes a crucial „function“ of transformative social policies. By shifting the burden of coping with the contradictions and crisis of current capitalist social formations towards individuals (and their family household), their ability and willingness to constantly adapt their labour-power through learning under a human capital oriented mode of regulation, and to mobilise and develop their subjective abilities in an encompassing form, become a crucial mechanism to secure reproduction through change. Thus, the permanent recomposition of the capacity to work (Arbeitsvermögen) under the logics of activation and social investment constitutes a crucial mechanism of the reproduction of the relations of production. Thereby, the latter is transformed into a pedagogical relation through which the hegemony/dominance of capital over the former is secured.



Arani Basu
KIIT University, Bhubaneswar (IN)

From Spencer to Orwell: The Idea of Progress and Social Inclusion of Indian Indigenous People in “Mainstream” Society

The paper deals with the idea of progress as it emerged in sociology and evolved in due course. For understanding the implications of progress, this paper will discuss the case of indigenous people in India, or the ‘Tribals’, as they are gradually being brought into the framework of modernity either by the state or private enterprises. Progress though paves way for social inclusion; however, by definition, it is not absolute! As espoused by Herbert Spencer, progress is linked to evolution, i.e., social improvement.

Social evolution faces the challenge of social inclusion that ensures improvement in life conditions for some to the exclusion of certain others. This differential level of social inclusion through social progress is manifested critically in the case of social inclusion of indigenous people in India, which is home to hundreds of tribal communities. Indigenous people in India represent a community where the western model of ‘modernity’ or ‘progress’ is missing.

In the wake of this process, the paper looks at the classical understanding of progress as espoused by Spencer and tries to find answers to progress (or non-progress) within the context of Orwell’s understanding of dystopia, treating the tribal community in India as the object of a case study.

Zohreh Bayatrizi
University of Alberta, Edmonton (CA)

Sociology and Nature: From Denial to Re-embrace

In line with the theme of the conference, ‘The Future Between Progress and Regression’, and building on my recent work on the key objects of sociological investigation, this paper explores the history and the potential future of ‘nature’ as a key ‘object’ of sociology. It is my contention that sociology was built to a large extent on the denial of ‘nature’. In order to build a domain of sociological analysis, some of our founders had to differentiate between a domain of nature and a domain of society/nurture/culture. This break from nature is most evident in the work of Emile Durkheim (despite his organismic metaphor for society and his assertion that social facts should be treated similar to natural objects). Later on, various waves of feminism and anti-racist scholarship reinforced this break from nature as part of an emancipatory project for

women and racial minorities, built on the argument that racial and gender differences are not ‘natural’. While not all of the founding fathers (and mothers) of sociology excluded nature from their accounts (Simmel, Marx, Freud, Mead and Gilman being notable exceptions), it was the exclusionist paradigm that dominated for most of the twentieth century.

Today nature is finding its way back into sociology, from Latour’s actor-network theory to Nikolas Rose’s innovative reintegration of body-politics into sociology, and to feminism’s critical return to questions such as maternity and materiality.

My paper explores this history of exclusion and re-inclusion of nature in sociology, asking what purposes did the exclusion of nature serve in the past and which directions its recent re-inclusion might take us in the future.

Jens Beckert
Max Planck Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, Köln (DE)

The Exhausted Futures of Neoliberalism

Recent political events in Europe and the United States have demonstrated voters’ pronounced disenchantment with policies of market liberalization and globalization that have dominated the world for the last forty years.

My talk interprets these events through the lens of the claim that the motivational force of neoliberal futures has been exhausted. A major portion of the population has been disappointed by the promises of neoliberalism, leading to the dwindling of the attractiveness of this economic narrative. The result is a pronounced political crisis.

The talk stands in the wider context of the analysis of the temporal structure of capitalist modernity. In a capitalist system, consumers, investors, and corporations orient their activities toward a future that contains opportunities and risks. This future is open and uncertain. How do actors form expectations regarding economic outcomes under these conditions? Collectively held images of how the future will unfold are critical because they motivate economic actors and free them from paralyzing doubt, enabling them to commit resources and coordinate decisions, even if those expectations later prove inaccurate. Since the imagined futures are not confined to empirical reality, they open space for the deliberate manipulation of expectations, what I call the politics of expectations. Fictional expectations drive modern economies—or throw them into crisis when the imagined futures fail to materialize.



Adele Bianco
University G. D'Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara, Chieti (IT)

The impact of the changing world on Europe. The role of Europe in a changing world

The paper aims at analyzing the relationship between Europe, particularly the EU, and the rest of the world. Europe is faced today with two different kinds of problems: the internal differences within the EU, and the impact of the changing world.

The internal differences among the European countries from economic, cultural, social points of view are both deeply rooted and consequences of global tensions. This is the reason why the unification process is experiencing at the moment a major impasse, which makes it impossible for Europe to reach internal cohesion, and consequently to be a major player on the international scene.

The second problem of Europe is the ongoing transformation of the global relationship between advanced and emerging countries. As underlined by OECD projections, the trend over the next decades will determine how power is shifting from the West to the emerging countries in Asia. As a consequence, advanced countries will experience progressive loss of importance.

According to a European Commission study, a further step of European integration, creating a powerful political union, not only in the economic and monetary dimension but also in the political and defense dimensions, is a crucial challenge in the near future. In fact, EU influence in the international arena can play a positive role in pushing towards a reduction of global imbalances, in defining global rules and being actively engaged in dealing with global challenges -- and in so doing, enhancing global security.

James Block
DePaul University, Chicago (US)

The lessons of theory: the death and birth of great world systems

Much of social and political theory involves the analysis of systems as continuing historical entities. But theory has also provided theoretical insight, not after the fact as history with the benefit of hindsight, but from within the very process, the very age, of decline and disaggregation. Despite the challenges, the temptation to either gloat or mourn, there are critical lessons to be gained from a more considered perspective for theorists (and others) living in such an age.

Two distinct, yet deeply interrelated, aspects of this age frame the analysis: the underlying

dynamic driving the process of decline; and the core features to be identified shaping the emergent world. Regarding the former, one lesson of theory is the importance of locating the foundational contradictions and cleavages within the old order, and to explicate how because of these the decline of the existing system is being driven, perhaps irreversibly, by its own operations and assumptions. With theorists such as Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, and the Frankfurt School (notably Wm. Reich), the present system itself stands forth as the helpless agent of its decline and ultimately its own executioner.

This first dimension of such transformative ages has also been identified and explored by historians such as Thucydides, playwrights like Shakespeare, and philosophers such as Diderot. It is the second lesson that is distinctive to social and political theorists: that within the workings of these irreversible contradictions lie the seeds of new psychosocial and institutional systems. Thus, while Thucydides understood the decline of Athenian democracy, it is Plato who treats this as the mere opening of the Republic as he advances in the discourse the conceptual frame for the rebirth of a new world system. So too, Reich's powerful analysis of the fatal incapacity of the authoritarian European psychic system to adjust to modernity leads the Frankfurt School to conceptualize the psychosocial reorganization of the late modern individual.

The goal of this presentation will be to apply these lessons with an analysis of the fateful decline of the American neoliberal, i.e. neoplutocratic, system and emerging post-liberal and post-industrial world. The argument will be that the seeds of this decline and birth of a new world system began with contradictions emerging with the liberal response to the rise of the industrial age in the 1880s that undermined its very psychic and institutional system, contradictions that were vastly exacerbated by its subsequent neoliberal revision.

In conclusion, one further lesson of this dynamic by and for social theory will be explored. The forces of Reaction, as they commandeer the institutions and rhetoric of the old order, try to mandate that they are in control of the historical process, and that the forces of re-birth are aberrant dead-ends to be thrust aside. This effort to circumvent their failure to address their internal contradictions and cleavage cannot succeed. What can propel the forces of change and transformation forward is the recognition that the control of official rhetoric is not the control of the historical process. To the contrary, the incapacity to sustain and maintain its own system and to deal with the rising forces and emergent dynamic that is bringing an end to their age and to their authority represents the judgment that its time has passed, which the flagrant use of power will only hasten. The more fully social theory can elucidate the grounds of the new and transformative path, the more quickly the transition will occur.



Michał Bomastyk
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń (PL)

(Un)real woman. Commercial as a medial space which stabilizes social relations of power

When we analyze the Western European culture from a philosophical perspective, we see that this culture is constructed and stabilized based on social roles. These roles must be internalized by individuals in the process of socialization, which shapes our habitus as described by Pierre Bourdieu -- as matrix of views. In the process of socialization, we also learn gender roles (how to be a man or woman in society), which Judith Butler defined as a matrix of gender relations, or the truth of gender.

These relations are not equal because they are stabilized by a binary system, which creates two gender oppositions: the hegemonic masculinity and the emphasized femininity (subservient) (Connell 1995). We can see now that relations between men and women in the Western European society are relations of power and they establish a masculine domination.

This symbolic order is very clear in TV commercials in which women are depersonalized, sexualized and unreal. Commercials present unnatural and desirable (emphasized) femininity. In this paper, I would like to prove that TV commercials are constructed by the binary system and relations of power, and that they stabilize the patriarchal status quo.

Vando Borghi
University of Bologna (IT)

Knowledge, critique, and sociology: a cosmopolitan from below approach

This paper aims at focusing on the process of transformation of knowledge – something intrinsically heterogeneous, going from its being specifically situated in different forms of life and experiences to a more abstract and universal nature – into what Amartya Sen defines as “informational basis for judgment and justice”, that is, the informational basis which policies and public action are based on. It is a crucial process, as it strongly contributes to framing the territory over which policies are going to intervene, establishing how the borders of this territory have to be drawn, what has to be included and what can be dropped off into the area of legitimate social, political and bureaucratic indifference.

Such a process has to be historically and sociologically situated, in order to fully understand the way actors’ capacities are implied in it. The paper points out the so- called “trap of

trajectorism” characterizing the field of tension configured by the capitalist mode of translating the space of possibility opened up by modernity: the relationship knowledge/informational basis results strongly affected by social inequalities and concurs itself in reproducing them. An approach inspired from a cosmopolitanism from below is then explored, according to which citizens’ capacities – in terms of capacity to aspire – can be actively involved in the process of transformation of knowledge into informational basis.

A redefinition of the knowledge-production process in terms of a human right to research seems to be the direction to be addressed in order to empower this relationship between capacity and knowledge; and social sciences can find a promising challenge of revitalization in addressing themselves in this direction.

Craig Browne
University of Sydney (AU)

Social Theory as Project and Institution

My paper argues that social theory is conditioned by a number of constitutive tensions and that these generate a variety of antinomies. One of these antinomies is that between social theory as a project and as an institution. The project of social theory gained strong impetus from the ‘new theory movement’ associated with the work of social theorists that initiated new paradigms and perspectives, like Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, Cornelius Castoriadis, Anthony Giddens, and Michel Foucault. It will be argued that this development in social theory was conditioned by the cleavages of capitalist society in the later half of twentieth century and that this was reflected in the centrality to it of problems like that of the relation of action and structure. The significance of the works of this generation of social theorists is such that it shaped the institutional formation of social theory as a distinctive space of discussion, evident in such things as the founding of journals and research associations. Yet, the contemporary period appears to be one in which the antinomies of social theory as project and institution have intensified, partly owing to new challenges, and that this has produced a certain sense of disorientation in social theory concerning how it can progress rather than regress. My analysis clarifies how these dilemmas can be addressed and assesses important developments in social theory in light of this problem. It is argued that while the relevance of social theory is not in doubt, there is a need for social theory to achieve a better understanding of how it can meet its interdependent, yet different, purposes.



Olga Brusylovska
Odessa National Mechnikov University, Odessa (UA)

Nationalism and Nihilism as the Sources of the Resurgence of Authoritarianism

We have to pay more attention to the ideological basis of post-communist transformation if we want to understand sources of the resurgence of authoritarianism in the region of Eastern and Central Europe. We may mention that decades of communist regime did not change that special type of East European societies, unlike Soviet and Western ones as well. Nations referring to historical memory, to heroic past as to life-saving in times of chaos, is too dangerous for the future of these nations. The purpose of this research is to show the evolution of special futures of East European identity after 1989. In some countries, the development of nationalism still accomplishes the function of the basis of East European mentality, but it lost its radicalism. In other countries, it led to the collapse of states. Liberal values didn't arouse too much emotion among most Eastern European citizens; until today, the trend of nihilism and non-alignment has been predominant. We predict that changes will take place in the longer term. The prognosis for the future of the Eastern Europe is not that optimistic. Not many people in states of this region fully comprehend that civil society in a democratic state should be built by the citizens themselves. Democracy depends on individual responsibility when every single person takes part in problem-solving, but the majority in post-communist Europe is still not ready for such resolutions and will not be ready during the next generation.

Andrew Buchwalter
University of North Florida, Jacksonville (US)

Universal Human Rights, Interculturalism, and the Idea of a Global Public Sphere

Challenging several received justifications of human rights, this paper defends what is called an intercultural approach to universal human rights. On the view presented, human rights are justified not through appeal to the order the universe or to some necessary of feature of human nature, but instead as the product of people and peoples historically coming to agreement, often fitfully and tragically, about the conditions of their sociation and their social relations. Likewise, the universality of human rights is shown to be construed not as some essential property common to human beings generally but as a set of cross-cultural norms expressive or and adopted by members of the global community. One important feature of this account is its connection to the idea of a global or transnational public sphere, a domain in which the peoples of the world can engage with one another in coming to some consensus

on their reciprocal rights and duties and the norms governing their social relation. The paper has three parts. Part 1 spells out the differences between mine and the traditional approach, focusing on how rights depend on processes of collective interpretation and self-definition whereby a community clarifies, appropriates, and endorses rights in ways meaningful to them and their life-practice. Part Two notes how such processes of collective interpretation and appropriation entail a specifically intercultural account of universal human rights. Part Three details how the intercultural view of human rights variously presupposes and entails a global or transnational public sphere.

Arthur Bueno
Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt (DE)

Capital, Desire, and Neurasthenia

This paper reflects on the affective implications of capitalist forms of life by exploring certain affinities between Karl Marx's Capital and Georg Simmel's writings on money and modern culture. Such an endeavor rests on the assumption that, as stated by a contemporary reviewer of The Philosophy of Money, many of Simmel's arguments "read like a translation of Marx's economic discussions into the language of psychology." In line with this, I suggest that Simmel's phenomenologically precise description of modern forms of life can be interpreted as a consistent analysis of the affective implications of commodity fetishism. More precisely, this paper develops the idea that money – in particular when it attains the form of capital – is an embodiment of pure, abstract, self-referential desire. Contrary to what is commonly stated regarding the first chapters of The Philosophy of Money, this does not mean that Simmel's account relies on a merely subjective theory of value, as in orthodox economics. Rather, the conception of money (and of capital) as pure desire is and can only be based on a theory of value that is at once subjective, intersubjective, and objective. Finally, in the context of this systematic interpretation, some of the most defining features of modern psychic life come to be conceived as expressions of what Simmel, following the psychology of his time, called neurasthenia, i.e. a continuous oscillation between feelings of hyperesthesia and anesthesia.



Natàlia Cantó-Milà
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona (ES)

,Being Social In Relation' - A Relational Approach to Simmel's Three A Priori Conditions for Society to Be Possible

In this paper I will concentrate on Simmel's first digression of Sociology (1908) ,How is Society Possible?' and I will seek to focus on the relational way in which Simmel thought and elaborated on the conditions that had to be fulfilled in our bodies and minds for us to be social. Simmel's work has been undoubtedly recognized as a milestone of relational sociology, yet no relational account of this paradigmatic digression has been given. It is however of great relevance for us to do so. When Simmel sought to give an account of that which is necessary for us to be social, he identified three apriorities which had/have to be fulfilled ,individually' in order for each of us to be able to engage in society recognizing it as such. In each of the three apriorities Simmel delivered great insights for a relational sociology which are still of relevance today: our being social in relation to ourselves, others, experiences, practices, and representations, our being social intrinsically in relation to what is not social, our being social in relation to space, time and our meaningful relation to them.

Carlton L. Clark
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse (US)

Political instability, anti-globalization, and the law in the early 21st century: A Luhmannian analysis

The United States has seen increasing tension between politics and the law. President Obama, faced with an obstructionist Congress, adopted the tactic of signing executive orders, which were then subjected to litigation. Now President Trump, despite the fact that he has a Republican majority in both houses of Congress, has already signed many highly controversial executive orders, and these too are being litigated. The press has also been under attack, with allegations of "fake news" and a splintering mass media market. Trump's opponents and critics are looking to the federal courts to rein in executive power, seeing the legal system as the last hope for preserving liberal values of inclusiveness and multiculturalism. Similar tensions between politics and law are evident in western Europe as neo-nationalism rises. The question to be addressed in this paper is, As we move deeper into the 21st century, how much trust should we place in the global legal system to resist anti-globalist, neo-nationalistic movements? We will draw on Niklas Luhmann's writings on law as a social system to explore this question.

Francesca Colella, Giovanna Gianturco
Sapienza University of Rome (IT)

Individuals, Labor, Community. The Utopian Model of Adriano Olivetti

In this paper, we propose a reflection on the social function of utopian models inspired by the Community. We start from the assumption that the fall of Utopian Thinking is at the root of today's crisis of industrial society, dramatically without an external and transcendent goal against which to measure the human sense of the internal correctness of their operations (Ferrarotti, 2013).

In contemporary society, the projectual elements of the Utopian Model play a very important role in the social sciences, because in the collective unconscious utopian mentality is based, mostly, on future projects (Mannheim, 1957). The Utopian Model is characterized as a complex social phenomenon in which are articulated three levels: an effervescence of economic and political aspirations of the subordinate social groups, an ordinary literary movement that has a relative mass distribution, a higher artistic and philosophical expression (Gramsci, 1975).

We propose, therefore, a critical analysis of the Utopian Model of an important Italian reformer, Adriano Olivetti (1901-1960), industrialist and politician, whose entrepreneurial thinking promoted an alternative model of society, utopian but very concrete at the same time, and well-rooted in the territory. He led Italy to the threshold of the biggest industrial opportunity that our country has ever had.

Utopian thought is almost always attributable to individual intellectuals who essentially reflect the conditions of instability and latent rebellion of the large popular masses of the time, but in the contemporary situation, where the future will gradually coincide with the present, may the model utopian exist? Do Individuals, without prejudice ideal, allow it to be considered a little more than an object?

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Harry F. Dahms
University of Tennessee-Knoxville (US)

Planetary Sociology: Social Theory and the Challenge of the Psycho-Social

In the final analysis, the penultimate level of analysis sociology must include and tackle is planetary in nature. The kinds of political, economic, organizational and social challenges that have been proliferating under conditions of globalization for the most part are of a scale and scope that cannot be tackled at the national level, nor is it possible to conceive of necessary strategies at levels that do not require coordination at lower levels of complexity across nations, as far as individual and group culpability, participation and responsibility are concerned, e. g., with regard to practices in terms of energy and resource use and depletion, and production of pollutants and waste that all have been intensifying rapidly and which are detrimental to all forms of life, including the biosphere as a whole. Globalization is a process fraught with ideology, both positively and negatively. Whether globalization will be a positive and constructive or a negative and destructive force indeed will depend on how nationally and internationally formulated goals relate to shared norms and values both in societies and in human civilization. Who defines those goals? How are they being defined? Is their attainment contingent on the application and maintenance of force, or possible in a manner that is consistent with and conducive to the application and strengthening of democratic principles? Evidently, the gulf between the purported *modi operandi* of modern society and of institutions and organizations in modern society, and how individuals are encouraged to denote those modes is a necessary precondition to more effectively confronting proliferating global challenges in ways that are conducive to their alleviation, if not resolution.

Alice Dal Gobbo
Cardiff University (UK)

Ecology: a utopia for a time of crisis? Reflecting on its risks and potentialities

2017: the recession, which began in 2008 and has not been overcome, is intersecting with an ever more evident and unmistakable ecologic crisis. Increasingly, environmental issues begin to be attributed openly to capitalist industrialization – acknowledged as an anti-ecological mode of production that, by injuring our ecosystems, is also injuring ourselves as embodied human beings (both in physical and psycho-social terms). Our governments and international institutions, but also society itself, seem to be far from apt to face these challenges. Therefore,

a socio-political crisis adds to the economic-ecological one. At this crossroads, the need for an urgent and profound restructuring of our social and political systems is slowly becoming voiced, but it seems short of visionary power. Can ecology stir the creation of alternative futures? Can it be a utopia for our time of crisis? Starting from my empirical research, I propose that this can happen in two different ways, leading to opposite outcomes. In a first study, I approached institutional documents on Sustainable Development using both Foucaultian and Lacanian insights: I concluded that here ecology acts as a ‘fake’, ideological (ultimately authoritarian), utopia that supports the status quo. Yet, my current ethnographic engagement with sustainable transitions in everyday life suggests that ecological utopias can inform radical micro-resistances. Inspired by the work of Gilles Deleuze (alone and with Guattari), I see in such micro-resistances the making of new worlds: away from an inherently destructive capitalist order and towards a life affirmative utopia that engages human and non-human nature into an interconnected and mutually enhancing becoming.

Amrita Das Dutta
Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IN)

Hedonism and Spaces

Hedonism is the philosophical doctrine where all pleasure is intrinsically good. Sources of pleasure can be different for different people. Hedonism in its purest form does not concern itself with consequences and hence has no future orientation. Hence, hedonism when it manifests itself in spaces, creates informality which resists the prevalent hierarchical order. Here, the hierarchical order may diminish because of the discontinuity in the prevalent life. This discontinuity is enabled by hedonism where people indulge in pleasure and have no fear of retribution. The Carnival is one such concept where hedonism manifests itself in informal spaces. In a society where relations are dictated by hierarchy, movements of individuals are observed and registered. But hedonism attempts to free people from the day to day practices and norms. My argument is, with the help of hedonism, people can aim to free themselves from hierarchical power and can express themselves in an uninhibited way, even if it only for a brief period of time. However, it can be argued that this only occurs in a discontinuous form and that this may not be sustainable in the long run. Society may find stability in unequal social relations, where each class may continue to protect their interests and preserve their status quo, but the analysis of that is beyond the scope of this paper.



Deborah De Felice
University of Catania, IT

Scientific evidence and criminal procedure. Reflections of sociology of law

The use of technical and scientific expertise for the assessment of the facts relevant to court decisions, in Italy, as in other countries, also affected the specific debate over the use of „genetic tests“ in a criminal trial. Part of the literature on the subject has addressed the issue by tracing it back to the relationship between scientific knowledge and legal knowledge; here the attempt is to focus on some unspoken problematic that the contribution of an external knowledge arises within the legal process. The work attempts to this end, a reconstruction - in the procedural dynamics - the relationship between the court and the expert taking the cue from the most significant experiences of several criminal judgments, not only Italian, which aroused intense international debate. The central problem is the comparison between two kinds of knowledge - the scientific and the legal - made immeasurable by different communication codes, which normatively defined coexistence in evidentiary contexts is, however, necessary for the reproduction of „justice system.“

The analysis questions the ways and the degree of penetration of the results of the latest scientific findings, on the formulation or reformulation of some of the classic problems of law. By orienting the analysis from the structure of the legal proceedings - in which the two kinds of knowledge are „cohabit“ - it is possible to show how many of the problems that have emerged highlighting the risk of a poorly controlled transformation of the characters of the same judicial decision.

Verena Erlenbusch
University of Memphis (US)

Genealogy and the Coloniality of Power

In this paper, I build on Amy Allen’s critique of a progressive notion of history and ask how we can engage in a practice of critical theory that generates substantively decolonized normative projects. My central claim is that this can be achieved by supplementing Allen’s historicization of the present with a shift in the geography of knowledge. Because systems of thought are not only historically, but also geographically situated, critical theory must attend to both the historical and geographical contingency of its normative foundations.

Mark Featherstone
Keele University, Newcastle (UK)

Simmel’s Ecological Thought

In this paper I return to Simmel’s ‚Schopenhauer and Nietzsche‘ in order to re-read his social thought as an ecological critique of neoliberal capitalism. Situating Simmel’s life philosophy in readings of Schopenhauer, who was influenced by Indian thought where everything connects to everything else, and Nietzsche, who similarly privileged the unstoppable movement of the will, I show how his critique of the objectifying money economy might be understood in terms of an ecological mode of thought where relationality is ontologically true. Beyond reading ‚Schopenhauer and Nietzsche‘ and ‚The Philosophy of Money‘ together in this way, I also propose to show how Simmel’s ecological critique of the objectifying economy might be projected forward into a critique of neoliberal capitalism, where everything is an object worth more or less money. In order to throw Simmel forward into the 21st century, I refer to his early presentation of his philosophy of money to an audience which included the father of Austrian economics, Carl Menger. On the basis of this interaction, I contrast Simmel’s philosophy with Menger’s theory of the origins of money and then show how it is possible to restage the opposition between their positions on the contemporary global political stage where neoliberalism seeks to deny the reality of the social on the basis of the irreducibility of the individual and ecological thought attempts to critique this perspective from a point of view informed by a vision of absolute relationality. Although this is, of course, the key point of Simmel’s theory of sociation, and the essence of his philosophical opposition to Menger’s Austrian economics, I look to extend this perspective by returning to ‚Schopenhauer and Nietzsche‘, which shows how formal sociology is based in a more expansive life philosophy where the will is everything. It is this Schopenhauerian influence that I think underpins Simmel’s ecological thought and forms the basis of his philosophy’s powerful critique of neoliberal capitalism.



Roberto Luis Ferrer Serrano
Zaragoza (ES)

Artificial intelligence vs. collective intelligence: two social systems models

The implementation of decision-making systems based on artificial intelligence can significantly alter the functioning of social systems.

The Exercise of power through regulation in such a way gives primacy to the architectural factor, that is to say, the software code, strongly conditioning the operation of other factors like Law or Ethics.

Nowadays social needs require a dizzying application of knowledge to concrete problems, now satisfied with the massive use of data generated by individuals, crystallized in the progress of decisions taken autonomously by machines. The recurrent example is that of self-driven vehicles which must resolve in decimals which right has to sacrifice in the event of a conflict of rights.

However, there is an obvious disadvantage: the logic of machines does not correspond to the decision-making mechanisms of human beings. When valuation elements arise, differences will emerge.

The human solution based on collective intelligence is more likely to satisfy the human group in a social system.

That suggest solutions as enhancing mechanisms for direct participation in decision-making by the State, even modifying the ancient concept of separation of powers. It is not only a question of enabling participation channels but also of analyzing information traffic - data and metadata - to generate the necessary collective intelligence that leads to find solutions equally valid - but somehow different - of those that can be found using Artificial Intelligence systems. The aforementioned demonstrates the need for the Social Sciences to assume a greater role in harmonizing the effects of artificial intelligence on the necessary social progress.

Ruben Flores, Ryan Burg
Higher School of Economics, Moscow (RU)

Ethical Reasoning and the Sociological Curriculum: or Why Sociology Programs Should teach Ethics

This paper offers an assessment of the state of ethics education in sociology programs at major universities around the world, as well as a critical, and prescriptive, discussion on this topic. Sociology programs engage with ethics at many levels, from research ethics to

prescriptive policy analysis, yet the formal analysis of ethical methods and frameworks is rarely to be found in either the undergraduate or postgraduate sociological curriculum. After exploring the landscape of where ethics is taught through a small empirical investigation, we advance a normative argument that an ethics course would serve aspiring sociologists, strengthen sociological curricula, and better locate sociological discourses within humanities epistemologies. Alongside a descriptive/prescriptive argument on the pedagogy of ethics, this paper engages in a related conversation about the place of ethics within social research. Drawing on process sociology, we argue that the distinction between involvement and detachment can help us to deal reflexively with the plurality of traditions regarding the role of normative arguments within social research.

Carl Leigh Fraser
University of Sheffield (UK)

Critical Spatial Practices

One of the key roles of civil society is to provide a platform for like-minded individuals and groups to come together to put pressure on powerful decision makers in society; from site stake holders, decision makers to elected representatives.

However, strategies to undermine the active civil sector (facilitated through the systematic implementation of a series of legislative acts which permeate social division); creates the current situation; where the responsive body of citizens is less active and effective than they have been in previous decades.

The lack of political desire to challenge the cyclic fall-out imbedded within our current mode capitalism; means that citizens cannot rely on traditional political ideologies or parties to overt this modern phenomena and problematic global outcomes.

Thus, the role of alternative practices, particularly that of protest actions which take place in the public realm; are a key arena in challenging the problems created by global capitalism. These include pressures on workers' rights, manmade environmental concerns (driven by the desire for perpetual growth) and the role of government, particularly in the role of dissolving of the welfare state and public institutions such as the NHS.

This paper aims to build on my PhD thesis which focuses on protest actions which took place in London between 2010 and 2013 in the aftermath of the Global Economic Crash of 2007/8. These actions often crystallise the imbedded social and political problems - and if allowed to gather momentum can become a forum that catalyse change. This paper will explore the way in which protest and other oppositional action can become a route to more sustained oppositional practices which can become institutionalised and inform the direction or the way in which we approach contemporary global challenges.



Inga Fuchs-Goldschmidt
University of Siegen (DE)

The Normative Error of Neoliberalism

The well-known normative thesis of neoliberalism is that there is no acceptable scientific way to formulate normative statements. From a sociological point of view, neoliberalism nonetheless has a normative impetus. It is the implicit (mostly not reflected upon) assumption that normative ideals are either found transcendental-pragmatically or by actual discourse. Methodologically neoliberal economists see themselves along the lines of the concept of critical rationalism, as originally formulated by Karl Popper. By doing so, they assume to be arguing in a value-free manner and to be using a method that is analogous to those in natural sciences. My goal is twofold: first, to show that Popper's methodology of science forms the basis of most scientific work in mainstream (neoliberal) economics; and secondly, to argue that neoliberalism implicitly draws on a concept of normativity that is stuck in metaphysical assumptions which as such scientifically are no longer tenable. There are two reasons: metaphysical assumptions create theoretical problems for the theory of neoliberalism itself, and furthermore, they do not explain why and how (economic) action is normatively shaped (both on individual and on society level). Neoliberalism therefore must be seen as a theory that lacks the proper impact on political action - or else misguides it.

Edmondo Grassi
Università degli Studi di Roma Tre (IT)

Ethics and A.I.

Big data are the sum of our information sent to artificial intelligence, able to process them, and give us a scanned picture of our identity process. They are considered as the new oil, as monetized data, exchange material of a new virtual geopolitics, forgetting that they are what we see, what we interact, what gives us part of that experience that should make us unique individuals, characterized by its own consciousness. It must be said that this is not simply the sum of our clickstream, considered as an objective measure of who we are, but it is information which draws a personal situation for our choices, our desires and our fears. The research hypothesis is to recognize the need to formulate an ethics of the relationship between human and artificial intelligence: technoethics. In the field of sociological research, it is important to understand the development of self-identity, the cultural and political change in the everyday life and the influence that digital devices, big data and its multifaceted forms have on the morale of the person. With digitization of life, the identity formation of the

individual has changed its development, recognizing to the artificial intelligence an integral and inevitable role of our existence, devoid of space and time limitations and able to represent the breaking of anthropocentrism.

Jacob Habinek
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Köln (DE)

Professions as Politics: the Medical Profession and its End in the United States, 1783-1860

In a striking case of professional collapse, the medical profession in the United States gave way to a raucous free market for healthcare around the middle of the nineteenth century. To explain the causes and consequences of these events, we draw on insights from political sociology to probe the origins of opposition to the medical profession. Dominant professions must both maintain cultural authority over potential rivals and secure the support of state officials in order to maintain their advantages. We argue that the cultural and institutional power of a dominant profession can be overturned if challenger occupational groups organize and mobilize actively, and if populist political coalitions find that anti-professional sentiments resonate with the electorate. Moreover, each of these processes can reinforce the other, lending the normally staid world of professions the character of a contentious social movement arena. Our analysis contributes to sociological knowledge of the professions by demonstrating that the loss of professional power is not simply a case of professionalization in reverse. Instead, political dynamics within professional and political ecologies can give rise to insurgent forces that challenge the foundation of professional power.



Claudius Härpfer
Goethe-University Frankfurt (DE)

Simmel on Circles, Groups and the Geometry of Social Forms

In constructing the basic lines of his sociology, Simmel used strong bonds from geometry. Thus, it is not surprising that in contrast to other approaches of his time, he did not distinguish between the naturally given community and the rational society, in the classification of social structures. Rather, he conceived these different forms of social coexistence on a different level as concentric and intersecting circles. In an orthodox reading, the one form of socialization is ideal typically associated with the life in the country, the other with the life in the metropolis. Nevertheless, this classification has the charm that it is applicable even in times of high individual mobility. In this spirit, the analytical potential of this distinction has been made network-theoretically fruitful. Based on these works, my presentation attempts to systematize Simmel's different concepts of groups, which are based on the circle metaphors, and to test them for their applicability to typical life forms in the 21st century.

Thomas Mario Hirschlein
The New School for Social Research, New York (DE)

Between Statis and Dynamis: The Paradox of Antagonisms in Adorno's Social Theory

This paper analyzes antagonisms in Theodor W. Adorno's philosophically informed theory of society as an example of a social phenomenon that blurs the distinction between social static and dynamic, and thus questions the still popular distinction between the two fundamental questions in sociology: How is social order possible? And how does social change occur?

Examining the central yet paradoxical role of antagonisms in Adorno's social theory, the paper develops three different ways of how to conceive of their relationship to society: First, society by necessity depends on antagonisms for its self-preservation. Second, whether antagonisms exist or not does not affect society at all. Third, antagonisms, whether they are caused by society or not, pose a threat to or at least a disturbance of society.

The paper argues, first, that Adorno considers social antagonisms, in particular the class antagonism in the late capitalist society, as fundamental for the survival of society, guaranteeing its reproduction and thus perpetuating its status quo (static principle). Second, it explains how, paradoxically, at the same time, pointing out this antagonistic nature and its historical conditions is, for Adorno, one way of showing the potential for the transformation of society (dynamic principle). In respect to transforming society, it thus concludes that antagonisms in Adorno's social theory are both: a constitutive and static part of the problem and the last hope for a dynamical overcoming of it.

Alexander Imig
Chukyo University, Nagoya (JP)

ELF without English - "System"-Semantics in World Society

In large-scale political crises, one of the most important tools for solution is communication. But what if this crisis is also to some extent a crisis of the tool that could be a tool for global communication -- the English language? The chance is that English is relying on different conceptual networks; using different semantics is increasing the polyphony in a functionally differentiated society and its functional systems. "Postcolonial English" is using the semantics of the Outer and Expanded Circle to contain the damages of Inner Circle (US and UK) Policies. This is not an easy task, because transforming semantics needs time to alter habits as the critic of "Grand theory" by C.W. Mills shows. Furthermore, multilingual resources need to be transformed into the semantics of English as (scientific) Lingua franca (ELF), a process which will be illustrated in detail on the basis of reception of Systems theories notably autopoietic systems theory by N. Luhmann.

Jacob Didia Jensen
Valby (DK)

Justification and Social Pathology – Combining Boltanski and Honneth to evaluate normative orders

In recent years, the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' of Luc Boltanski has experienced significant success in circles of critical social science from sociology to International Relations. However, although Boltanski's theory opens new perspectives on the study of critique expressed by ordinary social actors, it has itself been criticized for being unable to formulate critique. This inability primarily stems from Boltanski's denial of a meta-normative perspective, capable of evaluating other normative orders. This paper aims to draw on the theory of recognition and social pathology developed by Frankfurt school theorist Axel Honneth, to try and implement a meta-normative point of reference in Boltanski's theory. This will allow the social scientist to evaluate and assess different normative orders based on their impact on social pathologies. At the same time, such a coupling of Boltanski and Honneth will deepen the concept of recognition, as it becomes clear that recognition is multifaceted, and that not all morally justified forms of recognition are preventing social pathologies. The paper will end with a discussion of how combining the two theories will benefit their respective critical analyses of contemporary society and capitalism.



Thomas Kemple
University of British Columbia, Vancouver (CA)

Money and Metropolitan Life after Modernity: The Past, Present, and Future of Simmel's Philosophical Sociology of Cultural Forms

This talk expands upon David Frisby's thesis (1992/2016) that for Georg Simmel (1858-1918), the money economy is the site of the extension of modernity while the metropolis is the site of its intensification. I argue that Simmel's view that life itself takes philosophical and sociological form in certain contexts (as Geld, Großstadt, Geistesleben) offers an important perspective on current approaches to the study of cultural techniques (Kulturtechniken), and in particular, the technoscientific transformation of cultural forms. With reference to examples from contemporary Vancouver, Delhi, and Berlin, I consider how Simmel's approach to the urban experience – especially of poverty and wealth, secrecy and publicity – can inform our understanding of the mediatization and financialization of everyday life in the modern metropolis.

Christoph Kircher
University of Innsbruck (AT)

Between Flow and Suspension: Social Practices as Irreversible Processes

Many theories addressing social practices tend to conceive practices as consistent repetitions in daily life. Therefore, the emergence of new or different practices is theorized predominantly as the result of an external event, which causes an interruption of practical action and initiates a period of reflective consciousness and deliberative thought. Once a new course of action has been determined, the actor returns to the smooth conditions of unreflective practical action. This, however, implies, that in principle nothing new happens in the course of everyday practices – at least until an external event fundamentally disrupts a practice and triggers its re-orientation. One of the major problems with this two-stage model is that it ignores all novelties that evolve slowly but steadily from the most inconspicuous situations of everyday life. According to Theodore Schatzki, various theories addressing social practices (e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, Harold Garfinkel, John Dewey) are nevertheless based on this dichotomizing view of human life. But why is this the case? As a possible answer, I assert, that this dichotomizing view of human life is a direct result of the circumstance that social practices are conceptualized as reversible processes. In contrast, I argue that practices ought to be conceived as irreversible processes in order account for their internal transformations.

Eva-Maria Klinkisch
University of Hohenheim (DE)

Nothing but mediated? Mediation as a key concept to reflect on recent social challenges

Social theory has always enhanced mediation to be a core issue for understanding social phenomena within societies. Particularly critical theorists put mediation at center stage of their theoretical endeavors. They argue not only on mediation, e.g., between individuals and institutions, citizen and state, nature and humanity, etc. but also in regard of the relation between social theory and social praxis. From a viewpoint of Critical Social Theory mediation also stresses a dialectical dimension of social transformations and points out the problem of praxis.

Facing all disconcerting current social, political and economic developments it is not trivial to grasp the mediation problem. Today an idealized idea of mediated unity, e.g., through the state, is lost. And even the notion of social integration through mediated disunity might not attribute a plausible meaning. In my contribution, I will discuss to which extent the mediation problem occurs in terms of recent social dynamics and raise the question how far social contradictories, disruptions, and tensions might also be seen as afflictions of "failed" mediation.

This contribution starts with a brief introduction into conceptualizations of mediation from the viewpoint of Critical Social Theory. By means of examples, it then illustrates mediation problems under the conditions of globalized late modernity. In particular, it elaborates on the role of education as a pivotal point of mediation processes within society. The contribution ends with a short outlook on the problem of social theory and praxis in terms of mediation.



Anthony Knowles
University of Tennessee, Knoxville (US)

Automation, Work, and Ideology: The Next Industrial Revolution and the Transformation of “Labor”

This paper examines the social, political, and economic effects of increased automation in production and artificial intelligence. The increasing proliferation of these technologies represent the latest revolutionary development of the forces of production in society, and have the potential to greatly decrease the need for human labor in many sectors of the economy. The implementation of these technologies in production has profound implications for labor markets, class relations, and the role of the state in society. The capitalist economic system runs on the assumption and necessity of mass numbers of human workers to both produce goods and services and to consume the goods and services of the economic system, but structural imperatives of productivity combined with the increasing prevalence of hyper productive machines, means that human labor can be potentially made superfluous on a mass scale. This could have a potentially positive or negative outcome depending on how states, corporations, and classes respond and structurally adapt to these changes. There have been multiple academic and popular writers from a variety of disciplines who have written about these emerging technologies and their potential effect on society. These authors also come from a variety of ideological viewpoints and express different potential policy proposals for how the potential social problems from this development can be contained, eliminated, or channeled in a positive direction. The purpose of this analysis is to critically compare these ideological stances, and how the effects of automation and artificial intelligence are being framed from conservative, liberal, and radical perspectives.

Dan Krier
Iowa State University, Ames (US)

Economic Theology in Contemporary Capitalism: Four Ways of Western Power

Agamben's (2016) *Use of Bodies* rounded out his decades-long inquiry into the theological foundations of Western political economy. In this paper, a theoretical standpoint derived from Marx, Weber and the American social historian David Hackett Fischer is constructed and deployed to critique Agamben's most recent work. I argue that Agamben's archaeology of power— focused as it is upon ancient medieval social forms — loses contact with the core dynamics of power in modern capitalism. As the subject-substance of modern history, capital reconstructs the theological imaginary and social forms of power in complex patterns not

anticipated by Agamben's work. Four theologically-legitimated, ideal-type ways of power are distilled from the fine-grained historical writings of Weber and Fischer. The paper ends with an analysis of changing power ways in capitalism's contemporary moment.

Lauren Langman
Loyola University of Chicago (US)

The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of America

In 1620, a small group of devout Protestants, seeking religious freedom came to what was then the New World to establish a colony where they could freely practice their religion. While the conditions of early colonial life were quite difficult, they eventually adapted, prospered and within 300 years, the colonies, having become a nation, ascended to the pinnacle of power to become the richest, most powerful nation in the world – indeed the most powerful and history. How did this happen? There is no single factor to, the colonies were blessed with natural resources, separated from the world vast oceans etc. and without an existing feudal class, certain unique inequalities of the settlers enabled them to prosper – and namely the devout Protestant religion, the aggressive toughness that enabled them to adapt and indeed confront native populations, despite their religious roots, had developed a compulsive work orientation seen as a striving for success and finally, their collective self-esteem as an “exceptional” nation they their extreme worldly success possible. Having assumed the pinnacle of power, by 1945, the same factors however have led to the relative demise of the great Colossus rendering its decline inevitable. But in that decline, the conditions exist for a phoenix to arise from the ashes and mark the rebirth of a new and different post-capitalist America, secular, humanistic, and genuinely democratic. But the roots of that “new America” are to be found in its history, but history as more often than not suppressed and ignored.



Ralph Leck
Indiana State University, Terre Haute (US)

Benjamin & the Bodhisattva: Negative Theology & Neoliberalism

In 2008, members of the Order of Interbeing or Tiep Hien Buddhism opened the European Institute of Applied Buddhism in Waldbröl, Germany. The establishment of this institute reflects the growing relevance of Asian thought in Western countries. Known in the vernacular as Engaged Buddhism, Tiep Hien Buddhism is devoted to social justice and rests upon a philosophy of negative theology. These two characteristics—devotion to social justice and negative theology—are central to the work of Walter Benjamin. This essay will compare and contrast the civic theologies of Engaged Buddhists and Benjamin. My goal is the articulation of a hybrid philosophy—Eastern philosophy in Western Europe—that draws upon the critical theories of Thich Nhat Hahn and Benjamin. In pursuing the goal of a hybrid critical philosophy, this essay will carry on a tradition begun by Ken Jones’ *The New Face of Buddhism: A Call to Action* (1989) and David Loy’s *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory* (1997). Jones and Loy often touch upon the homologies and differences between Asian and Western social theories. However, the articulation of a hybrid critical theology was not their primary aim. The articulation of a hybrid critical philosophy—blending the insights of the European and Asian Enlightenment—is the aim of this essay.

Rhiannon A. Leebrick
Wofford College, Spartanburg (US)

Finding Feminism through the Frankfurt School: Exploring Self and Subjugation with Critical Theory

In this paper, I explore the ways in which feminist scholars have utilized Frankfurt school theorists in their work, as well as the ways that the Frankfurt School Theorists (particularly Adorno, Marcuse, and Benjamin) provided both the preconditions for greatly expanding third-wave feminism and intersectionality while simultaneously creating the implicit conditions for feminism to continue to be marginalized, even within this school of thought/analysis that is often attributed with spawning radical awakenings. By historically outlining the ways in which these early theorists dealt with issues related to gender, women, feminism, and masculinity I build the framework for discussing how and if current manifestations of critical theory are well-positioned (or positioned at all) to discuss the subjugation of women and non-binary conforming individuals today. In so doing, I also discuss how critical theory led me to reevaluate my own stance as a feminist, to better navigate experiences of subjugation within the academy, and finally to re-conceptualize the term activist-scholar.

Eric Royal Lybeck
University of Exeter (UK)

What is Civic Sociology?

This paper explores the possibility of a reconstructed ‘civic sociology’ with roots in earlier practices of sociological research - for example, in Patrick Geddes’ Edinburgh School, Hull House Chicago and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory. Other influences include Bellah’s work on civil religion and civic republicanism. Distinctive features might include a.) greater commitment to the local and regional rather than the global and abstract; b.) historicity, including both the history of societies and the history of sociology; c.) professionalism, suggesting sociology could claim jurisdiction over certain problem areas, including especially Education, broadly conceived. Civic sociology can be distinguished from ‘public sociology’, suggesting the latter is a sub-type of the former. With fewer ideological and political preconceptions, civic sociology opens wider horizons of possibility for reconstructive work within existing institutions.

Piotr Maroń
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun (PL)

Ontologies in practice. Case of male anorexia

Informed by science and technology studies, my presentation will focus on how a philosophical – in nature – notion of ontology is reconfigured and reconceptualized within the contemporary turn within STS. In particular, I will approach a disorder – male anorexia nervosa -- to show how one object is being multiplied in discursive practices. Using examples from biomedicine, psychiatric and psychological texts, this paper will claim that we no longer can rely upon a singular understanding of ontology. Instead, as Mol argues, there are multiple ontologies that are performed in multiple realities. The example of anorexia will be used to underpin the ‘ontological turn’ (Woolgar 2014) and to point out new directions for empirical philosophy.



Emily M. Medley
University of Tennessee, Knoxville (US)

Getting From Here to There with Planetary Sociology and Foresight

This paper demonstrates the viability of blending social theory with practical tools of foresight/futures studies into a research agenda of planetary sociology and offers an empirical example of doing this with my study of social entrepreneurship. A „sociology of the future“ like this can push beyond some of mainstream sociology’s theoretical and practical limitations. For example, while Weber’s ideal types are conceptual and analytical aids for understanding empirical findings, they do not drive qualitative improvement. Instead, at this historical moment when qualitative improvements are so needed, a foresight-driven, planetary sociology approach might use ideal types for analytical purposes, but can also suggest achievable alternative futures with built-in mandates for social improvement. Conceptualizing these future realities requires a dialectical and critical approach, challenging mainstream sociology’s self-perpetuating descriptions of globalization phenomena. While not ignoring such contributions, a “sociology of the future” uses them as merely first steps in confronting social problems within a framework of planetary sociology: considering the earth as a closed system of limited resources, not the technology-driven open system of ever-increasing opportunities purported by globalization. In this way, planetary sociology can suggest critically-reflexive alternative futures, which compare to each other not in relation to unattainable Weberian ideal types, but instead as imperfect, yet improved and attainable future realities. I use this approach in my study of social entrepreneurship to confront structural limitations of modern capitalism as they exist for entrepreneurs and are to be contended with in alternative futures informed by social theory and achievable by tools of foresight.

Christos Memos
Abertay University, Dundee (UK)

Critical Theory and Regression: Crisis of Critique, Symptoms of Decline and the ‘New Anthropological Type’

This paper argues that capitalist societies have, since the late 1960s, experienced an ongoing mode of crisis, which has now become effectively permanent, and is characterised by a state of progressive decline and decomposition, manifested in assaults upon selfhood. Elaborating upon Adorno’s, Horkheimer’s, Marcuse’s and Castoriadis’s insights, it critically discusses the view that the profound crisis experienced by modern societies, one characterised by pervasive decline and decadence and beginning to find expression in new forms of barbarism, must be understood as an ongoing and long-lasting social phenomenon. The paper maintains that a

loss of “negative and destructive critique” (Agnoli) has resulted in generalized conformism, depoliticization, and apathy, endemic across the totality of social life in advanced capitalist societies. This decay becomes manifest in a crisis in social values or as an existential crisis, which leads to an emptiness and impoverishment of everyday life. Also, social precarity finds expression in cultural crisis and the disintegration of the modern individual. This has led to the emergence of a “new anthropological type” (Castoriadis), a massive increase in mental degradation, and new forms of regression and barbarism such as environmental destruction, the nuclear accidents of Chernobyl or Fukushima, the rise of ISIS, the escalating conflicts in the MENA region and the Syrian refugee crisis. Finally, drawing upon the work of the early Frankfurt School, the paper seeks to trace the origins of this decline and argues that the theme “Socialism or Barbarism” has acquired a new signification. It contends that barbarism is not an historical stage that is yet to emerge after the total collapse of capitalism, but a quotidian aspect of life in declining, contemporary, neoliberal societies.

Patrick O’Mahony
University College Cork (IE)

Reasoning, Reason, and Critical Theory

Much of the intellectual effort directed towards understanding reason after the wide interdisciplinary reach of the multi-faceted linguistic turn has been dedicated to conceptually reconciling reason and reasoning. A rough division of labour between the terms, emerging from recent scholarship, might be that if reasoning addresses, depending on the interpretation of concepts, cognitive, pragmatic, processual, and procedural activities in a wide variety of social fields, reason holds out the prospect that such activities may be guided by democratically justifiable standards. Notwithstanding the extensive efforts in critical theory itself, much of it inspired by the theory of communicative action, efforts to advance the conceptual integration of reasoning and reason have not progressed very far. Needed philosophical clarification of concepts has advanced to some degree, but its necessary correlate in the critical theory of society, including its methodological capacities, comparatively languishes. Required above all is a social ontology sufficiently orienting and yet sufficiently flexible to grasp how society actually and in what dimensions operates through reason and what are the many structural obstacles to this. And for this task, we should not regard society as a merely empirical object open to normative correction but as itself a reason-capable educator. The paper, following an initial overview of its basic perspective, progresses by (a) outlining key philosophical and semiotic resources for comprehending reasoning that might (b) contribute to the development of an adequate social ontology for a communicative theory of society, showing how reason is generated and sustained and that might accordingly (c) improve critical theory’s capacity for societal interventions to advance reason in old and new forms and to combat unreason.



Natalia Matveeva
Moscow State University of Railway Engineering (MIIT) (RU)

Dogmatic Ideology and Critical Thought

The power of European culture is in the dynamism and intension of its ideological principles. Nevertheless, due to historical circumstances, Europe lost the critical character of its ideological positions after World War II, and especially the decay of the Soviet system. Contemporary social problems are caused, to a large extent, by the dogmatic character which took the ideology of the West.

The historical experience of different nations repeatedly testified that a dogmatic ideology leads to the stagnation of social development. Examples of this are the Soviet Union of Brezhnev's times, the French monarchy after Louis XIV, the Russian autocracy of the XIX century, etc. All these epochs are characterized by the dogmatism of the ideological positions formed after significant advances of power in the management of society. And all of them ended as the catastrophic decay of the social systems. It happened for the reason that dogmatism is an obstruction for adequate answers to challenges of time.

Stagnation in the comprehension of social problems leads to emergence of opposition to the dominant ideology, on the one hand, and to the extension of conservatism, on the other. Both directions cause a split in the society, not solving emerging problems. Meantime societies meet new challenges. Social solidarity is weakened. To overcome the crisis, it is necessary to adopt the ability of European science to critical thinking. This involves the work on the analysis of meanings of social phenomena, logic of their development and impact on real social life.

Laurindo Dias Minhoto
University of São Paulo (BR)

Notes on Luhmann, Adorno, and the critique of neoliberalism

This paper discusses some possibilities for a critical interpretation of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory. On the one hand, this theory could provide a sophisticated new sociological account of well-known modern social pathologies, such as alienation and reification; on the other, it could be considered a crypto-normative model for the reciprocal mediation between system and environment in which neither blind tautologies nor colonizations would take place. I argue that as a normative model this theoretical matrix seems to resonate with aspects of Adorno's negative dialectics between subject and object and that the involuntary promise it contains could be fully realized only under other social conditions. The paper also presents a preliminary

critique of neoliberalism reconceptualised in systems theoretical terms as a dedifferentiation machinery that aims at establishing the primacy of economic rationality and the formation of "industries" in different social spheres.

Andrew Mitchell
Kumamoto University (JP)

Function and failure in post-Fukushima protest movements

The Fukushima disaster, and the subsequent anti-nuclear sentiment that it created in Japan led to the appearance of mass protest movements of a size not seen for over a generation. Protests occurred on both the national and local level against nuclear restarts, with some continuing to this day. A movement also arose challenging the Japanese government and their plans to introduce new legislation, which some described as unconstitutional and against democracy.

Despite the popularity of these protests, both in Japan and in the world media, they failed to prevent key measures being passed by the government, namely the reactivation of nuclear plants and changes to security legislation. As of 2017, these movements has atrophied and one of the main groups, SEALDs, has announced its disbandment.

By using Niklas Luhmann's Social Systems Theory, I shall explore the role of protests with modern, functionally differentiated, societies. In particular, I shall explore the modern protest movements in Japan from 2011 to the present day. By considering protest as a type of autopoietic system, rather than an organizational or interactional one, its function as the site of "resistance of communication to communication" shall be explored. This insight will then be used to discuss why the protest movements failed to enact political change and, given this, what role they do/can play within Japanese society.



Yotaro Natani
University of Wisconsin-Madison (US)

Recognition and the Immanent Critique of Capitalism: On the Limits of Axel Honneth’s Moral Economism

Theorist of recognition Axel Honneth has been a strong advocate for the Hegelian method of immanent criticism over external criticism. Whereas external criticism involves constructing normative principles of the ideal society to evaluate social reality, immanent criticism involves reconstructing the normative principles of existing social institutions to examine the extent that they have been realized. Honneth’s application of immanent criticism to the critique of capitalist society is called “moral economism,” which is able to show progress for attaining recognition and freedom under social democracy, as well as normative regress under neoliberalism. However, Honneth’s critique suffers from a number of ambiguities: what the actual content or scope of immanent criticism is, and what exactly is deficient about external criticism; what makes the market economy a sphere of social freedom; and whether neoliberalism is a phase of social misdevelopment of capitalism. These internal flaws of Honneth’s critique result in a restricted argument that dismisses certain post-capitalist agendas while preserving certain capitalist institutions in the interest of remaining true to immanent criticism. I argue that Honneth must incorporate the concept of power into his framework in order to overcome these weaknesses.

Heinz-Jürgen Niedenzu
University of Innsbruck (AT)

From Nature to Culture: The Emergence of Normativity

According to sociological accounts, only human beings are able to develop mentally construed sociocultural forms and worlds, which are stabilized and secured by means of normativity (moral and conventional norms; roles; institutions; etc.). The relevance of normativity as a constitutive element in organizing social relations and societal structures is obvious. But, quite surprisingly, the un-clarified anthropological question concerning the emergence of normativity as a cultural mode of social organization has rarely been posed by current social theorists. For the modern anti-metaphysical understanding of the world, however, the normative constitution of human social forms of cultural organization can only be understood as a successor organization to a natural-historical precursor. That’s why evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology claim to be able to model both individual actions and the formation of social structures on a more fundamental, evolutionary biological, level. Sociology, on the other hand, allegedly restricts itself in general to culture-centered models of explanation.

The paper departs from the assumption of the compatibility of the phylogenetically constituted

heritage and the emergence of normativity as an evolutionary new mode of organization of the social. Thereby, the evolutionary point of departure is taken into account by a reconstruction of the processes of the emergence of human normativity out of non-normatively ordered pre-human societies. At the same time it is argued that the new mode of social organization follows a logic of its own in its development which requires a specific sociological model of explanation.

Ossi I. Ollinaho
Free University (FIN)

Cumulative change or the way the world changes à la business as usual

Business as usual is a frequently used term in environmentally concerned social sciences, regardless of the discipline. Even though the concept is in common use, there has been little conceptual discussion on what kind of change lies beneath the term. Harnessing insights from practice theory and phenomenological sociology, this paper illuminates the typically and implicitly evoked quintessence of the concept. Business as usual points to the continuation ad infinitum of established social practices, the continuation of the current societal structures, whatever they might be. Change à la business as usual refers to a cumulative type of change inherently linked to the reproduction of social practices and is characterized by uneventfulness. It, so to say, has to be brought to the fore in order to make it an event. This paper argues that environmental predicament is largely constituted by a manifold of business as usual changes, that is, the bulk of environmental changes are cumulative in nature. The paper has a major implication to social theory, namely that the mere continuation of social structures produce accumulative changes through their very reproduction, while agency is needed to stop or even to mitigate such changes.



Jan Overwijk
University of Amsterdam (NL)

Retrieving the Critical in Systems Theory

Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and critical theory are usually seen as opposing and mutually exclusive persuasions in social philosophy. This paper, however, aims to contribute to the recent initiative to develop a ‚critical systems theory‘ (see ‚Kritische Systemtheorie‘, edited by Marc Amstutz and Andreas Fischer-Lescano). Systems theory's powerful image of a poly-centric society consisting of incommensurable subsystems appears to be at odds with the political-emancipatory intent of the critical theory tradition in at least two respects. Firstly, systems theory cannot account for a phenomenon central to critical theory: the domination of economic rationality in society. Secondly, systems theory disallows for any normative claims regarding the social world because, according to Luhmann, the good and the true belong to different systems. In this paper, I argue that these points do not necessarily conflict with Luhmann's systems theory granted that we emphasize its pragmatic undertones. Such a pragmatic turn reintroduces a political-emancipatory element into the scientific system (which includes sociology) since it stresses the Luhmannian point that this system can never purify itself of the political, i.e. its basic contingency or openness.

I will argue this point by, firstly, questioning the criterion Luhmann uses to determine what ensembles of communications count as autopoietic subsystems and showing that there is a tendency in Luhmann to reify the identified subsystems by selectively underplaying the role of their institutional embedment. Such a reification makes it needlessly difficult to conceptualize the dominance of the economic system. Secondly, I argue that, rather than as reified entities, systems should be viewed as conceptual tools for interpreting the social world. This implies that the subsystems the sociologist picks out should, in part, be judged pragmatically, i.e. whether they enhance our capacities of acting in the world. This pragmatic turn, then, already re-introduces an element of politics into the subsystem dealing with truth, i.e. science. Thirdly and finally, I will show that this pragmatism already belongs to the core of Luhmann's epistemology. If we take Luhmann seriously, we must accept that the scientific system can never purge itself of its pragmatic, political or critical dimension due to its fundamental contingency or openness. The political, rather, must be seen paradoxically, as an element which science ‚cannot yet must‘ accept as part of its own.

Olli Pyyhtinen
University of Tampere (FI)

Simmel on Excess

Social scientific analyses typically frame social problems and public concerns in terms of scarcity: as poverty, impoverishment, unemployment, or lack of resources, forms of capital, and social contacts, for example. Following authors such as Bataille and Abbott, the talk focuses on excess instead, and asks what the work of Simmel has to offer to thinking about excess. In some parts of his work, such as in his theorizing on fashion, excess is evidently present, but figures only as an absence: while it is clear that the constant renewal of fashion and the increasing volume of consumption and production are founded on trash and waste, this reverse side of fashion and consumption nevertheless remains unexplored by Simmel. However, elsewhere Simmel addresses excess and abundance very explicitly. The talk focuses especially on the metropolis essay, in which Simmel considers the overwhelming metropolitan life in terms of the abundance of people, wealth of stimuli, and multitude of social contacts, for example. By expanding from those leads the talk attempts to tease out from Simmel's writings an understanding of modernity and sociality premised on excess.



Ilaria Riccioni
Free University of Bozen (IT)

Utopia and dystopia in art, culture and society

Contemporary societies, globalized and neoliberal, call for urgent social-theoretical tools in order to cope with the change which is occurring, however, social change never takes places without being announced before by symptoms or evidence. If the change in the Early Twentieth Century had provoked the artistic reaction with the proliferation of avant-garde arts announcing loudly the revolution in the role of art and culture through the utopic work of Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Vorticism and Rayonism, headed by the farsighted eye of Futurist artistic explosion, what is contemporary society producing as signals of its change? Art and society never confront one another. One is inside the other. A society which confines “non-productive” activities as art and culture according to global market main interests, runs the risk of imploding; it loses the sense of direction in its evolution, its ability to foresee possible development beyond sheer actuality; it drowns in the eternal return of the identical. It probably loses the sense of future as well as the idea of a new, other possible world, as Utopia in the sense of Ernst Bloch.

Where can we detect these symptoms, are they still in the arts or have they shifted in the virtual reality in order to disappear in websites? To which extent culture as a mean for development is capable of being “future oriented” as Appadurai remarks? In this paper, I will analyze and try to find answers to a major issue for contemporary sociology in order to understand the change and the deep tendencies in emerging societies.

Steffen Roth
La Rochelle Business School (FR)

Social theory above and beyond economy and society. A form-theoretical approach

This paper presents a form-theoretical observation of the Economy and Society perspective, which is still dominant in many fields of social science and most notably so in economic sociology, socio-economics, economics, and management studies. Inspired by the works of Niklas Luhmann and George Spencer Brown, we re-/formalise classical theories of social differentiation in general and of functional differentiation in particular so as to design a framework facilitating the socially differentiated indication and thus the sociological localisation of the viewpoints of prominent advocates of the Economy and Society perspective (such as Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, or Karl Polanyi) as well as the reverse engineering of their

re-/discoveries of the assumed economic take-off. We conclude that the perspective of an economic take-off be a true observation which is truly in need for supplementary observations of take-offs of further function systems of society such as art, science, or education.

Arokya Swamy Savariyappan
University of Innsbruck (AT)

“Female Agency”: Suppressed or Championed by Bourdieu and Butler?

All societies are dynamic due to various factors operating in a given historical situation. Scholars would agree that changes and transformations are not merely mechanical but induced as well by active agency. Though females constitute approximately half of the human population, in theoretical discourse they are not sufficiently acknowledged as active agents of social transformation. For instance, where is (the) ‘woman’ or ‘female’ as ‘Subject’ or ‘Agency’ for Pierre Bourdieu and Judith Butler? Do they really deny ‘female agency’ or undermine it? Both Bourdieu and Butler at different stages address the issue of gender in their theories. For Bourdieu, gender is part of habitus, capital, and field, and for Butler gender is part of performative acts. Gender domination, the “mother” of all forms of domination, intersects caste, class, age, etc., forming and transforming habitus, field, and capital through ongoing performative practices. Practice and habitus mutually influence each other and people (women also) become competent social actors by embodying the social world through practices of everyday life. If for Bourdieu, most human actions are part of habitus, then strategic and goal-oriented actions that are not automatic, have to be conscious. For instance, women’s work as (suppressed) agents, adds to their honor and status within the family and society; they are valued for their abilities to produce and procreate. Women are actively shaping their own society together with other members at home and outside. Though it appears that Bourdieu did not champion the female agency but he leaves enough scope in his theory to redeem female agency. For Butler ‘women’, ‘female’, ‘gender’ and such categories are mere social and cultural constructs that have no real agency at all. One needs to further probe: Do Bourdieu and Butler totally suppress ‘female agency’, or awaken it in a different manner, in their respective contributions to sociology? Which of these theorists is more effective in redeeming ‘female agency’?



Bruno Schoenfelder
TU Bergakademie Freiberg (DE)

The Collapse of Socialism from an Economic and Luhmannian Perspective

The viability of socialism has long been questioned by economists. As a time when many observers were fooled by socialist propaganda, economists exposed the fragility and inherent weakness of socialist economies. In retrospect, they have every reason to take pride in their scholarship. However, when confronted with the ultimate collapse of the socialist regimes, economists more often than not engaged in a death-defying leap. They turned into historic materialists rather than adhering to their own tradition of methodological individualism. This quirk suggests that they were facing a difficult challenge. Historians and political scientists have not solved the problem either. They have offered interesting suggestions, which lack a sufficient social-theoretic underpinning. This paper argues that the challenge can be met by adopting a Luhmannian perspective. Nicolas Hayoz's *L'étreinte Soviétique* made important steps in this direction but has some short-comings as well. This paper follows his lead and tries to cure the defects. It argues that the Luhmannian distinction between the memory of a social system (in particular: organization) and psychic memories is crucial for an adequate explanation.

Claudia Schütz
University of Innsbruck (AT)

An Application of Bourdieu's Crisis of Doxa for Social Movement Theory

Globally societies rise up against their leaders and their guiding political and economic principles. Since 2011 the number of protests increased significantly also in democratic countries. In search for explanations, contemporary social movement research primarily examines the recent protest wave in democratic states as an outcome of political and economic developments, most prominently austerity policies. However, the application of middle range theories proves insufficient, when addressing the complexity of the critical state of democratic societies today.

This paper argues that the mass mobilization of current protest movements in democratic states happened on basis of a deterioration of the normative consensus of democratic societies. In order to grasp this phenomenon, I argue for an application of Bourdieu's theory of practice and symbolic space as a theory of social struggle, which offers an insightful theoretical approach to understand contemporary social struggles located on the level of the normative order of everyday life being merged in material conditions.

Bourdieu himself considered change hard to achieve and did not outline simply applicable prospects for social change out of the neoliberal invasion. The paper presents a reading of Bourdieu's theory of structured social action and his concept of doxa on grounds of a relational perspective that implies the emergence of social situations, where profound social change can take place, dependent on dramatic changes of the economic and the political field, having radical effects on the social position of the agents and thus may lead to a change of normative cognitive convictions and action practices.

Omid Payrow Shabani
University of Guelph (CA)

Ineliminability of the Idea of Progress

In recent years the chants of "the end of progress" have grown more vexatious. Generally, critics charge that the historical idea of progress and development have worked to rationalize and legitimize colonialism and imperialism. They further charge that universalism of the liberal theories was, in fact, Eurocentrism in disguise, justifying the domination and exploitation of non-European as a civilizing mission. They, then, boisterously declare "the end of progress," has come. It is the aim of this paper to counter this negative view of progress by arguing that despite its role in the history of colonialism, the idea of progress is worth preserving because (1) in certain historical accomplishments progress has taken place; (2) and furthermore, it is argued progress should be understood as acquisition of non-violent consciousness.



Stephen Shirlaw
Asnières-sur-Seine (FR)

Four categories of action to revisit Economic Sociology and Political Economy

This paper outline proposes four categories of action as an ontology for examining some issues in Economic Sociology and Political Economy. The four categories are derived from an examination of recent research in a number of areas including Relational Sociology, Practice Theory, Cultural Psychology and Critical Realism using a process orientation. It is suggested that a particular interest of the categories is that they can be applied to a particular socio-cultural domain at different levels of analysis. This is illustrated by applying the categories both to the Theory of the Firm and to some current debates in Political Economy.

Brian C. J. Singer
York University, Toronto (CA)

Thinking Populism

One often hears today certain leaders and movements, and above all Donald Trump, described as populist. The use of the term populism has always been fraught with difficulties. First, because populist movements come in different flavors, both left and right. Second, it proves empirically impossible to delimit populism to some minimal set of characteristics that all populist movements share. And third, populism does not form a type of government, like monarchy, oligarchy or totalitarianism, but appears internal to democracy, drawing from some of the latter's most fundamental tropes. Indeed, etymologically speaking, the two terms, populism and democracy, appear equivalent, the one rooted in the Latin, and the other in the Greek word for people. Ernesto Laclau in his book *On Populist Reason* refuses to distinguish the two, claiming that a proper comprehension of populism provides a key to the intelligibility of democracy. And yet, however internal to democracy, populism, it can be argued, troubles democracy. This is not so much because it seeks power for groups and policies "outside the mainstream," but because it involves a torsion of characteristics that must be considered central to democracy. This paper seeks to examine this torsion under four rubrics loosely drawn from Claude Lefort: the division of political representation between representatives and represented; the institutionalization of internal conflict; the separation of power from law and knowledge; and the acceptance of (an unparalleled degree of) uncertainty.

Tracey Skillington
University College Cork (IE)

Relations of domination across generations - toward a critical theory of intergenerational justice

Capitalism's rapid and extensive enclosure of the resource commons is proving detrimental to the liberties and quality of life of growing numbers (Wallerstein, 2010). Major polluters lay claim to resources that in their natural state belong to all in common (e.g., a clean atmosphere) and ought to be protected as a common heritage for generations to come. In the absence of sufficient constraint, relations between generations degenerate into relations of domination, with present polluters depleting essential resource reserves at rates that cannot support a sustainable future.

The challenge for a critical sociology is to assess how the prevailing 'grammar' (Fraser, 2010) of resource justice can be challenged and relations of domination across generations theoretically and empirically accounted for.

In circumstances where society is driven predominantly by the pursuit of capitalist private gain and attentiveness to its inequalities notably reduced, empathetic engagements with the ecological circumstances of future peoples, for some, is a stretch too far. Using insights developed by Boltanski (2004) on 'distant suffering', Honneth (2006) on reification, Cohen (2001) on collective techniques of denial, and Urry (2014) on the normalization of capitalist atrocities, this paper will attempt to explain how intergenerational domination is justified by some and challenged by others.



Mark J. Smith
The University of the West Indies, Kingston (TT)

Towards a practical utopianism: reactionary and progressive formations

Early utopianism constructed imaginative visions of social arrangements that directly addressed the problems of direct experience, from Thomas More through the Diggers to more contemporary movements such as deep ecology. Marxist strands of utopianism theoretically focused much more on the division of labour between social classes although practical illustrations were much more than this, as with the political experiments of the Communards, early Soviets and factory councils. As a result, the radical-socialist antagonisms over utopian strategy have diminished the possibilities for a left populism. Such antagonisms need to be overcome socially rather than either politically or economically. This paper explores the avenues available in the 21st Century for constructing progressive forms of populism that counter the appeal of rightist populist insurgencies in both developed and developing societies, while also posing a challenge to the emerging 'new authoritarianism'. Specific cases considered include Trumpism, Brexit, Brazil, Philippines and Thailand. Particular attention is also paid to the development of state structures designed to prevent left-progressive forms of populism from emerging and whether the state should be seen as a site of contestation. As a conclusion, the key diagnostic and prognostic question of whether these new (and potential) formations are similar or different from forms in the last century will be considered.

Tony Smith
Iowa State University, Ames (US)

Technological Change in Contemporary Capitalism: A Symptom of Disease Rather Than A Cure

Innovation is a critical weapon in competition among capitalist firms. In previous periods of world history, regions where technological revolutions were centered enjoyed competitive advantages in the world market for decades. Not coincidentally, these regions enjoyed "golden ages," with high profit rates, high rates of investment, low unemployment, increasing real wages and a generalized rise in living standards. In the present historical period, there has been an unprecedented proliferation of reasonably effective national innovation systems. As a result, the time units of capital can enjoy a competitive advantage from innovation necessarily tends to be significantly compressed. The hope shared across the mainstream political spectrum that some new technological revolution will set off a new period of "healthy" capitalist growth is therefore a delusion. There will be no more "golden ages" of capitalist development. In this new period of world history, when technological change no longer contributes to capitalist growth the way it

has in previous epochs, other ways of increasing profits must be sought. The paper argues that many developments in recent decades studied by critical social scientists – the lower share of labor in GDP, expansion of monopoly rents from intellectual property rights, heightened role of financial "engineering," explosion of household debt, increasingly blatant political corruption, and so on – must be understood in this context. The paper concludes with a discussion of some implications of this account for the major theories of justice defended by normative social philosophers.

Martin Steinlechner
University of Innsbruck (AT)

Social Conflict Between Recognition and Freedom: Shifting Notions of a Key Concept in the Critical Theory of Axel Honneth

In one of his latest articles on »struggles for recognition in early 21st century«, shortly preceding the incidents of the so-called protest-year 2011, Honneth appears surprised about a lack of moral outrage: How could one explain that after decades of neoliberal reforms resistance had failed? Instead, he determines 'tendencies of degeneration' for the social conflict, turning the struggle for recognition into a 'bizarre scene of self-assertion'. In this article, which in his series of publications somehow marks the transition from the theory of recognition to the political theory of democratic morality, Honneth utilizes a concept of the subject, that increases its potentials and therefore also those of the social conflict.

The argument, that this means a damage not only to the social conflict but also to the key concept of critical theory, can be explicated along three stages: First, both of Honneth's latest books - »Freedom's Right« and »The Idea of Socialism« - at center focus on the sphere of public decision-making. For Honneth it seems to be a space free of domination to reflexively discuss one's self and to articulate the social conflict. Just like this sphere is oriented towards the succeeding self on the one hand and towards the stability of political order on the other, so does the social conflict in Honneth go beyond mere articulations in the political debate: it is also an expression of hurt claims in an ongoing struggle for recognition. Secondly, recent debates on the »structural transformation of recognition« and on »struggles for recognition at the beginning of the 21st century« do support objections towards his assessment of the social conflict, eventually leading to a fundamental question: can Honneth's theory of recognition fulfill its claim, to focus on the suffering of people and its transcending potential? Or does his description of social conflict by tendencies of degeneration possibly ignore, that existing relations of domination can be reproduced within a specific order of recognition? Thirdly, while Honneth had complained the importance of the social conflict within critical theory against Adorno, his own theory of recognition acknowledges 'to critically observe the unobtrusive layers of injured integrity and to be sensitive to the subtle consequences of denied recognition'. This critical view, however, seems to dissolve on the transition towards a political theory of democratic morality by focusing on benchmarks of recognition instead of questioning how and under which conditions the social conflict forms.



Karin Stögner
University of Vienna (AT)

Intersectionality of Ideologies - Nationalism, Antisemitism, Sexism and the Relationship of the Universal and the Particular

Based on Critical Theory, this paper aims at contributing to an analysis of ideologies relevant to present times. The main question is how different ideologies – here sexism, nationalism, and antisemitism – intertwine and reinforce each other and are thus constantly reformulated and reactivated across social change. I call this phenomenon the intersectionality of ideologies. With this, I propose a new way of conceptualizing intersectionality. While intersectionality commonly focuses on individuals or groups who are affected by resentments, discrimination, and exclusion and investigates how under these circumstances of multidimensional oppression and discrimination individuals form their identities, I suggest a change of perspective in two directions: First on the structural level of ideology formation by examining the moments by which they are connected and deciphering the unresolved structural problems and conflicts that serve as a common basis of ideologies. Second, I suggest focusing on the level of individuals or groups that have prejudices and follow exclusionary ideologies, i.e. on the authoritarian personality in its current shape and on how it is embedded in the social structures of developed modernity. A major aim of this approach is to tackle the relationship of the universal and the particular, which is central to the concept of intersectionality. Thus, the “privilege of invisibility” on the part of those who represent the universal against the special interests of diverse minorities shall be disclosed. Thus, the universal itself comes into view as the special interest of the hegemonic majority.

Valia Theofilopoulou
Trinity College Dublin (IE)

Anticipating Worlds that are ‘Yet-to-Arrive’: Hope and Becoming-Minor in Social Theory

In the face of neoliberal globalization, environmental disruption and the emergence of new and pervasive forms of power, it is ethically pertinent to cognitively and emotionally connect to worlds that are ‘Yet to Become’. I here welcome Ernst Bloch’s (1986) politically committed view of hope into critical sociology that purports to interrogate the current systemic and systematic injustices and inadequacies. Bloch reads hope as the immanent ‘venturing beyond’ the dysphoria of today via the conceptual and active reaching out to not-yet-realized future trajectories. Inspired by the philosopher’s intuition the first part of the paper appreciates hope

as an affectively emancipating process which, while triggered by concrete figurations of a future that is yet-to-arrive, galvanizes praxis in the here and now. Drawing then on Gilles Deleuze’s (1987) notes on ‘becoming minor’ through a kind of meandering thinking at the in-between of the visible and articulated, the paper argues for a becoming-other of sociology by means of engaging with, rather than reacting to, the world as an open and unfinished system of possibilities. A hopeful thus subversive sociology which eludes exegetical thinking that retains within- even if critical of- the dominant meaning-making matrix and is instead carried away and forward while navigated by concrete inventions of alternative, multiple and complex eco-social entanglements, ways of being and of knowing.

Mariana Teixeira
Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (Cebap) (DE)

Reconstructing the Master/Slave Dialectic in the Colonies: Travelling Theories and Misplaced Ideas within Critical Theory

The Hegelian dialectic of lordship and bondage as a metaphor for human subjectivity formation has been appropriated by several critical thinkers who sought to rework or actualize it and to thereby make it more concrete, plural, or radical. It may seem surprising that a philosopher whose oeuvre has frequently been associated with authoritarianism could also be quite often relied upon by subversive thinkers aiming at changing or revolutionizing the existing social order – the most obvious example is the left Hegelianism inaugurated by Marx in the 19th century and that reaches through to authors like Lukács and the ones associated with the Frankfurt School. But the reworking of the Hegelian dialectical approach to subjectivity formation is no prerogative of the advocates of a proletarian revolution. Thinkers located in the broad field of post-colonialism, like Frantz Fanon, W.E.B. du Bois, and Paul Gilroy, have also relied upon a reshaped dialectic between the master and the slave to formulate their own approaches to social domination (colonialism/racism) and resistance to domination (anti-colonial/anti-racist struggles). In this paper, I address Fanon’s Hegelian post-colonialism with regard to the issue of „traveling theories” and „misplaced ideas” referred to by Edward Said and Roberto Schwartz, respectively. Under which historical and philosophical circumstances could the master/slave dialectic travel in time and space and be translated into the language of post-colonial theory? And, more importantly: How can such a “misplaced” reformulation of this powerful philosophical metaphor shed new light on the contradictions that underlie its original formulation, when the idea was “in its proper place”?



Vladislav Valentinov
Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies, Halle (DE)

A systems-theoretic perspective on corporate social responsibility

The modern discourse on corporate social responsibility is framed by ideas many of which have important parallels in the literature on the general and social systems theory. Particularly the conceptions of the interdependence between business and society, and of the societal embeddedness of business, revolve around the theme of system-environment interaction that is potentially unsustainable. The paper draws upon the systems-theoretic arguments of Luhmann and Boulding in order to explain how sustainability is enhanced by corporate social responsibility practices. Systems are shown to risk becoming unsustainable if they develop their complexity to the point of overstraining the carrying capacity of the environment. To forestall this scenario, systems can improve their sensitivity to the environment and constrain their own complexity. These sustainability strategies reveal the systems-theoretic meaning of corporate social responsibility. Explained in this way, corporate social responsibility turns out to be a functional equivalent of vertical integration seen from the perspective of Williamson's transaction cost economics.

Philip Walsh
York University, Toronto (CA)

Social Differentiation and Critical Social Science

The concept of social differentiation has been thought to be fundamental to the social sciences. From its earliest inception in the work of Comte and Spencer, to its more recent re-imaginings in the work of Jeffrey Alexander, Niklas Luhmann and others, it has been invoked as a way to explain change within the broadest social systems, to capture the overall trajectory of specific institutions (such as families, organizations and governments) and to describe the shifting structure of classes, status groups and the individual life-course. Although differentiation may have no inherent normative valence, the process it is supposed to describe has been subject to both critical attack – particularly in the Marxist tradition, where it has been understood in primarily economic terms, and therefore as closely related to alienation – as well as to (often tacit) approval, for example among social equilibrium theorists like Durkheim and Parsons. Yet throughout its development, the concept has been marked by a deep confusion about its meaning. Does it describe a tendency towards greater specialization, and therefore interdependence and individualization? Or does it capture changes that Norbert Elias described under the moniker or 'declining contrasts, greater varieties'? This paper provides a general

overview of the career of the concept of differentiation, and asks, from a critical perspective, whether it is still viable as a means of capturing certain developmental tendencies within advanced industrialized societies at a time of dislocation and discontinuity.

Christina Weiss
Zeppelin Universität Friedrichshafen (DE)

The necessity of a dialectical concept for a system theoretic formulation of meaning constitution

One if not the central concept of Niklas Luhmann's social version of general systems theory is the concept of meaning (Sinn). Luhmann conceptualizes meaning as the medium, in which social systems, viz recursive communication procedures, operate. In this connection, the main theoretical background for systems theory's notion of meaning itself is Edmund Husserl's concept of (transcendental) intentionality, in particular, the idea of meaning constitution as successive actualizations of meaning possibilities in and out of a horizon of possibilities. To achieve his target of demonstrating that and in which respect social operations are operations of meaning constitution Luhmann basically extracts the very idea of recursive actualizations of possibilities out of Husserl's theory of transcendental consciousness and claims this recursive actualization activity to be the form of meaning through which consciousness as well as communication operate. Besides some inaccuracies and ambiguities, which occur in this process of reducing Husserl's concept of transcendental intentionality onto the simple schema of recursive actualizations of possibilities there is mainly one key point, which I seek to criticize in my talk: the lack of an appropriate, constructive concept of concept, viz conceptual content, let alone the normative dimension of meaning constitution that such a concept of concept invokes.

Referring to a likewise constructive and phenomenological reading of George Spencer-Brown's idea of the dialectical relationship between distinction and indication on the one side and the possibility to obtain a (logical) formalism out of this dialectical relationship on the other side I want to strike a different path than Luhmann does.

In the first place, I want to show that the phenomenological concept of meaning Luhmann employs necessitates an appropriate concept of concept that systems theory lacks.

Secondly, I want to carve out the dialectical nature of the form of the concept: normative/descriptive, rule-governed/rule-emerging, syntactical/semantical.

Thirdly I want to outline a possibility of integrating the pragmatics of inferential semantics (Brandom) with the phenomenology of meaning (Husserl, Luhmann) towards a likewise phenomenological and constructive theory of meaning constitution.



Frank Welz
Innsbruck University (AT)

The Neglect of the Future in Social Theory

The distinction between the present and the future is relatively new. Only since the late 18th century, in German verbs also have a future tense. In the late 18th century, philosophy had a major breakthrough. Neither tradition nor religion can show the way forward to the future. It's men who constitute their own world. Men make their future.

My paper will discuss four distinct social scientific conceptual approaches and trace the way on which social theory lost its orientation toward the future under the condition of the neoliberal society. Kant and Neokantian theories, first, fit well to the future-orientation of the welfare state. Under the neoliberal social order, other theories became dominant such as postmodernism and systems theory. Niklas Luhmann's radical constructivist theory of knowledge production, like Kant, also critically emphasizes the contingency of the future. However, since the 1980ies the dominant approaches in social theory neglect the future. They are completely focused on the presence of the post-historical neoliberal society. I will bring them together under the label of positivist social descriptivism. Finally, I will argue for a fourth version of critical thought that stresses the processual understanding of the present as the passage between the past and the future since both, the past and the present, are 'genetically' linked (Bourdieu). It is neither sufficient to critically emphasize the historical contingency of the forms of knowledge (Foucault) nor that the present social world could be interpreted differently (Luhmann). The future will be made by social actors under conditions that produce and stimulate the former. For transforming social theory into a potentially liberating force toward the future, the critique of contemporary social science must go hand in hand with emphasizing history as a vital part of social analysis.

Sam Whimster
London Metropolitan University (UK)

Social Relationships and Relationality. Learning from quantum mechanics

We need to subtract the social from relationality and separate social relationships from network theory applications. A pure theory of relationality is suggested by Werner Heisenberg's breakthrough in quantum mechanics. It is argued that sociology, to its detriment, has failed to incorporate a theory of communication, one adequate to the explosion of social media and the recent rise of populist politics, here instanced by Donald Trump. Realizing the underlying

importance of communication technology in all social relationships, and treating these two aspects in a complementary fashion, is the purpose of this essay in social theory.

In more detail: the paper presents definitions of relationality taken from social network theorists. These are sharpened by reference to quantum mechanics, which is used simply as a heuristic. Social network analysis usually defaults to standard social relationships. This misses the theoretical power of pure relationality. Social relationships should be treated separately as a meaning based field. This is classical world of Weber and Simmel et al.

The contemporary world is now shot through with the relationality of social media. Daniel Dennett's recent use of meme is picked out for its rejection of interpretive meaning, but his analogizing of communication to computer processing is rejected. Communication technologies - here using Harold Innis - always underlie social relationships and structures. The need for such a theory has now become urgent, if we are to fully comprehend the rise of populism based on digital communication technology.

Danqing Yu
Iowa State University, Ames (US)

Rationality and vicarious consumption: the case of Mukbang (Eating show)

This paper describes and analyzes a bizarre form of fetishized food consumption, originating in Korea but now popular to global audiences, known as 'mukbang'. In mukbang, a performer records or broadcasts the consumption of massive quantities of food in a single, continuous setting that can last for hours. Central to mukbang is vicarious enjoyment: food is attractively presented in high definition and the performer emphasizes the pleasures derived from eating, for example, the noise while eating. Female performers usually appear with heavy makeup. Performers provide verbal commentary to accompany their lavish meal. Mukbang has become surprisingly popular, especially among lonely, single viewers, who watch newly posted videos by the millions. Mukbang as a new form of consumption satisfies audiences within societies that value control over indulgence, in which the vicarious enjoyment of excess provides guilt-free or consequence-free effects. Mukbang performers are used as "avatars" to do something we desire to do, and something we cannot do. Moreover, according to Weber and Marx, this non-rational or mystical shell that still surrounds and distorts rational consumption in contemporary capitalistic environment. They make as much as 10, 000 a month to eat on camera.

Adrian Zabielski

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń (PL)

Windup Worlds. Paolo Bacigalupi's works in the context of selected problems of modern capitalism

Paolo Bacigalupi is an acknowledged science-fiction author, who write stories in a biopunk genre. He creates worlds, where global politics, bio-engineering, climate change and transhumanism assemble into complex, although disturbing visions of the nearest future. These, without doubt, deserve a detailed analysis, as we can clearly recognize the presence of the writer's political sensitivity in them.

The main topic of my presentation is the analysis of selected Bacigalupi's works, specifically „The Windup Girl” novel and „Pump Number Six” short stories tome. The presentation brings up the subject of current world-system bifurcation, and also other issues intertwined with late capitalism, like migration crisis, climate crisis, deruralization and techno-scientific controversies. Then I compare them to their metaphorical representations in fictional worlds created by Bacigalupi. By using this method I would like to portray how Bacigalupi's dystopian visions of the future can surpass predictions of social sciences, while still being relevant to the problems of the modern world. The researchers I am referring to are (among others): Immanuel Wallerstein, Walden Bello, Harald Welzer and Bruno Latour.



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Fr, 26th of May 2017, 6pm-10pm (optional)
**ISTC 2017 Closing Event: Social Theory Summit - Conference
Dinner at „Seegrube“**

To conclude this year's meeting of the International Social Theory Consortium, this event will take place in the mountains high above Innsbruck at „Restaurant Seegrube“, located in the center of the alpine Karwendel Nature Park, at an altitude of 6,250 ft (1920m).

We will be enjoying authentic Tyrolean cuisine, a magnificent view over the picturesque city of Innsbruck, and the stunning alpine scenery surrounding it. Riding the beautiful Hungerburg funicular (designed by star-architect Zaha Hadid) and then taking the Seegrube cable car (built in 1927/1928), we will reach Seegrube. At the request of numerous prospective conference participants, we have organized this shared event.

Please see <http://www.nordkette.com/en/restaurant-seegrube.html> for further information.

To participate in this amazing experience, select **option A – 24-26 May (complete)** when registering via ConfTool (<https://webapp.uibk.ac.at/istc2017/>). This option includes *conference attendance, funicular/cable car rides, as well as dinner at “Restaurant Seegrube”* (beverages excluded).



About Innsbruck

Innsbruck Tourist Information Office: Burggraben 3, phone +43 (0)512 5456330; see also: <https://www.innsbruck.info/en/> for information about sightseeing, events, restaurants and summer/winter sport.

Taxi in Innsbruck: phone 0512-5311

Public transport Innsbruck:
<https://www.innsbruck.info/en/innsbruck-city/mobility/public-transport.html>

At a Glance - Facts on Innsbruck

Innsbruck is the capital of the Austrian Tyrol province

- approx. 135,000 inhabitants – located at 575 m above sea level
- rivers: Inn and Sill
- situated at the foot of Patscherkofel (2,247 m) and Nordkette (2,334 m)
- University town: campus spreads all over town. During term 23,700 students live in Innsbruck.
- Olympic town: in 1964 and 1976 venue of Olympic winter games

Focus on tourism

The 'Innsbruck Tourismus' tourist association represents Innsbruck as well as 25 holiday villages in the town's vicinity

- approx. 2.2 million annual overnight stays
- in Innsbruck alone approx. 5 million guests, incl. day visitors
- summer and winter tourism, with a slight advantage on summer tourism Eating and Drinking: great gastronomical variety, ranging from gourmet restaurants (3 award-winning restaurants) to the 'Tiroler Wirtshaus' inns
- offering wholesome popular local fare (dumplings, noodles, filled 'Krapfen', lamb, beef, sweet dishes), - cafes and pastry shops with gateaus, cakes and coffee specialties – clubs and bars to go out in the evening, meet locals, sample wines, ..

Sports & leisure

Multitude of summer sports (hiking, climbing, Nordic walking, running, cycling, mountain biking, golf, swimming lakes) and winter sports (downhill and Nordic skiing, glacier skiing on the Stubai glacier, snowboarding, snowshoeing, tobogganing, ice sports etc.)

- guided hikes with ASI (Alpenschule Innsbruck)
- 9 skiing and hiking areas serviced by chairlifts and cable-cars
- free transport for skiers and hikers alike
- free summer and winter activity program for ALL guests of Innsbruck and its 25 holiday villages



Cultural highlights

Annual events such as the Festival of Early Music, Summer Dance Festival, Easter Festival

- sights: the Golden Roof, medieval historic quarter, Ambras castle with its Renaissance 'Chamber of Art and Curiosities', Imperial Palace and Church with the Renaissance cenotaph tomb of Emperor Maximilian I., Bergisel ski jump & Hungerburgbahn designed by British-Iraqi star architect Zaha Hadid, etc.

Traditions

Advent and Christmas customs such as Christmas Market, Nativity exhibitions, St. Nicholas and Christmas processions – carnival folklore and Easter tombs; in autumn: cattle processions and thanksgiving festivities.

Modern architecture

A dialogue between urban design and natural landscape. Around the turn of the millennium, Innsbruck experienced a veritable boom in high-quality architectural design, finding its expression in administrative buildings, sports venues, shopping centers, exhibition halls, cafés and numerous other projects. As this trend continues, inhabitants and visitors alike enjoy the attractive changes in the cityscape, a harmonious blend of modern and historical architecture. Nestled in a gentle basin and ringed by towering mountains, Innsbruck's unique location certainly requires some unique architecture. This has become most evident in sports venues and projects dedicated to other leisure activities, representing the close link between urbanity and nature. Probably the most striking examples of such interaction are the Bergisel ski jump (2002) and the newly opened Hungerburgbahn funicular railway (2007), both of them designed by Zaha Hadid. Besides being an exceptional sports venue for professional athletes; its viewing deck and panoramic restaurant have turned the Bergisel ski jump into a popular tourist attraction.

Sport

The sports district to the south of town comprises the ski jump, a football stadium (extended for EURO 2008) and 'Olympiaworld', the recently expanded Olympic ice rink complex. Olympiaworld includes also the Igls bobsleigh, luge and skeleton track, built in 1976 for the Winter Olympics and completely refurbished from 2005 to 2007. The technical features of this spectacular structure are now once again state-of-the-art, and its outer shell is fitted with steel and aluminium. The buildings at the start and finish of the track as well as all public areas were rebuilt or extended. At the cupola-shaped Bobcafé spectators can relax from the excitement of the races. Anyone wanting to make a truly nerve-tingling experience can book a seat on a guest or racing bobsleigh and tear down the run's bends and gyroscope just like a pro, safely accompanied by an experienced pilot.

Staying longer?

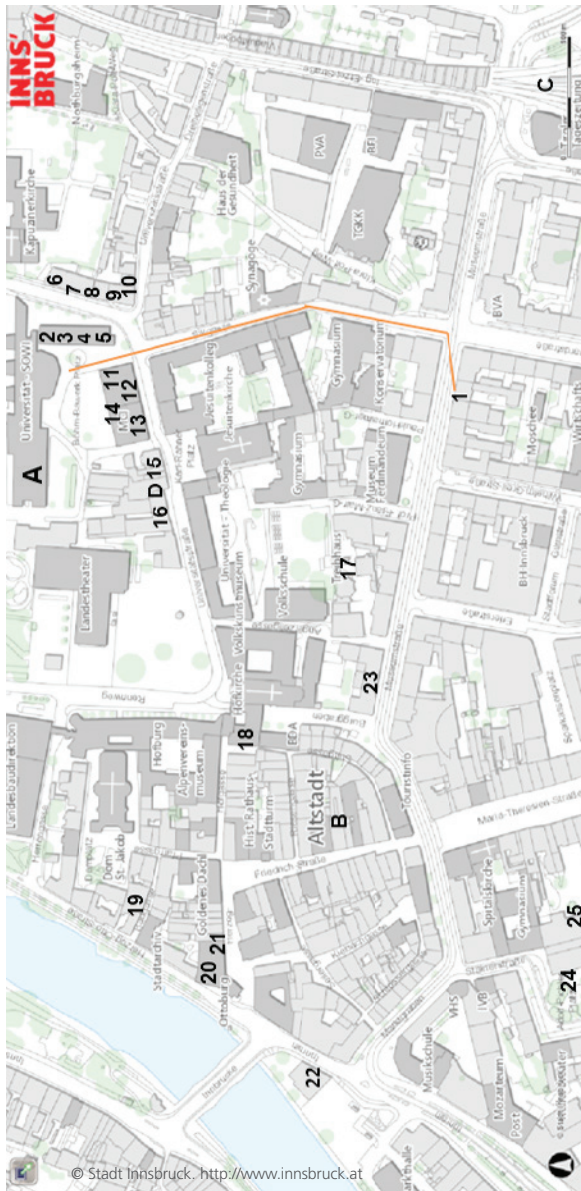
For information about different hiking routes see: <https://www.innsbruck.info/en/experience/summer-sports/hiking/familienwanderungen.html>

Hiking Tour: Arzler Alm

- mountain restaurant close to the city (altitude: 1067m), offers Tyrolean cuisine and a marvelous view
- www.arzleralm.at/; phone: +43 664 / 65 53 395 - address: Rosnerweg 113.
- 3km hike. Starting point: Hungerburg funicular stop. To get there, you can either take the Hungerburgbahn-funicular or the bus line "J" (numerous bus stops in the city center e.g. "Landesmuseum", "Museumstraße", "Marktplatz"; exit at final stop "Nordkette")
- Detailed map including directions: <https://www.innsbruck.info/en/experience/tours/tour/arzler-alm-505.html>



Where to eat



C Main Railway Station

B Old Town

A SOWI conference venue

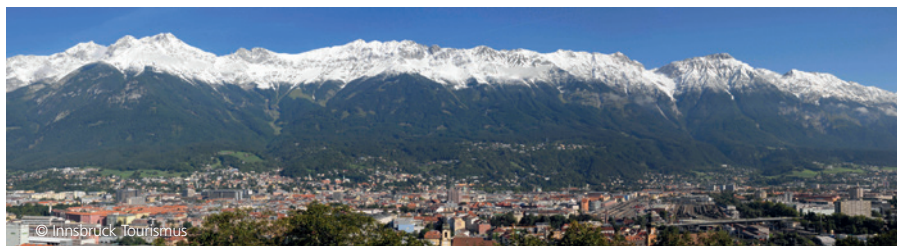
1	Auis	http://www.auis.at Museumsstrasse 24	fish, steak, pizza, pasta, risotto, curry, wok, burritos,...
2	NOI – Original Thaiküche	http://www.noithaikueche.at Kaiserjägerstraße 1 (Campus)	thai-cuisine
3	Il Dottore	http://www.il-dottore.net Kaiserjägerstraße 1 (Campus)	italian cuisine
4	Café Bar Dinzler	Kaiserjägerstraße 1 (Campus)	Bar / Café: coffee, beverages & snacks
5	Sowi Bistro	Kaiserjägerstraße 1 (Campus) http://www.victoriasushibarinnsbruck.at	Pizza, Kebap, Döner
6	Victoria Sushi Bar & Restaurant	Kaiserjägerstraße 4a	asian cuisine; Sushi, Maki
7	Café-Bar Kapuziner	Kaiserjägerstraße 4a	Bar / Café: coffee, beverages & snacks
8	Shifu	http://www.shifuasia.at Kaiserjägerstraße 4a	Asian-crossover cuisine
9	The Galway Bay Irish Pub	http://www.thegalwaybay.com/en/ Kaiserjägerstraße 4	Irish Pub: craft beer, pub food
10	Schwarzer Adler	www.deradler.com Kaiserjägerstraße 2	tyrolean cuisine
11	MPPreis	Universitätsstraße 15b	grocery store & bakery
12	Solo Vino Solo Pasta	Universitätsstraße 15b	italian cuisine & wine
13	06 ZERO SEI	https://www.zerosei.at Universitätsstraße 15b	Italian specialties: coffee, piadina, bruschetta
14	Sixty Twenty	Universitätsstraße 15 a (Campus) http://himal.at	Bar / Café: coffee, beverages & snacks
15	Himal	Universitätsstraße 13 (Campus)	“Nepali kitchen”
16	Woodfire	http://www.woodfire.at Universitätsstraße 5-7	steaks & fish
17	Treibhaus	https://www.treibhaus.at Angerzellgasse 8	alternative Café & restaurant: pizza, pasta, salad, döner, kebab
18	Stiftskeller	www.stiftskeller.eu Stiftsgasse 1(Old Town)	tyrolean cuisine
19	Moustache	Herzog-Otto Straße 8 (Old Town)	Bar / Café: coffee, beverages & snacks

20	Ottoburg	http://www.ottoburg.at/de/ Herzog-Friedrich Straße 1 (Old Town)	tyrolean cuisine
21	Piano Bar	https://www.cafepiano.at Herzog-Friedrich Straße 5 (Old Town)	tyrolean & italian cuisine
22	Cammerlander	http://www.cammerlander.at Innrain 2	Bar / Café, Tapabar & mexican cuisine
23	Ludwigs	http://www.ludwig-burger.at Museumstraße 3	Burger & fries
24	Thai-Li-Ba	http://www.thai-li-ba.at Adolf-Pichler-Platz	asian cuisine: chinese, thai, indonesian & vietnamese cuisine
25	360° Restaurant Lichtblick	www.restaurant-lichtblick.at	Café / Bar / Wine-Lounge / restaurant (changing menus) high above the rooftops of Innsbruck

Please note: due to a holiday on Thursday, 25th of May (“Christi Himmelfahrt”), many restaurants will be closed.

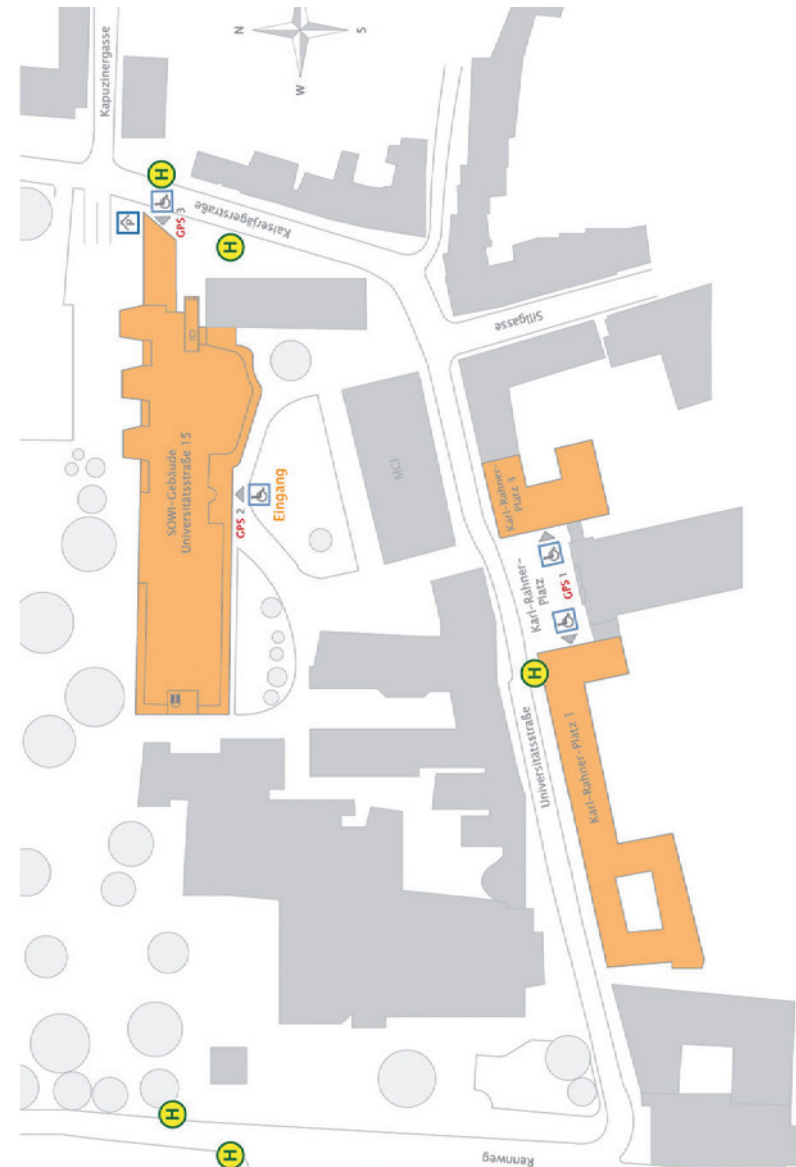
WLAN-Access

WIFI is available inside the SOWI building (conference venue) - please ask the ISTC 2017 organization team for further information.



Site Plan

SOWI Social Sciences building, Innsbruck University, Universitätsstr. 15



Site Plan – Ground floor



Site Plan – 3rd floor

